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People's Right to Know

JS session to stretch 4 more days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The Business Advisory Committee yesterday at a meeting decided to extend the current parliament session for four more working days up to October 4 to pass a few bills.
Main opposition Awami League (AL) walked out of the meeting as the ruling party members did not agree to hold general discussions on price hike of essentials, government failure to alert people before the recent storm, law and order situation and power crisis.
"We raised three issues for discussion but the ruling party did not agree with us; so, we walked out of the meeting," Abdul Hamid, deputy leader of the opposition, told reporters after the Business Advisory Committee meeting.
The Speaker, who presided over the meeting, said, "They [the AL] have already discussed the matters on points of order...So, there was no scope for fresh discussion on it."
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Jubok to offload shares in Rtv

SARWAR A CHOWDHURY
Jubo Karmasangsthan Society (Jubok) is going to offload its shares in the National Television Limited, which runs private satellite television channel Rtv.
The board of directors of the non-government organisation at a recent meeting has decided to sell its stake in the Rtv, sources said. Jubok holds around 40 per cent share in the TV channel.
The sources said Jubok is now trying to mobilise funds so that it can comply with the Bangladesh Bank's directive to return deposit money, collected through illegal banking, within December 31 this year.
Jubok needs around Tk 100 crore to comply with the central bank's directive.
After detailed investigations, the central bank on July 6 directed Jubok to immediately stop taking from people deposits in any form and to return the collected deposits.
"We need a huge amount of..."
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Heated debate in JS as minister's personal secy made DC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
An unscheduled debate was held in parliament yesterday over the appointment of a minister's personal secretary as deputy commissioner (DC), price hike of essentials and the killing of prof Aftab Ahmed.
Opposition legislators blasted the government for its failure to check price spiral of essentials during Ramadan and politicisation of the administration.
Meanwhile, a ruling party lawmaker protested the killing of Aftab Ahmed and demanded the culprits be put on trial after proper investigation. Ruling party lawmaker Moazzem Hossain Alal, on a point of order, also demanded that the state minister for home inform the...
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AL softens talks stance

Ready to accept invitation even over telephone

HASAN JAHID TUSHER
The much-talked about secretaries-general level dialogue between the ruling BNP and the opposition over electoral reforms now appears to be a possibility following Awami League's (AL) softer posture on the BNP secretary general's recent 'proposal for talks' over telephone.
"If they [the ruling party] give a specific proposal for talks over telephone, I will discuss it with my party chief and my colleagues at the party and the alliance to decide in this regard," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil told newsmen at his Mercantile Bank office yesterday.
BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told reporters on Monday that he already had telephone conversations with Jalil about the talks and that was his formal response to the opposition's call for a ruling party initiative for negotiation.
"If necessary, I will call him [Jalil] again," Bhuiyan had said adding that now there should be no need for a formal letter.
Jalil, also coordinator of the AL led 14-party opposition combine, said the government would have to give a specific proposal for dialogue over telephone. "Any dialogue with the BNP must settle who would be the chief adviser to the caretaker government and the chief election commissioner (CEC) instead of Justice KM Hasan and Justice MA Aziz," Jalil observed.
Meanwhile, Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina in an interview with the BBC radio yesterday said the initiative for dialogue must come from the government side. "I will sit with my party and alliance leaders to decide what we should do," she added.
Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon said a dialogue should take place immediately. "But it is not necessary to talk about technical points," Menon, a senior opposition leader, told The Daily Star last night. If Bhuiyan can give Jalil a call, then why can he not send a formal letter, he asked.
The possibility for dialogue came after Bhuiyan said there was no need to send letters inviting the opposition to the negotiating table as he had talked to Jalil over telephone twice in this regard.
Admitting Bhuiyan's making the phone calls to him, Jalil told reporters, "We can discuss a range of issues as lawmakers."
He claimed the dialogue issue did not come up during the telephone conversations.
Over Bhuiyan's view that there is no need to send a letter inviting the opposition to the talks, Jalil said it would be better if they [BNP] respond to our last letter, as the BNP started the culture of sending letters and they have to end this culture, Jalil added.

Workers reject new labour bill, threaten tough movement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Terming the Labour Bill 2006 as unacceptable and most unfriendly to the workers, labour leaders rejected the bill saying that its implementation will stand against the workers rights movement.
They said usually a labour bill considers the interest of workers in different sectors, but the bill which was passed in the parliament on Monday, reflects only stock holders' interests.
The new bill also violates different regulations of International Labour Organisation (ILO), which Bangladesh ratified in 1972.
Talking to The Daily Star, the labour leaders also urged the president not to sign the bill and to return it to the parliament for further discussion. Otherwise, they will embark on a movement including hartals, strikes, and other forms of demonstrations, they said.
Wajedul Islam Khan, co-coordinator of Sramik Karmochari Oikyo Parishad (Skop), the largest labour organisation in the country, said, "The government passed the bill within a short time without any major discussion with the workers, which is unacceptable."
He urged the workers to come forward to prevent the bill at any cost.
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Jatiya Sramik Jote brings out a procession at Muktagong in the capital yesterday protesting against the new labour law passed in parliament on Monday.

KEPZ gets licence after 5 years of wait

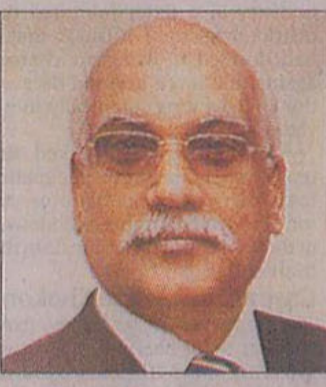
SHARIEF KHAN
After five years of delay, the government yesterday finally decided to award operating licence to the country's biggest private export zone -- Korean Export Processing Zone (KEPZ) -- highly placed sources said.
The decision was taken at the 12th meeting of the Private EPZ Board of Governors chaired by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her office (PMO). The board last met in April 2003.
The KEPZ authorities will be formally informed of the decision soon. And they will have to deposit \$100,000 as licence fee, instead of the previously fixed \$20,000, the sources said.
Between 1999 and 2003, the KEPZ spearheaded by Korean company Youngone had invested about Tk 100 crore to procure 2,500 acres of land for the export zone and develop it. But the BNP-led alliance government declined to give it operating licence without any explicit reasons.
Sources said the PMO decided to review the KEPZ case last month, considering that the investors have already suffered a lot and that there is no clear reason for not awarding it operating licence.
The KEPZ with its size and investment profile stands out from all the EPZs in the country. It plans to install 500 industrial units with an investment of \$1 billion. KEPZ sources said they plan to set up a whole range of garments and textiles units plus electronics, software, scientific and optical tools, machine tools, automotive parts and other units there. To build its infrastructure, Youngone will separately invest \$200 million.
"When we will be formally informed of the decision, we expect to bring in investors immediately and start export from the zone within two years," said a KEPZ source requesting anonymity.
The KEPZ would directly employ about 100,000 people and indirectly another 200,000 people.
After coming to power in 2001, the BNP-led four-party coalition government started viewing the KEPZ as a 'political beneficiary' of...
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City dwellers through a Bangladesh Rifles-run 'fair price shop' beside Dhanmondi playground yesterday as the prices of essentials soar in the kitchen markets.

Bullet-wounded Prof Aftab dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Former vice-chancellor of the National University (NU) Prof Aftab Ahmed succumbed to his injuries in the city's Combined Military Hospital (CMH) yesterday morning after struggling for life since assailants shot him in his residence Saturday. He was 57.
Prof Aftab died at 9:10am following a cardiac arrest resulting from blood clots, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) director quoted an attending doctor as saying.
Three unidentified youths shot Prof Aftab, a senior professor of political science at Dhaka University (DU), entering his Fuller Road residence, adjacent to the British Council on DU campus, on Saturday.
Severely wounded, he was rushed to Samorita Hospital with two bullet wounds -- one in the...
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Prof Aftab Ahmed

DU teachers live in fear

KAMRUL HASAN KHAN
After Saturday's fatal attack on Prof Aftab Ahmed, hundreds of teachers of Dhaka University (DU) have been feeling that their lives are under threat. They think that this kind of heinous attack may take place again on the campus.
On Saturday, three unidentified assailants entering Aftab's residence on the campus fatally shot the former vice-chancellor (VC) of National University (NU) also a senior professor of the political science department of DU. He succumbed to his injuries yesterday.
Nurul Amin, professor of the political science department of DU, said the teachers are suffering from a sense of insecurity following the deadly incident, especially in the pre-election volatile situation.
"Attack on a teacher, after entering his house, did not happen..."
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JMB LEADERS' DEATH SENTENCE Execution possible in last 72 hours of govt

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK
The five Islamist militants can be executed in the last 72 hours before the present government hands over power to the caretaker government on October 28, prisons officials said despite the law minister's speech that the execution will not be done during the Ramadan.
The prisons authorities said the execution is possible during the present government's tenure if the militants do not appeal against the verdict or seek mercy from the president.
Meanwhile, the Supreme Court (SC) registrar in a letter yesterday asked the jail authorities to stay the execution of Iftekhar Mamun following his jail appeal against the High Court's death penalty.
The High Court had upheld the death sentence delivered by the lower court against seven militants of Jama'atul Mujahideen...
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Sayedabad residents turn violent for power

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Swamibagh residents of the capital vandalised several vehicles in Sayedabad area last night demanding uninterrupted power supply.
Witnesses said several hundred men and women came out on the streets stretching from Sayedabad to Swamibagh around 7:00pm protesting frequent load shedding.
They also barricaded the road until 9:30pm halting traffic, pelted passing vehicles with stones and shattered the windshields of vehicles.
Jatrabari police said after receiving the information their team rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.
Duty officer of Jatrabari police station said they later informed the power supply control room prompting them to switch on power supply.
"As the electricity supply was restored, the locals calmed down," the duty officer said.
A resident of the area said they got angry as they did not get supply of electricity during iftar and sehri on the first day of Ramadan.
Speakers at the lecture also...
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Ex-CECs debate over fair polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
Former chief election commissioner (CEC) Mohammad Abu Hena yesterday stressed the need for neutrality of the Election Commission (EC) and appointment of the "right person in the right place" for fair polls.
Contradicting him, another former CEC Justice Abdur Rouf advocated for the neutrality of the election process instead of looking for the neutral persons.
The two former CECs gave their opinions at a public lecture titled "Democratic processes, national elections and civil society initiatives: Indian experience" organised by Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) at Brac Centre in the capital.
Dr Jayaprakash Narayan, a civil society leader from India, shared his experiences about the civil society initiatives in Indian elections.
He suggested increasing the...
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Eid Expenses...

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