

EU mission chief hopes for fair polls, all parties' participation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Head of Delegation of the European Commission to Bangladesh Dr Stefan Frowein said the European Union (EU) Election Observation Mission (EOM) expects that the upcoming election in Bangladesh would be held in a fair way and with participation of all the political parties.

Dr Stefan Frowein said this at the Election Road Show held in the port city yesterday to explain the role and background of next EU EOM to Bangladesh.

There is lot of rooms to improve the election process and political will is a must to bring about that improvement, he said.

The EU selected Bangladesh as a priority country for the EU EOM since the country as a democracy in an unstable region carries enormous strategic potential to act as

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Accord with UAE soon for expatriates' welfare

UAE labour minister due next month

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh is going to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the government of United Arab Emirates (UAE) shortly that aims at mitigating the sufferings of the Bangladeshi expatriate workers.

The UAE Labour Minister Dr Ali Abdullah Al Kaabi will visit Bangladesh in the first week of December in this connection, said a source in the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment.

In a letter to the Health and Family Welfare Adviser Dr Sufia Rahman on November 21, Bangladeshi Ambassador to the UAE Nazimullah Chowdhury said that the UAE labour minister called

him and discussed the proposed new labour laws of the country, which focus on improving the condition of the expatriate workers.

The MoU is going to be signed at a time when there are reports of widespread violations of human rights of the migrant workers in the UAE, especially in the country's construction industry.

According to New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW), these abuses include unpaid or extremely low wages, several years of indebtedness to the recruitment agencies for paying up fees that UAE law says only the employers should pay, the withholding of the workers' passports and hazardous working conditions that result in apparently high rates

of death and injury.

Most of the UAE's 500,000 migrant construction workers come from South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, the report says.

The embassies of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh repatriated the bodies of 880 construction workers in 2004, HRW said, adding that the UAE government can account for only a few of these deaths 'primarily because it appears not to enforce its own laws requiring employers to report worksite deaths and injuries.'

"Recruiting agencies unlawfully force the workers, rather than their employers, to pay \$2,000-3,000 for travel, visas, government fees and the recruiters' own services," the

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Judicial probe ordered in 3 defamation suits filed by Tarique

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday directed three metropolitan magistrates to conduct judicial probe into three separate defamation suits filed by BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman against three Awami League (AL) leaders including Sheikh Hasina.

The two other AL leaders are General Secretary Abdul Jalil and Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader.

Tarique filed the cases with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court on November 19 for conducting 'malicious campaign' against him.

After hearing the petitioner, Metropolitan Magistrate AJM Abdullah Baqui ordered judicial

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PHOTO: STAR

A car, owned by a Japanese national, mysteriously catches fire at Ramna Tennis Complex car park near Dhaka Club in the capital yesterday.

Police raid 12 DU halls, no arms recovered

DU CORRESPONDENT

Police raided 12 residential halls of Dhaka University (DU) on Saturday night but failed to recover any arms or explosives.

However, two cocktails went off near Nilkhet police station just after the raid ended at 3:30am.

Sources said the news of hall raid was leaked out hours before the raid was conducted.

DU Proctor Prof AK Firoz Ahmed admitted the news leak and told The Daily Star, "The authorities will take legal action against those who were responsible for the leak."

He claimed that the raid was highly confidential. "Even pro-vice chancellor, treasurer, members of the proctorial body and officer-in-charge of Shahbagh police station were not aware about the raid before midnight," said the proctor.

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PHOTO: STAR

One of the three jewellery shops looted at Holland Centre shopping complex in Badda in the capital on Saturday night.

Border guards trade gunshots in Satkhira

UNB, Satkhira

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) exchanged gunfire on Madra and Kakdanga borders in Kolaroa upazila early yesterday.

The BSF members from Tarali camp and BDR jawans of Kakdanga camp exchanged several rounds of bullet at about 2:00am.

Besides, BSF troops from Hakimpur camp in Sawrupnagar

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Prayer Timing		
November 27		
	Azan	
Fajr	5-10	5-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-19	5-22
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Restaurant bomb kills 15 Afghans

55 Taliban die in Nato strikes

AFP, Kabul

A suicide bomber blew himself up in a restaurant in eastern Afghanistan yesterday, killing 15 Afghans, as Nato said 55 rebels had died in fierce clashes that also killed one of its soldiers. The violence was the worst in weeks after a lull in a Taliban-led insurgency that has left around 3,700 people dead, four times more than last year, with rebels accounting for most of the victims.

The suicide attacker was in a restaurant in the remote town of Urgan in the eastern province of Paktika and blew himself up when

the Urgan district chief walked in, the interior ministry said.

"Fifteen people were martyred and 25 others including the district chief, Mohammad Mobin, were wounded," it said.

Paktika provincial governor Mohammad Akram Kheplwak gave the same toll. He said most of the casualties were soldiers with a militia hired by US forces, who have a base in the area, to assist with patrols and searches.

The commander of the militia and the governor of an adjoining district were among the wounded, he said.

Interior ministry spokesman

Zemarai Bashary blamed the attack on the "enemies of Afghanistan and of the government."

This often-used term generally refers to fighters with the extremist Taliban movement driven from power five years ago. The hardliners' insurgency features regular suicide and roadside bombings.

The small hotel and some shops around it were badly damaged, said witness Mohammad Shah Faizi who saw some of the bodies being pulled from the rubble.

Nato's International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) said the blast caused buildings to collapse

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Tarique sued again for defamation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Senior Vice-president of Pabna Awami League (AL) filed a defamation case against BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman yesterday for his alleged "indecent remarks" about AL chief Sheikh Hasina.

M Saiful Haque Chunnur filed the case with a magistrate court in Pabna. The court ordered a judicial inquiry into the matter and fixed January 15 for the next date for the proceedings, a court source said.

According to the filed case, Tarique had made the "indecent remarks" about AL President Sheikh Hasina on November 4 at Hawa Bhaban in the capital.

Mashhud finds political situation improving

UNB, Dhaka

Power and Energy Adviser Lt Gen (ret) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury yesterday said the country's political situation is gradually improving although it has not improved completely.

Mashhud, who is a member of the Advisory Committee on Law and Order, said the caretaker government would launch a countrywide drive, without any prior announcement, to recover illegal arms.

"If such a drive is launched with formal announcement, sometimes it fails to achieve the desired goal," he said.

"The holders of illegal arms are not 'innocent boys', but the government has the ability to control them... and we know how to deal with them," said the former army chief.

He hoped that all the political parties would become election-oriented after the appointment of two new election commissioners by the president.

CTG CONTAINER TERMINAL Businesses seek urgent steps to resume activities

Council of advisers may discuss it today

RAFIQ HASAN

The issue of Chittagong Container Terminal (CCT) deadlock is likely to be placed before the council of advisers meeting today for a policy decision after top business leaders of the country urged the government to solve the stalemate urgently.

At a meeting with Shipping Adviser Azizul Haque yesterday, the five business leaders urged him to take immediate steps for reopening the container terminal, which has been sitting idle since November 12.

The shipping adviser assured them of taking up the matter before

the council of advisers' meeting scheduled to be held today, sources said.

Operations at the CCT remained suspended mainly due to a serious row over the operation of four sophisticated gantry cranes by a private company, Saif Powertec Ltd.

"We have urged the adviser to resume operation in the port immediately, otherwise, the entire economy of the country will suffer," Mir Nasir Hossain, president of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), said emerging from the meeting.

"We do not bother whom the

government gives the charge for running the cranes, we only want to see the port becoming functional again with the cranes operating," he pointed out.

As many as 7,000 containers full of important imported cargo have been stuck up in the ships stranded at the port for over two weeks due to non-operation of the cranes, the FBCCI president said. The port is a basic infrastructure that should be kept above politics, he added.

The President of International Chamber of Commerce (ICC-Bangladesh) Mahbabur Rahman, President of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters

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124 police inspectors transferred in last spell

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday completed 'reshuffle' in six metropolitan police areas by transferring 124 inspector ranked officials - mostly officers-in-charge (OC) of different police stations.

The OCs and inspectors have been transferred to other districts in the range in accordance with a November 15 decision of Advisory Council for Administrative Affairs of the caretaker government.

All OCs of 32 police stations and eight inspectors of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) were transferred.

"The process of transferring the OCs started a few days ago, but could not be completed due to the movement of the 14-party combine," Jahurul Islam, the home secretary, told reporters at his office yesterday.

Hunt for criminals will go on based on the list prepared by the

immediate past government, he said.

Asked whether the government is going to revise the list since there is allegation of listing names of the then opposition parties' activists, the home secretary said the list was prepared neutrally where no one has been implicated falsely.

"In a sense, activists from all the parties are there. We can say, in other words, that there is no political activist on the list because criminals do not belong to any party," said the home secretary.

He, however, said, the list will be updated if names of new criminals come up.

On whether law and order may deteriorate due to massive transfer of police officers, home secretary Jahurul Islam replied in the negative. "The officers will not face any problem in their new stations if they are well informed about the area. The crime chart already remains."

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Hu to elevate strategic ties with Pakistan

REUTERS, Islamabad

Chinese President Hu Jintao ended a four-day visit to Pakistan yesterday during which he promised to work with Islamabad to elevate strategic ties to "a new high" and strengthen trade and economic cooperation.

Hu had visited India immediately before coming to Pakistan, and the Chinese leader avoided taking sides over the South Asian rival's perennial dispute over the Kashmir region, and instead focused on economic partnerships with both countries.

A crowd of well-wishers waving Chinese and Pakistani flags were at the airport in the eastern city of Lahore, as Hu, seen off by Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, left for home at the end of the first visit by a Chinese president for a decade.

Pakistan has treasured its relationship with China, mainly

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PHOTO: STAR

Despite electronic signals are in operation, a traffic police uses flags to control the movement of vehicles in front of the chief justice's residence at Kakrail in the city yesterday.

Yemeni editor walks free after Prophet cartoons conviction

AFP, Sanaa

A Yemeni court sentenced a newspaper editor to one year in jail and shut his publication for reprinting offensive cartoons of Prophet Hazrat Mohammed (SM), but the attorney general freed the journalist.

The court in Sanaa handed down the one-year jail sentence to Kamal al-Olfi, editor of Al-Rai Al-Aam, and banned him from writing for six months, in addition to closing his private weekly, an AFP correspondent reported.

The court accused Olfi of mocking Islam's prophet by reprinting the controversial cartoons, which were initially published in Danish newspapers and sparked a wave of protests across the Muslim world earlier this year.

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