

## WB for downward revision in aid disbursement target

The World Bank, amidst poor aid disbursement performance in Bangladesh during the current year, has signalled that the disbursement target requires a downward revision, reports UNB.

In a recent note to the government, the Bank cautioned that poor disbursement performance during the current year placed Bangladesh in a "highly disadvantageous" position in competing for the future allocation from IDA (International Development

**Vacant posts of SC to be filled up soon: Ishtiaq**

Adviser for Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Barrister Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed said here yesterday that the present caretaker government had been giving top priority to the maintenance of law and order in the country, reports BSS.

Speaking at a meeting with the members of the Supreme Court Bar Association, he said that the government had already taken steps to recover unauthorised arms and to investigate the irregularities in granting licences for arms.

The vacant posts of the Supreme Court are to be filled up as early as possible and that efforts are under way in this regard," Ahmed said.

Speaking on the occasion, president of the bar association Barrister Showkat Ali Khan stressed the importance of appointment of the judges to the vacant posts of the Supreme Court.

The meeting was also addressed by the Attorney General, M Nurulla, senior advocate Nurul Huq, Barrister Amirul Islam and Dr M Zahir.

### New CEC

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cial sources that the government is going to appoint a total of six Election Commissioners, all likely from the civil service.

"Each one of these six commissioners would be in charge of a division," said an official last night.

Meanwhile, Election Commissioner Justice M A Jafri, when contacted last night, said that he was not yet aware of any changes.

"When I hear from the government I will know what to do," he said without elaborating further.

Association). Bangladesh has been a major beneficiary of fund from the IDA, the soft loan window of the World Bank.

The World Bank note insisted on arranging a full-scale review of all projects immediately to make a "realistic" disbursement target during 1995-96.

The note pointed out that the Bank's project credit disbursement during the first eight months of the current fiscal (July-February) amounted to a poor 135.82 million US dollar, a little over 10 per cent of the undisbursed opening balance.

The disbursement by the Bank was lower by about 20 million US dollar than the same period of the last fiscal year (1994-95).

The World Bank resented that disbursements against all projects during the current year were "well below" the projections.

When contacted, a senior official of the Economic Relations Division (ERD) said that a prolonged political uncertainty was a major factor behind the poor aid disbursement during the current year.

### Water plant

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was repeatedly rescheduled, according to official sources.

So far, the Dhaka WASA has fulfilled four out of five conditionalities. They include: enactment of the new WASA Ordinance; appointment of a new board of directors and a chairman; reduction of total arrears to no more than five months of billings and appointment of a managing director on contract basis.

The other condition — contracting out two WASA zones to private hands for collection of bills — has so far been strongly resisted by the unions of WASA.

The two zones generate and annual revenue collection of between Tk 4 to 6 crore each. WASA sources, requesting anonymity, said some unscrupulous union leaders are involved in huge pilferage and therefore have been resisting the "contracting out."

The Unions, after repeated requests from the authorities, have softened their stance and now have tagged their own condition that they would not resist the issue if the WASA workers were given pension.



South Korean soldiers keep an eye on the movements of North Korean soldiers on the south side of the De Militarized Zone (DMZ) in Panmunjom, some 65 km north of Seoul, yesterday. North Korea moved 180 armed soldiers to the north side of Panmunjom for the fourth consecutive day yesterday following their violations of the armistice agreement.

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## Rifle snatched from cabinet secy's sentry not recovered

By Staff Correspondent

The rifle, snatched from a police sentry posted at the Dhanmondi residence of Cabinet Secretary Muhammad Ayubur Rahman Sunday night, could not be recovered till late last night.

Police said, they were investigating the incident. They had started a manhunt to nab the gunmen and recover the rifle. A case has also been filed in this connection.

A gang of about eight armed men attacked constable Abdul Alim at around 9:45 pm and took away his 303 rifle brandishing fire arms. The two other sentries were not at the gate of the house at the time.

Soon after the incident, family members of the cabinet secretary left their house at Dhanmondi Road No. 3/A and took shelter in a relative's residence. The secretary himself was not at his house at that time and did not return home till late Sunday night, according to reports.

This correspondent made repeated phone calls but there was no response from the cabinet secretary's house.

Meanwhile, the Officials' Coordination Council of the Republic expressing concern over the incident condemned the attack at the residence of Ayubur Rahman.

## Cong-I expels 3 ex-ministers 15000 candidates for Lok Sabha polls

NEW DELHI, Apr 8: Indian political parties have hit the campaign trail in the world's largest democracy, with a record 15,000 candidates in the parliamentary polls, officials said today, reports AFP.

The Election Commission said the number of candidates for the 545-seat Lok Sabha (lower house of parliament) was the highest in an Indian general elections since independence in 1947.

A total of 8,699 candidates fought the last polls in May-June 1991.

Most parties launched into their election campaigns as soon as the deadline for candidates' withdrawal ended Saturday, election officials said.

The first phase of the election battle was expected to be low key with public rallies and house-to-house canvassing. But "things will pick up very soon," said Sushma Swaraj, a leader of the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The staggered polls will be held on April 27, May 2 and May 7. Balloting in Kashmir will also be held on May 23 and 30.

Meanwhile, the governing Congress Party today expelled three former Cabinet ministers, including one of the top architects of India's economic

reforms for anti-party activities, according to AP.

Former Commerce Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram, junior Industry Minister M Arunachalam and Human Resource Development Minister Madhavrao Scindia were expelled for being nominated to run against the party's candidates in a national election to be held in April and May, said Congress spokesman Ved Prakash.

He also said another party dissident, G K Moopanar, had been suspended for spearheading a revolt against Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao in the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

Chidambaram and Arunachalam resigned from Rao's government last week after he announced a surprise election alliance with Tamil Nadu's governing All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam Party, better known by its acronym AIADMK, a move they oppose.

AIADMK and its charismatic leader Jayaram Jayalitha, often are accused of corruption, but the Congress Party needs to win as much support as possible in the election, which many pollsters expect will fail to give any party a parliamentary majority.

## AL discusses polls manifesto

A joint meeting of the Advisory Council and Presidium of Bangladesh Awami League was held with party chief Sheikh Hasina at her Dhanmondi residence yesterday, reports BSS.

The election manifesto of Awami League came up for discussion in view of the coming Jatiya Sangsad election, a party press release said.

## SAIC meet begins today

The three-day long 10th meeting of the governing board of the SAARC Agricultural Information Centre (SAIC) begins here today in the SAIC conference room at Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council, reports BSS.

The meeting will review the achievements made and programmes completed by SAIC.

Dr Abdul Hamid Miah from Bangladesh, Samdrup Regyal from Bhutan, Dr Mengala Rai from India, Bishnu R Kafle from Nepal, Prabal S J B Rana from SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu, will attend the meeting.

## Ershad

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Advocate Mahbubur Rahman further said that Ershad expected to get justice, equal rights to all, compliance with law and guarantee of life and liberty, fundamental rights and human rights to all including himself (Ershad). "In default, Ershad remarked, that the present caretaker government will not be taken as neutral and honest," Rahman quoted him as saying.

Ershad said in prison he suffered long solitary confinement illegally, had been deprived proper treatment.

## Straddle carrier

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Authority Port Captain Zahir Uddin Mahmud said: Now we have nothing to do, everything depends on the will of the government.

The decision for hiring equipment from private parties was taken earlier against the backdrop of equipment crisis at Chittagong port," the acting Chairman said adding "If the employees union do not allow we may need to procure the same immediately to tackle the cargo situation here."

He informed that the Chittagong Port Authority already had a plan to procure equipment in phases upto the year 2010.

## The Midnight File

### US senator meet Ahmed Shah Masood

KABUL, Apr 8: Surrounded by anti-aircraft weapons and machine gun toting guards, US Senator Hank Brown today met Afghanistan's military chief Ahmed Shah Masood at a lush garden along the Stalif River out of sight of the capital Kabul. The meeting, shrouded in secrecy, took place at Stalif village, a peacetime haven for tourists, about 40 kilometers northwest of the war-ravaged capital, reports AP.

## Khaleda: Coming polls

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country". She alleged that the opponents started the conspiracy against the BNP being jealous of its success in all sectors.

"Actually, they were in conspiracy against the country, against development and economic uplift," she said. "They started an anti-people movement to stop the country's progress and prosperity."

About the "non-cooperation movement" of some political parties during the rule of the BNP, Begum Zia said agitations that hinder normal public life and destroy the country's economy, cannot be called a movement of the people.

"Non-cooperation can never be a people's movement... This forced more than 1000 garment factories to be closed and badly damaged the economy."

Mentioning the process leading to the formation of the caretaker government, the BNP Chairperson said: "We did not go beyond the Constitution despite threats and intimidations."

She said her political opponents had threatened that they would not allow the BNP to hold the elections on February 15, to form Parliament. "But we help the elections and passed the bill of caretaker government through the Sixth Parliament to continue the constitutional process."

She said: "We believe in change of power through con-

## Taka devalued

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15 poisa on March 7, 1995, taka was devalued twice earlier by 15 poisa against the dollar on September 12, 1995 and 25 poisa on October, 1995.

During the last calendar year, the local currency was devalued by 1.61 per cent against the greenback compared to almost 14 per cent depreciation of the Indian Rupee and eight per cent devaluation of the Pakistani Rupee.

stitutional process, and that was why we have done all these."

Begum Zia listed the development activities initiated during the BNP rule and said: "We've accomplished many things, but a lot of our tasks remained incomplete."

She called upon the people to "vote for the BNP and give us the chance to complete our unfinished jobs."

The former Prime Minister started her journey by road from Dhaka at about 10:30 am. Central BNP leaders, including Dr Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain, Tanveer Ahmed Siddiqui, Abdul Matin Chowdhury, Rafiqul Islam Mia, Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan, Mirza Abbas, Jahan Ara Begum, Abdul Hai, Redwan Ahmed and Amanullah Aman also addressed the meetings.

## Indian held with smuggled goods

From Our Correspondent

JESSORE Apr 8: The BDR seized smuggled goods worth about Taka one lakh eighty thousand and arrested one Indian national from Murali near Jessore town last night.

According to reports a special patrol party of 22 Rifles Battalion, while going to Benapole, saw a private car overtaking and moving them in high speed towards Khulna.

This made the patrol party suspicious. The BDR team, changed the direction of their jeep and chased the speeding car which was later intercepted at a roadblock. A good number of contrabands including Indian, T-Shirt, Lungi and Ganjis were recovered from the private car and an Indian national was caught red-handed.

When contacted, Major Tauhid Bin Ahmed, second-in-command of 22 Battalions told The Daily Star that the Indian national, Sri Dulal Karmakar, son of Norendra Mohan Karmakar of village Khoikhali in Nadia district of West Bengal was arrested.

সংবিধিত সত্যকরণঃ ধূমপান স্বাস্থ্যের জন্য ক্ষতিকর

Editor : Mahfuz Anam