

Polls by end of Sept or early Oct, PM tells US envoy

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday reiterated that the general election would be held under a neutral caretaker government by the end of next September or early October.

"The election will be held under the constitutional provisions and on completion of the full term of the present parliament," she told US Ambassador in Dhaka Mary Ann Peters during a meeting at her office, replying to a query about the time of upcoming general election in Bangladesh.

Hasina said the election would be held in a totally free and fair atmosphere, and foreign observers would be here to monitor the election.

In this regard, she said her party had struggled to create an environment for free and fair election, and introduced the caretaker government system in the country.

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**Marubeni offer sent back to energy ministry**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Cabinet Purchase Committee yesterday sent back to the energy ministry Marubeni's proposal to set up the second phase 450 MW Meghnaghat Power Plant for further negotiation and clarification.

The energy ministry yesterday delayed before the purchase committee the proposal of Japanese company Marubeni, which is in gross violation of the initial understanding with the government. According to the understanding, the plant will be built as per the terms and conditions and pricing of the first phase AES power plant, sources said.

The committee sought several clarifications from the energy ministry about the terms and conditions of the proposal saying that these did not comply with the original understanding.

**Verdict in Yasmeen murder case likely on Sunday**

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Hearing on the Yasmin Murder Case ended at the High Court yesterday after the prosecution closed its arguments.

The verdict of the case by the Death Reference Bench comprising Justice Abdul Matin and Justice Marziul Huq is expected on Sunday, court sources said.

Winding up his arguments, state attorney Barrister Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik pleaded for confirmation of the death sentence handed down by a trial court to three policemen accused of rape and murder of the 17-year-old maid-servant Yasmin after promising her a lift to Dinajpur on August 1995.

Barrister Choudhury said the accused should not be spared the capital punishment so that police get the message that they can not get

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Secular vote for change: The charisma that was not

Praful Bidwai writes from New Delhi

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DSE for change in Z share settlement system, SEC disagrees

US House preparing to challenge Bush on NTR with China

DSE, CSE price quotations

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
May 23		6.38 pm
May 24	5-12 am	

**Prayer Timings**

May 24		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fazr	4-20	4-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-42	6-47
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

## Over 200 life-saving drugs don't have registration

NAIMUL HAQ

Over two hundred potentially life-saving foreign drugs do not have registration in Bangladesh despite being frequently prescribed by doctors and in great demand.

These essential medicines, required mostly for hormone therapy, cancer, heart, kidney, liver and brain treatments, have no legal existence in the country, although there are thousands of patients whose chances of survival or cure may depend on them.

However, some of these drugs are being sold in the 'underground market' at an exorbitant rate. According to sources in the Bangladesh Chemist and Druggist Samity (Association), annual turnover from unregistered drug sales is around Tk 150 crore a year.

During a recent Daily Star investigation, this correspondent found out that licensed and unlicensed drugs stores at the country's biggest medicine market adjacent to the Mitford Hospital in old town were openly selling unregistered imported medicines.

When asked to show some samples, a number of dealers declined but others displayed the items including the labels of the drugs on condition that the identity of stores would not be revealed.

Some of the most necessary drugs are Zoladex injection used for chemotherapy. Each ampoule costs Tk 7500. Decapeptyl, also used for chemotherapy and manufactured by Organon in Holland, is Tk 3600 per ampoule.

Sufect injection required for hormone balance is manufactured by Hoechst of the UK, each of ampoule of which costs about Tk 800.

Gesmoprosin, prescribed for bladder cancer, is manufactured in Sweden, is available for Tk 750. Gestin (progesterone) for hormone therapy is Tk 150 per 100mg. Essential, a drug used for re-generation of liver tissues after damage, is Tk 30 a capsule. Nissel, used to controlling chronic Hepatitis B, is manufactured in Korea and each tablet costs Tk 35. Neuronit 300mg,

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30 per cent DA  
Teachers, govt  
employees to  
hold rally at  
Paltan today

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

A grand rally of Bangladesh Primary Teachers Association and Coordination Committee of the Government Employees will be held at Paltan Maidan in the city at 10 am today to press home their 26-point demand including 30 per cent dearness allowance.

Conference organisers said they are also demanding a separate pay commission for primary teachers and permanent pay commission for government employees. Other demands includes class II status of

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## EC suspends move to set up new polling centres

NAZRUL ISLAM

Amidst growing political pressure, the Election Commission has suspended a move to set up new polling centres for the upcoming general election.

"The commission has decided to finalise the list during the tenure of caretaker government to avoid controversy over arranging new polling stations," Chief Election Commissioner M. A. Syed told The Daily Star yesterday.

The EC move to list the new voting centres has already drawn flak from prospective candidates who would like such centres to be set up at their convenience, commission sources said.

Twenty written complaints have so far been lodged with the EC, mostly by opposition political parties. In the complaints, the opposition parties accused the ruling Awami League of influencing the authorities to list voting centres of their choice with the goal of rigging the election.

Such allegations were also discussed at a meeting of the field officers of the Election Commission last month.

The Commission started listing new polling centres on the basis of

reports from its field offices to accommodate nearly 1.5 crore additional voters expected to exercise their franchise in the upcoming general election. The issue would come up for discussion in the EC meeting tomorrow.

Syed told Star that the EC would also discuss the crucial issue of setting up new polling stations with all the political parties and persons concerned before finalising the new list.

In a related development, the EC at a meeting yesterday assigned its officials to probe the allegations of 'abnormal rise' in the fresh voter list and take necessary action accordingly.

"Fake voters, if found in the new voter list, would be dropped and the persons responsible for inclusion of fake voters will be brought to book," the EC said immediately after the meeting.

The meeting also asked the officials concerned to make the list public. Accordingly, the voter list would be made available for the public at the Union Parishad offices across the country.

Three election commissioners, deputy election commissioners, assistant election commissioners, EC officials and district election officers from

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paid. As it pays more to act as go-between in arms deals, they deliberately hold up information until the terrorists and the traders are through with their business."

An official of the detective branch of Chittagong police, meanwhile, revealed that the group has been on a 'shopping' spree of late. "To my knowledge, the Shibir terrorists have recently purchased at least 17 firearms including AK-47."

When asked why police have not made any move to arrest them, he said, "We are not getting the information at the right time."

"The sources we use to gather underworld information are poorly

carry out criminal activities like extortion from their hideouts.

"They send letters to the business men in the city, demanding money," one businessman said. "We have little choice but to comply with their wish."

Overall, however, Shibir has been a little subdued within the city since arrest of Nasir, a top-notch terrorist who is implicated in as many as 22 criminal cases, in 1998. It has nevertheless retained its control over

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## Capital shortfall in banks: BB prescribes subsidy

SHAHRIAR KARIM

In the face of a huge capital and provision shortfall in the country's banks, the Bangladesh Bank (BB) has proposed government subsidy as a bailout measure.

The BB in a report sent to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance Ministry also suggested that the ministry should take effective measures in this regard. The Standing Committee will meet today to discuss the report.

The central bank suggested government subsidy as a bailout measure for state-owned banks have been stuck up with state owned enterprises for years.

According to BB sources, the banks now face 45 per cent provision shortfall, amounting to Tk 4435.25 crore against a requirement of Tk 9912.15 crore as on December, 2000. The four NCBs have a provision shortfall of Tk 3556.62 crore, which is more than 80 per cent of the total provision shortfall.

On the other hand, capital shortfall of local banks stands at Tk 1438.13 crore or 23.9 per cent of the required amount of Tk 6148.16 crore as of December 2000.

Capital shortfall of foreign banks operating in the

country stands at Tk 6.05 crore or 0.80 per cent of the required amount of Tk 760.35 crore.

The banks have to maintain eight per cent capital adequacy against their risk-weighted assets.

The central bank in its report expressed concern over the huge provision shortfall and said if the banks fail to increase their profit, this may become a permanent problem. It also observed that the situation could be improved by quickly reducing classified loans.

"The banks have to increase their profit by ensuring proper and safe investments and transferring a portion of their profit every year to the provision head," the BB said in its report.

Although the BB suggested more profit for the banking sector, the reality is completely different, specially with state owned banks and financial institutions.

According to a World Bank report, the NCBs have incurred huge losses during the 1990s. The combined loss of the public sector financial institutions was about Tk 43 billion in FY 1999 and there has been a clear deteriorating trend, the World Bank said.

The two countries have decided to set up two joint working groups in December last year for demarcation of 6.5-km of Indo-Bangladesh border

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## Tale of a DCC demolition drive

STAR REPORT

A DCC team backed by four platoons of police, on a planned drive to remove illegal structures from Karwan Bazar yesterday, left the area without demolishing a big illegal structure housing a ruling party office.

They left untouched the tin shed housing No. 12 Kitchen Market Awami League Office of Ward No. 39 following conversation with a local Awami League (AL) leader over mobile phone.

The DCC Estate Department team earlier demolished two other illegal structures housing an AL office and a BNP office, and some other illegal makeshift structures.

But when the team went to demolish the illegal tin shed housing the Kitchen Market AL office along the main road running

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## HC rule to delay BTTB bills further

MUSTAK HOSSAIN

The High Court yesterday issued a rule nisi on the post and telecommunications secretary, and chairman and four other officials of the Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) for their refusal to supply tender schedule to Lithi Enterprises Limited.

The rule casts doubt over the tender for preparation of monthly telephone and telex bills, which is scheduled to get underway today.

The High Court division bench comprising Justice Syed JR Mudassir Hussain and Justice Syed Mahmud Hussain asked respondents to explain why the director

of finance and accounts of the BTTB had refused to supply tender schedule to Lithi. The BTTB floated fresh tender for preparation of its monthly telephone and telex bills through a notice published in The Daily Independent on May 9. Lithi used to prepare subscriber bills for the BTTB until its contract expired on January 31 this year.

However, the court refused to issue any rule on the tender procedures, as sought by the petitioner. The rule is made returnable within two weeks from the date of issue.

The petitioner, in its prayer, said the BTTB did not

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## Delhi will decide shortly on date for border talks

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

India yesterday hinted that it would shortly take a decision on Bangladesh offer to hold talks on border-related issues this month.

"This is under our consideration, we will get back to them shortly," a Foreign Office spokesperson said.

India had suggested May 22-25 for talks on boundary demarcation and other contentious issues and invited a Bangladesh official delegation to New Delhi.

Bangladesh made a counter proposal inviting an Indian delegation to Dhaka and suggested May 26-30 for talks in Dhaka.

India's specific proposal was for discussion on all pending matters including 1974 Indira-Mujib Accord on demarcation of land boundary and related matters to find an early solution.

The two countries have decided to set