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INSIDE TODAY

SOUTH ASIA

Pakistan's Chief Executive is in a dilemma over how to appease the traders and the ulamas, and make them agree to co-operate with the government on issues like the blasphemy law and general sales tax, writes Mansoor Mamoon

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Stop filling Gulshan Lake

HC orders RAJUK

By Staff Correspondent

The High Court has directed the Chairman of Rajuk to immediately suspend all activities connected with earth filling of Gulshan lake and construction on different plots at four roads adjacent to the lake.

The HC also asked him to inform it by June 12 if its order has been complied with.

The directive issued on Wednesday concerned Plot-8 at Road-78 and empty plots on the eastern side of Roads - 118, 121 and 123 at Gulshan Model Town.

The fresh HC order followed a writ filed by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA) and Gulshan Banani Baridhara Welfare Society. They pointed out that many plots had been 'extracted' by filling the lake and occupying the green belt along it.

Earlier on 2 May 1999, the HC had issued a rule nisi asking Rajuk to show cause why filling up and allotment of plots in Gulshan-Banani-Baridhara lake should not be declared to be without any lawful authority and as such of no legal effect.

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Govt deviates from Master Plan

Power plant at Chandrima Udyan is a violation of Town Improvement Act

By Morshed Ali Khan

The government is violating the Town Improvement Act 1953 by ignoring the Dhaka Master Plan and taking up projects such as construction of a power plant for the NAM summit centre at Chandrima Udyan, sources in Rajuk said.

Experts fear an environmental disaster in the 590 square miles of the city area if the Master Plan is ignored so indiscriminately. The master plan was devised after four years of painstaking studies and at a cost of about Tk 16 crore. It takes into consideration urban issues such as economic, social, institutional, social, ecological and environmental aspects.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Development Plan (DMDP) or the Master Plan, designates Chandrima Udyan as a green space. The Town Improvement Act makes it mandatory to follow the DMDP recommenda-

tions. The Rajuk chairman is the only person who enjoys discretionary power to overrule the Master Plan recommendation under special circumstances. In the case of Chandrima Udyan, the government did not even bother to seek the chairman's clearance.

"Instances are abound with the government ignoring the city Master Plan. In Chandrima Udyan's case, the Rajuk chairman kept mum because if he tried to defend the TI Act, he would have probably been replaced by someone willing to cooperate," said a Rajuk official on condition of anonymity.

The only time the government cared about the opinion of the DMDP experts was when the military put forward a plan for approval few years ago to fill up the Balu River near Tongi and construct a housing complex, officials said. However, the

DMDP experts immediately poured cold water on the plan since the DMDP strictly forbids filling of any low-lying area.

The clauses of the Master Plan was incorporated in the Town Improvement Act 1953 through a gazette notification numbered SRO No. 184-LAW/97 dated August 3, 1997. It was published in the Bangladesh gazette on August 4, 1997.

About the government decision to reactivate the old airport at Tejgaon for domestic airline services, the Master Plan states that the old airport area should be turned into a recreational facility. While about Dhaka Cantonment and Zia International Airport, it says these areas lack thoroughfare roads and form a physical impediment to development.

"At Rajuk there is no Master Plan monitoring cell. The Chief

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Opposition plans hartal, siege early next month

By Rezaul Karim

The opposition alliance plans siege and hartal programmes early next month in retaliation against the 'unilateral' appointment of the chief election commissioner.

Sources said leaders of BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote held a number of meetings, but are yet to finalise any programmes. A hartal on June 11 and a siege programme to the Election Commission Secretariat in the first week of June are on the cards.

Former home secretary and Securities and Exchange Commission chairman M.A. Syed was appointed CEC for the next five-years.

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Who's knocking at the door?

By Staff Correspondent

Enumerators collecting personal information of voters for the next general elections in the country are facing trouble in their job, since residents of many households hesitate to open the door for them suspecting them to be intruders.

In some areas residents are putting pressure not only on enumerators but also on officials to register information as per their convenience. Two officials of the election commission secretariat were handed over to the police recently on unfounded suspicion and false charges, they said.

Police said that they are

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Sri Lankans fly in for Asia Cup

Sports Reporter

An 18-member Sri Lanka cricket team, led by dashing opener Sanath Jayasuriya, arrived in the capital yesterday to take part in the Pepsi Asia Cup starting at the Bangabandhu National Stadium from Sunday.

On their arrival, captain Sanath Jayasuriya promised to play positive cricket in Dhaka and retain the trophy they won in Colombo three years back.

The defending champions will take on hosts Bangladesh in the opening match of the premium event. The islanders will meet India in the second match on June 3 before facing Pakistan in their last league match on June 5.

Top two finishers will move into the final, scheduled to be held on June 7.

The Lankans, who have won the Asia Cup twice in 1986 and 1997, were the first among three Asian giants to reach the capital. India, the four times champions in the previous six editions, are expected to reach on May 28 while Pakistan, who will fly in straight from West Indies, are likely to arrive on June 1.



Big puddles at big bowl

Incessant rain over the last few days has already turned the Bangabandhu National Stadium, venue for the Pepsi Asia Cup cricket championship, into a giant pool. With more rain forecast, dark clouds hover over the four-nation tournament scheduled for a May 28 start.

Star photo: Anisur Rahman

AES-PDB discord over

By Sharier Khan

The prolonged dispute between US power company AES and the Power Development Board (PDB) over Meghnaghat power plant's land site finally ended yesterday through signing of an agreement, sources said.

Under a directive from the Prime Minister's Office, PDB Chairman and AES Managing Director signed a 'supplementary agreement' following a very brief negotiation at the Energy Ministry yesterday noon.

The supplementary agreement was prepared as per a draft finalised at a day-long

AES-PDB negotiation a couple of weeks ago, but disowned by AES later. Yesterday, AES agreed to the earlier draft and the agreement was signed.

The sources said that the Prime Minister earlier yesterday asked the PDB chairman to explain the progress made in the power sector, including the status of the Meghnaghat project. The chairman met the Prime Minister with his report in the morning and then came to the Energy Ministry and signed the agreement.

AES had earlier declined to take over the 100-hectare site, developed by a Chinese com-

pany, CWHEC, saying that it was not developed as per the specification.

As per the supplementary agreement, AES would now take over the site immediately and undertake the remedial work in some selected areas of the site. The cost would be provided by PDB but that would not exceed 4.5 million dollars, a ceiling approved by the Energy Ministry.

The AES-PDB dispute had started on December 28. The US company, after inspecting the Meghnaghat project's land site, raised several objections about

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Flash floods in Ctg forecast

By Special Correspondent

Low lying areas of greater Chittagong region are likely to experience flash flood due to heavy rains during the past two days. Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) said here yesterday.

It forecast heavy downpour in the region in the next 24 hours. The forecast, made in its 2:30 pm bulletin, has been corroborated by the Meteorological Department and the Space Research and Remote Sensing Organisation (SPARRO).

The Met office said the Bay has also become 'very rough' and advised hoisting of local cautionary signal number three. It also asked fishermen to move to shelters.

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Clarification

The Planning Ministry refers to a report titled Rural Maintenance Project: 41000 women not getting salary since March' published in The Daily Star on May 24 had explained that all money was made available on May 2, 2000 by inter-sectoral adjustment.

Our Reply: The focus of our story was that the 41000 destitute women who are working in the Rural Maintenance Programme (RMP) have not been paid since March.

This point was not addressed in the clarification. According to the latest information they have not been paid till yesterday.

PCJSS threatens to reject electoral roll

By Nurul Kabir

The Parbatya Chattagram Jono Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) threatened to reject the voters' list for the Chittagong Hill Tracts if it includes anyone other than permanent residents in the electoral roll.

But the Election Commission says the contentions of the PCJSS are unconstitutional.

PCJSS leader Jyotindra Bodhipriya Lama, popularly known as Shantu Lama, maintains that the EC process of preparing voters' list in the CHT is ultra vires the CHT

Peace Treaty signed between the government and the PCJSS on December 2, 1997.

Lama, also the chairman of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council, submitted a memorandum to the EC on Tuesday, urging the commission to postpone the process in the CHT region.

However, the commission maintains that its directives regarding preparation of the voters' list in the hill districts are very much consistent with legal and constitutional provi-

sions. There is no scope to suspend the process.

PCJSS vice-president Goutam Kumar Chakma, who accompanied Shantu Lama to the Election Commission Secretariat, told the Daily Star Wednesday that "the peace agreement only allows the permanent residents of the hill districts to be enlisted as voters in the area."

"But under the commission directives, the Bengali settlers as well as members of the secu-

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