

## Canadian HC voices concern

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functioning parliament? I do not believe this is impossible".

He urged the news media to play its due role towards that end.

The High Commissioner said, upon an invitation from the Election Commission, Canada will send a small group of polls observers apart from the Commonwealth delegation.

But it will be upto Bangladeshis, not foreigners, to ensure success of the election process and future of democracy.

The High Commissioner said Canada-Bangladesh relations are based on "shared interests and values, particularly regarding dealing with big neighbours".

"Bangladesh is small in territory and Canada is small in population...We both have giant neighbours with whom we must deal. This leads us to a major conclusion as regards the strategy we must adopt. International rules are needed to protect us from big neighbours as well as to level the playing field so that we can compete fairly with other countries."

Bangladesh is the largest recipient of Canadian aid, he informed. The current annual flow is around 50 million dollars, which is 90 million if

Canada's contributions through multilateral organisations are added. The total development assistance to Bangladesh since independence is about two billion dollars.

Responding to a question, he said, Bangladeshis can take advantage of the present immigration situation in Canada. But very few have applied for immigration, he added.

Bangladeshis in Canada are the smallest group of immigrants from South Asia. Fifty per cent of the immigrants are from Asia, whereas one out of every 30 is from South Asia, he said.

The Canadian government wants to raise the number of immigrants to one per cent of its population. Some 2,50,000 foreigners entered Canada last year and the number will be increased by around 30,000 next year.

The Canadian government will assist Bangladesh fight air pollution, particularly in urban areas, he said. Four pollution-free three-wheelers, converted into gas-users with Canadian technology, have been pressed into service. More such vehicles will be on streets, he said.



Chief Comptroller and Auditor General Syed Yusuf Hossain handing over the Audit Report to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Ganabhaban yesterday.

## It's all quiet at Rangamati

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(RC) for Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

He told this correspondent, "I am happy that the hostage drama ended without bloodshed but it put a big dent on the prospects of long-term peace, development and law and order in this region," said the JSS leader, a close aide to its chief and RC Chairman Jyotirindriya Bodhipriya Larma.

Preferring anonymity, he said that the kidnappers who are thought to be hardcore supporters of United Peoples' Democratic Front (UPDF) have not only created a threat to law and order but also damaged the prospects of development, especially aid.

He doubted if the Danish firm would resume work on the Danish aided Rangamati-Mahalchhari-Khagrachhari road project for which

Danes Torben Mikkelsen, Nils Hulgaard and Briton Tim Selby were working before they were abducted on February 16.

"Even if fund for the project around TK 60 crore is not withdrawn, it is not known if the foreign consultants would be all interested to work any more," the JSS leader said.

Local MP Dipankar Talukder also expressed similar apprehension at a dinner on Saturday night for newsmen who covered the hostage drama for a month. He felt that the prospects of development were marred by the kidnapping which also affected the image of the region and the country.

The lawmaker, who had played a key role in negotiations for release of the hostages before they were rescued by army troops in a lightning operation in the early hours of Saturday, expressed concern over

law and order and the damages caused by the kidnappers to the local economy, especially tourism.

He said that the villagers affected due to the police raid in search of the kidnappers on February 22 at Betchhari would be provided with test relief.

But law and order is his priority, he said. The miscreants who operated in the area and were used by the kidnappers would not be spared, he added.

Troops who rescued the hostages but failed to nab the kidappers are still camping a limited area around Daijyapara-Nakshachai where the three were kept.

"We will continue the raid to clear the area of miscreants who fled after an exchange of fire, leaving some of their vintage guns," an army source said.

## BUET student commits suicide

BUET CORRESPONDENT

A forth-level student of the Department of Computer Science and Engineering of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) committed suicide by hanging himself from the ceiling of this dormitory yesterday morning.

Tonmoy Sarker, 23, was found hanging at his room number 454 of Ahsanullah Hall of the university campus. The reason could not be known immediately.

Tonmoy was asleep while his other mates went out to join classes. At about 11 am one of his neighbours found him hanging from the ceiling through the open window while the door was closed.

Vice-Chancellor of BUET Dr Nuruddin Ahmed and director of Students Welfare went to the spot after hearing the news of suicide.

Labgah police went to the spot and the body has been sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Tonmoy's father who is a teacher of Ananda Mohan College of Mymensingh was duly informed but he was yet to come till writing of this report at about 8 pm last night.

The VC expressed his profound shock at the death of Tonmoy and prayed for the salvation of the departed soul. He also expressed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

## Autorickshaw

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Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where doctors declared him dead.

He received stab injuries in his abdomen, hands, legs and back. The gang took away the autorickshaw.

When contacted, Demra police said they were not aware of the incident.

## Gunmen storm

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Feroz Rashid were among others who attended the meeting. The windshields of their cars were shattered.

When contacted late last night, family members of GM Kader said that unidentified callers threatened him over telephone all day long and asked him not to attend the parliament session; otherwise he would be killed.

The meeting which began at 7.45 pm was set to device a means of getting the 'plough' symbol in the coming general elections. The Election Commission had earlier suspended distribution of the symbol, traditionally used by the JP, following the splitting of the party into two one led by Ershad and the other by Anwar Hossain Monju, the communications minister in the Awami League government.

"The government does not want us to get back the plough symbol in the elections and so it arranged the attack on our meeting," said JP presidium member Khondker Mahub Hossain.

"We will not join the parliament but will write to the Speaker to convene a meeting of the JP MPs to decide which faction holds majority."

## PM: Power

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by plundering public money.

But, she said, the ruling party is working day and night for the people of the country and brought some remarkable changes in the economy, restoring financial discipline and ensuring a smooth growth of the economy.

## Ershad's detention

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Additional Attorney General Mahub-e-Alam moved for Ershad and the government respectively.

Ershad was jailed for five years and fined Tk 5.5 crore, in default to serve another six months' prison term in the Janata Tower case.

After Ershad served half of the prison term, Tk 2.75 crore was deposited with the Bangladesh Bank on February 28, and an order was obtained from the trial court for his release.

But on the next day, the District Magistrate issued one month's detention order on Ershad under the Special Powers Act.

Ershad was shown arrested in two other cases. His lawyers yesterday sought his bail before the Metropolitan Session Judge's court in these cases. The court rejected the prayers and fixed April 13 for hearing on these cases.

## Mystery shrouds arrest at ZIA

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airport officials by the man was the only reason behind his arrest. Later, police took the issue as an advantage of taking bribe, they added.

Sources also said police received a huge amount of money from Mamun's family for not bringing any charge against him. "Police first demanded Tk one lakh from him on the condition of freeing him from the hijacking charge," the sources further said.

"The man could be released even on Saturday as no clue was found against him. The failure to reach a settlement over kickbacks delayed this process," said a cantonment thana source.

Police seized a toy pistol, a laptop and an ISD cellular phone from Mamun.

As part of the intensive investiga-

tion into the matter, police interrogated him, visited his Shenpara residence under Kafrul thana and scrutinised his laptop.

Cantonment police brought Mamun before the CMM's court yesterday afternoon, following their failure to find out any clue and reach a fruitful agreement with the arrested. No remand prayer was submitted against him.

The lawyer of the accused submitted a bail prayer before the court, stating that Mamun was implicated as part of a "conspiracy" to harass him following an altercation with the aviation authorities. The prosecution side opposed the petition.

After hearing both sides, the court granted him bail.

## BNP dialogue with CEC

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yesterday but did not attend the meeting, official sources said.

Election Commissioner Mushtaq Ahmed Chowdhury is now on a pilgrimage to Saudi Arab and the other, Abidur Rahman, is sick, they said.

Late last month, the EC had a meeting with the ruling Awami League which appreciated its proposal for electoral law reforms, including registration of political parties. The EC would sit also with the other parties having representation in parliament.

At yesterday's meeting, BNP leaders did not focus on the probable time-table for the election. "It may be deemed premature to discuss the election time-table right now," the CEC said adding, the issue would be settled after the caretaker government takes over.

M K Anwar said they would discuss the matter in their forum.

Meeting sources said that the BNP delegation comprising five former bureaucrats and a retired army officer raised some objections on the fresh voters' list, saying there is a large number of fake names in the list and impartial election cannot be held with this.

The delegation also raised the issues of illegal arms, black money and muscle power that would hamper the polls environment and urged the EC to take necessary steps in this regard.

The BNP leaders demanded transparency in voters' list printing and said the list should be available to all concerned.

About registration of political parties with the EC, Anwar said BNP in principle has no objection to this. But there is not enough time for this before the election. "These issues can be dealt with after the election,"

The meeting also discussed three other issues including increase of election expenses of candidates and strengthening of election tribunals.

Anwar said the electoral reforms, particularly those relating to the Representation of People's Order (RPO), should be completed before

the election. The CEC said the Commission would consider the proposals of BNP and other parties in the light of constitution provisions and other related laws.

Although the EC found no irregularities in voters' enrollment, the instruction would be issued for reinvestigation, the CEC said.

Other members of the BNP delegation are Abdul Mannan, Enam Ahmed Chowdhury, Hasan Ahmed, Musfiqur Rahman, Haris Chowdhury and Maj (Retd) Hafizuddin Ahmed.

## Students ransack exam centre in Faridpur, stop Master's final

BSS, Faridpur

The examination of 800 students appearing in Masters final examination under National University at Faridpur Rajendra College centre could not be held yesterday due to rowdism of a section of student leaders for not allowing them to adopt unfair means.

According to the acting principal of the college, the examinations on Political Science and Sociology in the first half started peacefully but after some time a student leader who was adopting unfair means was caught by an invigilator. In protest, the student leader along with his accomplices damaged hundreds of answer scripts of the examinees and ransacked the entire college.

The teachers fled in despair but again assembled to resume the examination, but in vain. In the second half, another Masters examination on Management also could not be held due to hostile attitude of student leaders.

The college authorities lodged an FIR with Kotwali thana and also sought police protection for their security.

## Opposition

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"We can't demand the recovery of illegal arms to the ruling party as the arms have been flooded by them," he said.

Presided over by local BNP leader Ali Asgar Matbar, the rally was also addressed, by City BNP president Sadek Hossain Khoka, Amanullah Aman, Nazimuddin Alam and Abdus Salam, Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Majahid and ATM Ajharul Islam, Islami Oikya Jote Acting Secretary General Ahmed Abdul Kader and Jatiya Party's Saifur Rahman and Teybur Rahman.

The BNP secretary general reiterated their demand for deployment of police, BDR and Army, if necessary, during the interim caretaker government for recovery of illegal arms.

## Ershad's bail

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Earlier, the CMM's Court issued "custody warrant" against Ershad in the cases.

The Bureau of Anti Corruption filed the case with Tejgaon thana against Ershad on August 3, 1994.

The CMM's Court Dhaka rejected the bail petitions after hearing on the issue on March 14.

The cases were revised on March 12 and he was shown arrested in the cases.

## PM apprised

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was necessary for good governance. "We will bring the entire system under computer very soon," he said. The reports will be submitted to President Shahabuddin Ahmed shortly, official sources said.

## PM may ask President

FROM PAGE 1  
spoke about early polls.

They strongly believe that the prime minister is seeking fresh mandate from the people even before completion of her government's tenure on July 13, 2001 as a gesture of goodwill.

Before leaving the office, party sources said, the AL wants to make sure that the BNP-led opposition does not capitalise on its good intentions for early polls by interpreting it as a 'forced resignation'.

A minister who is also an AL presidium member has already said that the government would transfer power only after settling all election-related issues. Otherwise, he feared, the opposition might create problems

by raising new demands during the tenure of the caretaker government.

Earlier, Hasina had announced her party's readiness to go for election by June 12 following Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia's demand for polls in May.

A senior AL leader told The Daily Star that the prime minister would elaborate her plans for an early general election and transfer of power to the next caretaker government during the party's parliamentary meeting on March 29.

Besides, she would address a public rally in the city on March 30 and also speak at a function the next day in the city's Suhrawardy Udayan where she will inaugurate an independence monument.

## Beximco bid

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In a span of only three years since June 30, 1997, the group has managed to almost double its outstanding loans. On June 30, 1997, Beximco's total outstanding debt was TK 886.62 crore with TK 21.99 crore in defaulted loans.

Nevertheless, its default loan status remained ever changing and a CIB report released on September 30, 2000 revealed that it had TK 60.99 crore in defaulted debt. These include TK 56.22 crore by Shinepukur Holdings, Tk 1.56 crore by Beximco Textiles and TK 3.21 crore by Gamatech Ltd. While the first two loans are sub-standard, the last one is classified as bad.

In addition, the group is learnt to have huge unpaid debenture loans. With Rupali Bank alone, Shinepukur Holdings had two overdue instalments of Tk 3.60 crore as on January 16, 2001. Its Beximco Knitting loan account was not renewed for a long time.

However, a February 25, 2001 CIB report shows despite having bad loans, Gamatech Limited is vying for fresh loans.

According to sources, the banks, which have primarily agreed to fund the company, will also seek

explanation from Beximco Pharma on the repayment issue.

"Without clarification of the point, we will not fund the company," said the managing director of one of the banks in the proposed syndicate.

Moreover, many of the banks now feel that they are being pushed into further exposure to a group that already has in excess of Tk 1800 crore in loans for different projects, many of which are no more viable.

For instance, Rupali Bank feels that it already has a Tk 255 crore exposure to the group, which may already be risky. On the other hand, if it gives a further Tk 25 crore in loans to the pharmaceutical company, it will be left with little money to fund other projects.

However, one net benefit that the banks had got out of the Beximco proposal is that they could pursue the company into either repaying or rescheduling many of its loan accounts.

Rupali alone realised Tk 6.5 crore from the group including overdue instalments and Tk 14 lakh in overdue dividends that the group had owed to the bank as a result of equity participation.

## Bangabandhu Murder Case

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not illegal.

Furthermore, he said, nothing illegal was done by producing him on Nov 27 before the court. If it is called delayed, then it is curable under Section 537 of CrPC.

"An irregularity can be cured, but an illegality can't", Huq told the court.

Pointing to another portion of the judgement of Justice Ruhul Amin that the confessional statement should be analysed with the deposition of witnesses to see whether it was true and voluntary, Huq said there was no such law and argued that it was true and voluntary.

The chief prosecution counsel said Justice Ruhul Amin had counted the remand days from the day of arrest of Mohiuddin that is from Nov 18, 1996. The counsel said the accused had been legally held in police custody for 24 hours and was produced the following day and after the end of remand on Nov 26, he was produced on Nov 27.

"Even then, for the sake of argument if we say that the convict was kept in police custody longer than the court's order, still in no way

was the voluntary-ness of the statement hampered," he argued.

There is no definition of confession. However, the higher court has defined a confessional statement as one that would substantiate the charge levelled against the accused.

Mohiuddin himself confessed that he was present at the night parade and heard the speech of the

## Nari Samaj

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coming election if the demand for direct election is not accepted.

"Direct election is essential for empowerment of women, their effective participation in state affairs and development activities," said Raushan Ara Rusho who chaired the rally.

Later, a procession was brought out demanding an immediate to terrorist activities, killings, armed hooliganism and repression on women.

The procession started from Shahbagh crossing, paraded different streets and ended in front of the Jatiya Press Club.

main conspirators and installed cannons near the Kalabagan Lake and lobbed four shells in a pre-planned way at the instruction of the main conspirators. "So, the accused could not be acquitted from the charge of conspiracy," the counsel said.

The prosecutor said, "Doing an illegal act by illegal means in pursuance of an agreement is conspiracy." Section 120/B, that is the charge of conspiracy is more applicable to Mohiuddin.

The counsel pleaded before the third bench that the judge had misled himself. "The truth of confession is not dependent on other evidence," he said refuting Justice Amin's point that confession of Mohiuddin must be analysed with the evidence of other witnesses.

Serajul Huq was assisted by Adv Anisul Huq, DAG Shamsuddin Ahmed Chowdhury Manik, AAG S Haider, Towfika Karim and Mosharraf Hossain Kajol.

The court resumes today at 10:30 am.

## Nearly non-existent parties hamper polls

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mentary constituencies, while JP nominated 293 candidates. None but three of the remaining 115 parties who were allocated electoral symbols could nominate candidates for even one-third of the constituencies.

Thirty-eight of those parties failed to name any candidate, while 33 parties named only one candidate each, and 10 were able to nominate two candidates each in the previous polls. All these candidates lost their security deposits.

Twenty-three parties fielded about 113 candidates, all of whom lost their deposits. The number of candidates each party nominated varied from three to 19.

Of the 18 others, 13 small par-

ties nominated 406 candidates and the number of candidates each party fielded varies from 21 to 54.

Two hundred and eighty four candidates contested independently.

Jatiya Party nominated 293 candidates, Jaker Party 241, Islami Oikya Jote 166, Gano Forum 104 and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) 67.

Some 1,730 out of 2,574 candidates who participated in the June 1996 general election lost deposits. The percentage of the candidates losing deposits stood at 69.32.

Taking these facts into account, the EC moved a proposal for electoral law reforms that include registration of political parties. The EC has also initiated a process of

dialogue to reach a consensus among the major political parties on the issues.

The EC proposed to check the mushrooming of these parties, as the number of parties has been climbing, except two controversial parliamentary elections in 1988 and February 15, 1996, since the first general election in 1973.

Fourteen parties participated in the 1973 parliamentary polls. The number rose to 29 in the 1979 election and 28 in the 1986, eight in 1988, 75 in 1991, 41 in February 1996, and 81 in June 1996 elections.

In 1991 parliamentary polls, 90 political parties were allocated different election symbols and 75 of those nominated candidates. The

number rose to 119 in the seventh parliamentary election in 1996.

The EC officials fear that the number would increase further in the upcoming elections, as a number of parties have been launched in the recent years in absence of a regulatory policy.

According to the election rules, a candidate will lose his security deposit, if he fails to obtain one-eighth of total votes.

Reviewing the percentage of votes obtained by different parties in 1996 elections, the EC in its reform proposal said, "Many of those political parties fared so poorly in the election that statistics reflecting the percentage bagged by each could only be expressed in fractions."

## Money laundering law

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central bank to update the country's laws to effectively cap such activities. Sources said BB officials consulted laws in different countries including those in the USA to prepare the draft.

The proposed law is so harsh that the punishment prescribed will be applicable even if the judiciary was yet to convict a company or person for the "intended crimes through money laundering".

Under the law, separate legal and criminal proceedings can be drawn for money laundering and the intended crime through such activities.

The investigators of the anti-money laundering cell will have the right to enter any residence, building and enclosure or check any vehicle to collect evidence of money laun-

dering against any company or person.

Leakage of any information about investigation on money laundering case will also be treated as a crime punishable with 12 months' imprisonment and a fine of up to Tk 5,000.

Imposing suspension or stay order from any other court will not be considered legal on the investigation order issued by the special tribunal.

On request from public prosecutor about the asset owned by the company accused of money laundering, special tribunal can issue freezing order on tangible or intangible asset held by the third party on behalf of the accused. Sale or transfer of any tangible or intangible asset of the accused will be prohibited.