



VOL. X NO. 116 REGD. NO. DA 781

www.dailystarnews.com

DHAKA TUESDAY MAY 16, 2000

3rd Millennium

JAISTHA 2, 1407 BS

SAFAR 11, 1421 HIJRI

16 PAGES PRICE : TAKA 6.00

## PM to take steps as per Constitution

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday questioned whether opposition leader Khaleda Zia at all believes in democracy, constitution and election process after her outright rejection of talks on the appointment of Chief Election Commissioner on consensus, reports UNB.

"In the wake of the present stance she (Khaleda) has taken, I put this question to the people to ascertain if she at all believes in democracy, constitution and election," Hasina said at a meeting with the leaders of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) at her Ganobhaban official residence.

The Prime Minister's remarks came following BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia's abrupt change in her position while addressing a public meeting at Bhurungamari (Kurigram) on Sunday rejecting a planned dialogue with Awami League on nominating a consensus CEC.

Referring to the relevant constitutional provision, she said the President appoints the CEC on the advice of the Prime Minister.

Explaining her own conviction on appointing a new CEC, Hasina said despite the constitutional prerogative, she invited the opposition leader to have a consensus on the matter in the interest of democracy and parliamentary practices.

About the government's follow-up action, she said CEC is a constitutional post, which should not be left vacant for long.

The PM then advised the Finance Minister that he should inform the people about it through the media.

## Govt accuses Khaleda of scuttling talks

By Staff Correspondent

The move for a dialogue between the ruling party and the Opposition to nominate a new chief election commissioner took a U-turn yesterday as Finance Minister S A M S Kibria communicated to BNP negotiator Saifur Rahman that there was no longer any scope for such talks.

Kibria blamed Opposition leader Khaleda Zia for "destroying" the environment for a dialogue by making a public statement that she wanted appointment of a new chief election commissioner after the government handed over power to a caretaker administration.

A few minutes after talking to Saifur, the Finance Minister held a press conference at his office at 3:15 pm "to inform the nation" about the developments.

Earlier in the morning, members of Sheikh Hasina's Cabinet reviewed the developments in the back-stage communications between Kibria and Saifur. After Kibria's briefing on the latest situation, the Prime Minister and her Cabinet colleagues found Khaleda Zia's public statement contradictory to the ruling party's spirit to resolve the issue through discussion, a minister told The Daily Star last night.

The PM then advised the Finance Minister that he should inform the people about it through the media.

Khaleda Zia reportedly said

the public rally at Kurigram on Sunday that they would select a "good" chief election commissioner in consultation with all parties after the government of Sheikh Hasina handed over power to a caretaker administration.

There is no longer any scope for dialogue with the opposition for nomination of a new CEC," Kibria said at the press conference.

Replied to a query, Saifur said, "According to the latest understanding between the Finance Minister and myself, I was supposed to hand over to him a list of opposition negotiators after Begum Zia's return to Dhaka."

Saifur, who went to Sylhet yesterday afternoon, is scheduled to return to the capital today.

The crises regarding appointment of a new CEC arose following resignation of Mohammad Abu Hena on May 8.

After his resignation, the initiative for discussion on the appointment of a new CEC came from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. She invited the Leader of the Opposition in Jatiya Sangsad Khaleda Zia for talks with her on the issue at the Prime Minister's office.

Meantime, they have exchanged four letters, two each, without any positive result.

Alongside the official communication, Kibria and Saifur were trying for a consensus on the issue through talks at the second layer of leaderships.

Saifur refused to make any comment on the development.

When contacted over telephone at Moulabibazar last

night, he said, "I cannot make any comment until I have a discussion with Begum Zia tomorrow (Tuesday). The only thing I can tell you now is that the Finance Minister communicated to me at around 3:00 pm that there was no longer any scope for a dialogue on the issue, especially after Begum Zia's public statement at Kurigram."

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## Unusual incident at Supreme Court

By M Shamsur Rahman

The Supreme Court yesterday witnessed a stormy session, triggered by a senior lawyer who claimed that one of the judges passed a sarcastic remark about dispensing justice.

Barrister Rafique-ul-Huq, while arguing in one of the sensational 1996 share scam cases, at one stage burst into anger alleging that one of the judges — Justice Kazi Ebadul Huq — made a sarcastic remark that it is difficult to put rich people in the dock.

"What kind of comment is that," Huq said. "What will people think of the judiciary if a sitting judge of the Supreme Court makes such comments," Huq exclaimed before the Full Bench including Chief Justice Latifur Rahman.

Rafique-ul-Huq was repre-

senting three companies against which the capital market regulators filed cases for manipulating the share market in 1996.

Huq's statement surprised the judges.

"What happened?" the Chief Justice asked.

Huq repeated the alleged remark by Justice Kazi Ebadul Huq, at the top of his voice.

But most of the judges were seen looking at each other trying to understand what went wrong.

Justice Ebadul Huq said that if Barrister Rafique-ul-Huq had any objection about him then he can state that and the judge concerned will not hear his case.

But Huq continued to speak

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## Opposition's mass procession in city today

Farooq Abdullah on the hit-list of militants

Kaleem Sadiqi told AFP by telephone.

"Bhatt was on our hit-list because he used to give directions to Indian security forces for quashing militancy in Kashmir," Sadiqi said.

He warned that Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah and some more members from his 24-member ministerial council would be targeted by the pro-Pakistani organisation, the largest and the best armed officials here.

A spokesman of the Hizbul Mujahideen guerrilla force told AFP on telephone that it staged the landmine ambush for Bhatt while the minister was coming to Srinagar from his constituency in southern Kokarnag district.

"The minister's bullet-proof car and the security escort vehicle were blown by the impact of the blast," he said.

Local police and government officials from nearby Anantnag district have rushed to the area.

Nearly a dozen militant groups are fighting New Delhi's

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## NCBs plan rate cut

By Inam Ahmed

The Nationalised Commercial Banks (NCBs) are mulling over reduction of interest rates on term lending for some specific sectors, according to sources.

Managing directors of the four NCBs yesterday met Finance Secretary Dr Akhbar Ali Khan and told him that they might reduce interest rates for some specific sectors like information technology (IT), fully export-oriented industries, agro-based industries and industries which use fully local raw materials.

Subsequently, the NCB boards discussed the issue and arrived at a conclusion that all the four NCBs could make a joint move in this effect instead of individual rate cuts.

According to sources, the four banks will prepare a report on how many percentage points they can slash from the existing rates for submission to the ministry shortly.

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Doctors' blunder has eventually cost her life.

After struggling for life for almost two years, the nineteen-year-old girl who was surviving on a transplanted kidney, died at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital (BSMMUH) on Sunday night.

Her 'only functioning kidney' was removed by doctors at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) during an operation for removal of ovarian tumour. Then she had a transplanted kidney, donated by her mother Zahura Begum.

DMCH doctors said they had removed Asma's kidney by 'mistake'.

Prof Mahmuda Khatun, a gynaecologist at DMCH, aided by her colleagues, had operated on Asma for removing a tumour on her ovary. Asma's five-month pregnancy was also terminated during the operation performed on August 11, 1998.

But the doctors later said they had 'accidentally' removed her kidney.

The temperature in the capi-

toland the sources said. Some genetically modified (GM) seeds have already been brought in the country but research on those is withheld in the absence of legal protection, the sources said.

The draft act will be ready next month and then placed in the Jatiya Sangsad, according to sources in the task force formed to prepare it.

Once passed by parliament, the act will give legal cover to the already prepared biosafety guidelines for safe genetic research and engineering and scope for legal protection against their probable fallout on environment and ecology.

The government move came at a time when collaborative projects with international research institutes are pending due to lack of a biosafety act.

Experts say, although

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## City dwellers suffer in heat, power failures

By Staff Correspondent

Intolerable heat coupled with frequent power disruptions increased people's misery in the city yesterday.

The DESA control room said last night that there was only 70 MW load shedding in the city capital and adjacent areas yesterday. Besides, there was additional load shedding in some parts of the city due to overload on different lines.

But people from different parts of the city alleged that the power situation in the capital yesterday was the worst in the last couple of days.

A resident of city's Kalyanpur area alleged that starting from early morning the area had experienced frequent power disruptions throughout the day.

The highest temperature in Dhaka yesterday was 35.8 degree Celsius more than a degree higher than that of the day before, sources at the met office said.

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Source: Islamic Foundation

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