

Over 3000 cases pending with HC Division
UNB, Dhaka

Over three thousand cases have long been pending with the High Court Division of the Supreme Court as the defendants cannot afford to hire lawyers, according to a finding.

"Defence side cannot appoint lawyers for want of money though everybody is equal to the eye of the Constitution," Advocate Elena Khan, a human rights activist, said.

Many of the defendants who cannot engage any lawyer are accused in cases that might earn them life-term imprisonment or even death sentences, lawyers said.

A two-member team of the
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14 dacoits nabbed in N'ganj : Arms recovered
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch of Police arrested 14 dacoits and seized five guns, one shutter and a huge amount of explosive-making materials from Kushumbagh of west Delpar in Narayanganj yesterday.

When a special squad led by Inspector Rezaul Karim raided the house of one Mohammad Ali, a driver, the gang opened fire at the police from inside the house. Police retaliated by firing off shots at the gang and managed to arrest 14 of the bandits.

The arrested have been identified as Sabuj Khan, Moni Hossain Dhali, Babul alias Mizanur Rahman, Nasir Uddin, Din Islam, Sahidul Islam, Barkatullah, Alamgir, Khokon, Faruq, Anwar Hossain, Sadequul Islam, Shah Alam Nobil Hossain.

A case was filed in this connection.

WEA refutes allegation
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Women Entrepreneurs Association, Bangladesh (WEA) has refuted the allegation of hiring space and selling it to others during the just-concluded Dhaka International Trade Fair (DITF) 2001 as reported in a newspaper.

"We categorically deny the allocation or hiring of any space to our association. We even did not apply for space in DITF'2001," it said in a press release yesterday.

However, it said the space may have been allocated to another organisation using the same name.

It said that WEA was formed in 1994 and was formally registered under the Societies Act. It is a non-political organisation set up with the objectives of developing entrepreneurship in women in Bangladesh.

AL move to muster public support ahead of polls
Countrywide mass contact tour from Mar 12

REAZ AHMAD

Central leaders of the ruling Awami League including ministers will embark on a mass-contact tour across the country from March 12, seemingly as a prelude to electioneering for the upcoming national elections.

The tour follows a recent decision taken by the party high-ups to muster public support in the face of a renewed opposition agitation over the last couple of weeks.

Although there is a pause in the out-government movement of the BNP-led four-party alliance after a series of hartals in January, the ruling party fears another wave of opposition agitation programmes soon after the Hajj and Eid.

The AL move to go for such countrywide tours comes at a time

when the opposition is all set for holding rallies and demonstrations throughout the country between March 12 and 18 as a lead-up to the March 21 'grand rally' in the city.

Chances are there that BNP chief and opposition leader Khaleda Zia might give an ultimatum to the government to relinquish power to pave the way for an early general election.

Ruling party leaders, split into 23 groups, would cover 69 organisational districts of AL during the tour from March 12 to 21.

Each group, comprising at least one minister, central AL leaders and some former leaders of the party's student front, will tour two to four districts and organise meetings of the party workers. They are also scheduled to address public rallies.

The Coordinator of the Awami

League Election Coordination Committee and Finance Minister, SAMS Kibria would tour his hometown Habiganj as well as the neighbouring district of Moulvibazar.

The AL leaders would meet people at grassroots level and project the 'successes' of the government and at the same time, 'destructive activities' unleashed by a desperate opposition, according to the AL sources.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also the President of AL, is likely to join the campaign against the 'Opposition on her return from Makkah where she is performing the Hajj pilgrimage.

Hasina would address a 'grand rally' of the ruling party on March 30 at Paltan Maidan in the city, said AL leaders. AL would observe the
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Karwan Bazaar turns into 'cow dung bazaar'
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The busy Karwan Bazaar commercial area turned yesterday into what its occupants term as "cow dung bazaar" as cattle excreta, fodder and mud covered all of its thoroughfares and lanes in virtual absence of cleaning efforts.

The cattle market here expanded up to the Mymensingh Road at some points, and the air became thick with stench of cow dung mixed with vehicular smoke.

Truckers continued unloading thousands of cattle until yesterday.

There was no cleaner of the Dhaka City Corporation that leased out the place to one AK Azad for a hefty Tk 21 lakh.

Like all lessees of the pre-Eid cattle markets in the city, Azad paid the DCC Tk. 10,000 exclusively for keeping the place clean.

There was no cleaning effort at
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With traders expanding the cattle market onto the streets, Karwan Bazaar, a prestigious business hub in the capital city, has become a veritable stable with overpowering filth and foul odour.

War of words to shroud hidden agenda?
Early election loses way as two leaders try to outsmart each other

NAZMUL ASHRAF

The most talked-about issue of an early election has seen Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia engage in several rounds of verbal salvo. While the war of words between the two has brightened the prospect for early polls, a kind of ambiguity in their utterances has left the public wondering when the election, earlier or else, is going to take place.

Latest developments in the ruling Awami League give strong indications that it prefers the next general election earlier than is due in 90 days from July 14. The combined opposition, too, has made it amply clear that they don't want this government to serve out its term.

However, the picture of an early election remains hazy as one tries to outmanoeuvre the other in a rather common motive of keeping their hidden agendas hidden.

The current debate on early election began when the Prime Minister in a surprise statement on February 28 said she was ready to give polls as and when desired by the opposition leader provided that the latter raised her demand on the floor of the parliament.

Many thought that the PM's announcement had created an opportunity for the opposition leader to have her long-drawn demand implemented. Also, they initially interpreted the condition attached to the surprise offer as a ruling party ploy to get the boycotting opposition back to the House.

Return of the BNP-led lawmakers to the parliament could have benefited the government at least in two ways. It might have brought about an end to violent street agitation and the passage of the long-pending bill seeking

retention of parliamentary seats reserved for women.

However, Khaleda turned down Hasina's conditional offer and challenged the latter's authority to determine the time of election, arguing that it was the discretion of the Election Commission.

Khaleda urged Hasina to resign and pave the way for the EC to announce the poll schedule. While she was right about EC's authority, she apparently missed out on the fact that it can never announce an early election unless the party in power volunteers resignation, a decision that entirely depends on the head of the government.

While the opposition leader stuck to her position, the Prime Minister reiterated her offer with no strings attached. On February 28, Hasina asked the opposition leader to specify her choice for the election time anywhere, if not in the parliament, and by any means.

Her latest offer created a fresh opportunity for the opposition leader to make her demand specific, even through a press statement.

However, once again the opposition leader refused to be specific, maintained her observation that only EC has the authority to announce the election schedule and asked the PM to resign before she left for Hajj.

While both leaders were right on the points they raised on the issue, their arguments appeared directed more towards winning the war of words rather than settling a political dispute over polls.

Had they two leaders been sincere about reaching a consensus on early election, they should have gone for a dialogue instead of exchanging tricky words, political observers believe. Any one of them
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NEWS ANALYSIS

Eid coincides with historic March 7
BSS, Dhaka

The historic seventh March falls on Wednesday, the day the nation this time will celebrate the holy Eid-ul-Azha.

This day 30 years ago in 1971, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman called upon the people to be prepared to wage war to liberate the country.

March 7 speech of Bangabandhu at the then Ramna Race Course (Now Suhrawardy Uddyan) was a turning point in the long struggle for a separate statehood.

Despite Eid, several political and cultural organisations have chalked out separate programmes in observance of the day.

Both President Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in separate messages, called upon the people to uphold the spirit of the day.

President Shahabuddin asked people to work for greater cause of the country and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina urged people to build united resistance against anti-liberation forces.

Plan to open mission in Vienna remains shelved for 2 yrs
M ANWARUL HAQ

Dhaka is yet to make any progress regarding the opening of a mission in Vienna, an international diplomatic hub.

The plan to open a mission in the Austrian capital came for consideration at least two years ago after Vienna in a unique gesture expressed its desire to house the new Bangladesh mission free of cost, sources said.

The Bangladesh government took up a scheme nearly two years ago to set up three resident missions in the capitals of Jordan, the Maldives and Austria. While full-fledged missions were opened in Amman and Male, the plan to open embassy in Austria is learnt to have been put in the cold. The new mission in Vienna was expected to be represented by an ambassador.

Vienna's importance as a diplomatic hub is internationally recognised. After New York and Geneva, Vienna hosts the headquarters of several important UN and other international agencies. The central office of the UN Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and UN Social Issues Secretariat are also headquartered in Vienna.

The headquarters of the Inter-governmental Agency on Narcotics and Drugs is also located in Vienna.

The number of Bangladesh's ambassadorial-level missions in Europe currently stands at eleven.

Fully-fledged Bangladesh embassies in Europe are located in London, Paris, Rome, Geneva, The Hague, Moscow, Madrid, Bonn, Stockholm and Warsaw.

Diplomatic analysts feel that Dhaka needs to seriously examine opening of new missions in some other European capitals including those of Norway and Hungary. Bangladesh is the largest recipient of Norwegian assistance in Asia while Hungary is considered one of the emerging economies in Eastern
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Deer rescued
OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Police rescued a deer from the 22 no-Digubabu Bazaar area in the town of Narayanganj Sunday evening and sent it to the Mirpur Zoo.

One Liaqat Hossain was arrested in this connection.

According to sources, Liaqat bought the deer at Tk 4400 from one Dhanu Mia, who collected it from the Majjbandari Urs.

Liaqat said he bought the deer for rearing, not for slaughtering.



Light drizzle in the city and elsewhere in the country yesterday came as a prelude to the rainy days ahead. Meteorologists, however, say that the sky over the capital would remain clear on the Eid day.

Sky will start getting clear this morning
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Despite a forecast of rain/thunder-shower in the country on the Eid day, meteorologists are expecting a clear sky over the city and its surrounding areas on that day.

After drizzles yesterday, the sky over the city will start getting clear this morning, they said.

Slight rain was reported from some other places in the country yesterday. On an average, there was one mm rainfall in Mymensingh, Khulna, Sathkira, Jessore, Ishwardi and Chandpur, they said.

Drizzles were also reported from Sylhet, Comilla, Faridpur, Srimanagal, Chuadanaga, Rajshahi and Bogra.

The forecast for the 24 hours beginning at 6 p.m. yesterday said there may be rain/thundershowers with temporary gusty/squally wind over few places in Dhaka, Rajshahi,
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T&T snaps outgoing call facilities of ISPs
BSS, Dhaka

The Telephone and Telegraph Board has snapped the outgoing call facilities of the Internet Service Providers (ISP) to stop "illegal telephone call trading" that deprives the government of a huge amount of revenue.

T&T sources said they had snapped the facilities of 67 ISPs in the past several days for misusing the technology.

"The snapping, however, will not disrupt the normal internet services since the ISPs do not need to make outgoing call for their services," one T&T official said.

The board would no more give telephone links with ISD facilities to any ISP to check the trend of "call business," he added.

A recent report published in some newspapers on alleged "disconnection" of telephone services of an ISP, DRIK, drew wide attention and speculations.

T&T officials said they disconnected only the international call facilities of DRIK along with the 66 other ISPs, not the telephone lines.