

BFF's elected committee reinstated

SPORTS REPORTER

The government as expected, reinstated the executive committee of Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday to pave way for the FIFA suspension on Bangladesh to be lifted.

FIFA, world football's governing body, had banned Bangladesh from all international football activities with effect from January 9 following the government's decision to dissolve the BFF's elected executive committee led by its general secretary Harun-ur Rashid and appoint an ad-hoc body.

FIFA and Asian Football Confederation (AFC) never recognised the ad-hoc committee as it was appointed in a violation of FIFA rules.

FIFA had also threatened to prolong the suspension unless Bangladesh reinstated the democratically elected BFF body.

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Air Bangladesh has no right to operate hajj flights

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Air Bangladesh (AB), a private tour operator which promised to operate hajj flights, has no authority to carry passengers, but only to ferry cargo.

It obtained Air Transport Operators Licence (ATOL) from the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) to carry cargo only, highly placed sources said.

Hundreds of pilgrims have now been stuck in hajj camps since January 28 as the AB could not operate its flights.

Shafiqul Islam, secretary of the civil aviation ministry, told The Daily Star yesterday that the matter was under investigation and action would be taken against the company for violation of CAAB rules.

He said the AB did not obtain permission from the Saudi authorities for landing at Jeddah to operate hajj flights, and so, CAAB did not allow it to operate flights on Saturday.

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Feni Polytech reopens after about 5 yrs

UNB, Feni

Feni Polytechnic Institute reopened yesterday after remaining shut for long four and a half years.

The institute was ordered closed by the Awami League government following killing of BCL cadre Nazrul Islam on the campus on August 23, 1997.

Despite many problems the institute began the new academic year with 176 students in four departments. The authorities said power and water connections were snapped while mechanical tools went out of order during the last four years.

Nazrul of village Ilijatpur was abducted by terrorists from Chhagalnaiya and later beaten to

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Straight from the heart

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Govt moves to protect 80,000 workers in Malaysia

Japan pledges to promote financial stability in Asia

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Feb 5		5-47 pm
Feb 6	6-37 am	

Prayer Timings		
Feb 5		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-40	6-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-15	4-30
Maghrib	5-50	5-55
Esha	7-15	7-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Govt gets tough on acid attackers

Cabinet for special tribunals, no bail to offenders

REZAUL KARIM

The cabinet yesterday approved two new laws providing stringent measures against acts of acid throwing.

With Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in the chair, it approved drafts of the laws 'Acid Crime Prevention Law '2002 and Acid Control Law '2002 - to fight the crime.

The draft laws will be placed in the current session of the parliament for its final approval.

The passage of the laws would strengthen the existing provisions of the Women and Child Repression Act on acid throwing. Introduction of new laws was felt as males are also becoming acid victims.

According to available statistics, 30 people, specially young girls, become victims of acid throwing every month.

According to news reports, acid was thrown on 186 women in 2000 and the situation even worsened last year.

In 2001, 39 persons received acid burns in January, 20 in February, 32 in March, 38 in April, 45 in May, 35 in June, 55 in July, 52 in August, 27 in October and 32 in November. The statistics for September and December are not available.

A total of 37 women and young girls fell prey to acid attacks in January this year.

Cabinet sources said the new law proposes strict

legal actions against acts of acid throwing and also stringent control on selling of acids.

After passage of the new laws, an Acid Control Board will be formed and trials in acid throwing cases will be held in special tribunals. The proposed law does not keep any provision for bail during trials and prescribes capital punishment for the accused with fines of Tk one lakh if the victim dies, loses eye sight or hearing ability, or gets injury on face, breasts and sexual organ.

If any other parts of the victim's body are burned, the criminal will have to face a maximum of 14 years in jail and a fine of Tk 50,000.

For attempted acid throwing, the accused will face a minimum three-year in jail extendable up to 14 years along with a fine of Tk 50,000.

Speedy trials in the acid cases received top priority in the proposed laws.

The proposed tribunal prescribed by the laws has been given adequate authority to conduct cases. It must complete inquiry into cases within 30 days and pass verdict within 90 days. If necessary, it can take another 15 days to pass a judgement.

It also proposes legal actions against investigation officers if they fail to complete inquiry into a case within 30 days.

There is also a provision for punishment for filing of

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A govt can't be judged in 100 days: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Renewing her call for the boycotting opposition to join parliament, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday asked Awami League to exercise the rights people reposed on them through properly observing democratic norms.

With regard to norms, she rebutted an "unwarranted" campaign about the country's position on the Afghan Taliban issue. She made it clear that her government is neither rightist nor leftist but rather centrist and peace loving with a progressive outlook.

The PM dismissed as blatant lies the baseless propaganda that people of Bangladesh are Taliban, terrorist, extreme fundamentalist and communal.

She was dismayed to note that opposition leader Sheikh Hasina, without naming her, blemished the image of Bangladesh to foreigners, during her recent tour abroad.

"Criticism constructively the activities of the government. Give alternative proposals. These are

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PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia makes an over-the-air address to the nation yesterday.



Colleagues brought out a protest procession (left) along with the body of Shamsul Alam, sales manager of Smart Technology (BD) Ltd. at Dhanmondi, who was shot dead by muggers in front of his office in the city yesterday. Police snatched the body (right) from the demonstrators.



PHOTO: STAR

No respite as 2 more murdered in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified gunmen shot and killed owner of a long-distance bus service, while muggers gunned down an employee of a computer firm in the city yesterday.

Abu Nasir Mohammad Towha, 41, the bus owner and a Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal activist who was a resident of Mugda, was shot in the head, chest and hands at about 11:30am in front of his residence.

A gang of five armed hoodlums sprayed bullets on Towha, also general secretary of Sayedabad Bus Owners Association, as he was about to get in his car. The killers left the spot leaving him in a pool of blood.

Towha's wife Ferduos Begum rushed him to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH). But on-duty doctors declared him dead at around 12:30pm. The body was

then sent to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

Following the killing, transport workers and leaders ransacked several buses at Sayedabad, halting traffic for about an hour. Police however took control of the situation.

Towha owned two transport services, namely Prince and Dhaka Express. The victim left behind two sons and a daughter.

In the other incident unidentified muggers shot dead Shamsul Alam, 25, sales manager of Smart Technology (BD) Limited, at Dhanmondi Road No. 4 yesterday evening.

The victim reached his office by a microbus after withdrawing Tk 3.46 lakh from Standard Chartered Bank at Road No. 2 at Dhanmondi. The muggers riding two motorcycles stopped Alam and asked him to hand over the money.

Alam obliged them and ran

towards the office. When he was on the staircase, the muggers shot him in the back and he fell down on the stairs.

His colleagues took to Shamarita Hospital where on-duty doctors declared him dead. Members of the Bangladesh Computer Samity, who had gathered there, brought out a procession with the body and proceeded towards the Jatiya Press Club to hold a press conference. But police intercepted them at Science Laboratory point and snatched the body, sources and witnesses said.

The agitated colleagues then ransacked a number of vehicles. Police lobbed clubbed and teargassed the agitators, and arrested six persons from the spot.

Alam was the only bread-earner of his family. His other brother had gone aboard in search of a job but is yet to find any.

Police sent the body to the DMCH for autopsy.

Pushing a dubious deal!

SHARIER KHAN

The BNP government is finalising the Tk 921 crore Bangladesh-Singapore Submarine Cable project despite identifying financial irregularities in the deal in its white paper on the alleged corruption of Awami League government.

According to sources, Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTB) would issue a Letter of Intent (LoI) to US company Tyco late next month to set up the submarine cable that would connect the country with the Information Highway.

The agreement on the project would be signed following successful negotiations, the sources said.

But the white paper-- released on January 23 at the Prime Minister's Office-- points finger at Tyco, the company's adviser, ex-telecommunications minister Mohammad Nasim, ex-finance minister SAMS Kibria and others, saying that the project was approved on the basis of an inappropriate finance and installation plan.

As a result of this contradictory policy of the government, the persons implicated in the white paper as regards this project feel that they were unjustly humiliated in the public.

"If there is corruption in the project, the government can stop it and investigate into the corruption," said one of the persons accused in the white paper. "They cannot just conveniently slander people and a company for corruption and at the same time continue the same project with the same company."

The white paper also implicates Mahub Rahman-- managing director of Gasmin-- the advisory company of Tyco-- for influencing the authorities at different levels to award the project to Tyco. It mentions that the managing director was the son of former civil aviation minister Mosharraf Hossain and a friend of ex-premier Sheikh Hasina's son.

Tyco was selected inappropriately on the basis of an unsolicited bidding offer, the white paper says describing the process through which the project was developed.

It notes that on March 20, 2000, the BTB signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Tyco for this project though at that time the project was not even properly considered. The 921 crore project was approved by the cabinet on August 29, 2000 with the aim of completing it by March 2002.

While it pointed out these issues, negotiation is going on in full swing with Tyco. T&T sources said the authorities were not given any instruction to stop the negotiations.

Meanwhile, following the change of government-- Gasmin, the advisor of Tyco and Singapore Telecom in this project, has left the scene to avoid any backlash from the BNP government, a spokesman of Gasmin told The Daily Star.

He categorically denied involvement in tender manipulation saying, "Tyco was primarily selected for its lowest price offer. If there is no merit in its offer, why is

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700 audit reports pending with public accounts committee

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Outgoing Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) Syed Yusuf Hossain emphasised empowerment of the CAG office and the public accounts committee (PAC) of the parliament to bring accountability and transparency to government offices.

"The government officials were mainly responsible for misappropriation of money and losses of government resources as mentioned in the recent audit reports submitted to the president," he told newsmen at the CAG office yesterday.

"If any private organisation is involved in corruption, this is also because of government officials who do not take action against graft," he pointed out.

"The Auditor General's Office

itself cannot attain effectiveness, unless a strong parliamentary supervision and a proactive administration are there," the CAG observed.

Yesterday was Hossain's last workday at office. Although the tenure of the present CAG ends today, the government is yet to decide on appointment to the constitutional post.

Any of the four secretaries of the government from the accounts cadre may be appointed comptroller and auditor general before long, sources said.

Yusuf Hossain paid a farewell call on President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday.

Narrating his two-and-a-half-year experience as CAG, Yusuf Hossain said auditors work with a limited

executive power, as there is no clear direction or legal compulsion that the government offices are bound to provide all documents of accounts and spending.

In this regard, he underscored the need for formulation of necessary laws and for administrative independence of the CAG office to ensure good governance.

Elaborating on the point, Yusuf Hossain said the CAG office does not have any power to recruit new and efficient people. "As many as 3,500 posts under the CAG office are lying vacant for years together," he said.

"Much of the value of the work done by this office will be meaningless, if action is delayed or recommendations not complied with," he continued.

He also urged the government to empower and equip the PAC adequately, since all audit reports will be placed before the committee for hearing and follow-up action.

The shortage of resources and research and secretarial supports has crippled the committee, he said. "More than seven hundred audit reports are pending with the PAC for hearing," he said.

Hossain termed the existing audit system "poor and outdated". But he claimed that a lot of initiatives were taken to improve and modernise the system during his tenure.

Earlier, the audit on many government organisations used to remain pending for five to seven years, but now all audits on ministries have been updated up to 1999-2000, he said.

On Sunday, Hossain handed over to the president 73 audit reports containing cases of misappropriation and financial irregularities of Tk around 15,000 crore.

Another 25 reports have already been completed and awaiting final approval, the CAG said.

Hossain also stressed the need for internal control standard in the government offices and flourishing of a management culture in the country to ensure good governance.

Nothing but a basket of lies: AL

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League Presidium Member Abdus Samad Azad outright rejected Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's speech as a "basket of lies" that he said left the people further frustrated.

"It's a speech of disappointment, nothing but a basket of lies," he told UNB over phone giving his instant reaction to the Prime Minister's address to the nation.

Her speech did not contain the bare facts of torture, killing and rape of minorities and innumerable Awami League leaders and workers across the country, he observed.

She, he said, also did not mention unusual price hike of utility services like gas, electricity and water and essential commodities like rice, pulses and edible oil that made public life miserable within the 100-day rule of her alliance government.

Azad thought Khaleda Zia only repeated what Awami League government had done in distributing 10,000 computers among educational institutions.

About measures to resolve load-shedding problem, he said Awami League inherited disarray in the power sector, and in last five years

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AL writ sent to chief justice

BSS, Dhaka

A High Court Bench yesterday sent the matter of a writ petition to the chief justice for necessary action after the counsel of the petitioners expressed his apprehension that he would not get justice from this bench.

The petition was filed challenging legality of publication of a white paper on graft of the previous Awami League government.

A division bench comprising Justice MA Matin and Justice Marzi UL Haque heard the matter. Former industries minister Tofail Ahmed and former education minister ASH K Sadek jointly filed the petition.

Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmood, counsel of the petitioners, submitted before the court that he is doubtful of getting proper justice from this bench.

After his submission, the court sent the matter to the chief justice for necessary order.

Delayed again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Its opening delayed by more than half-an-hour, the current session of the eighth parliament continued with its sittings starting late till yesterday.

The sittings of the maiden session of the parliament also started behind the schedule on all but one of the 19 working days.

Lack of quorum - presence of less than 60 members in the 300-strong House - is mainly responsible for such delays, a crisis that also hit sessions of the seventh parliament in its last two years.

The ongoing session, the second of the new parliament, was opened 32 minutes behind the schedule apparently because of delayed arrival of Prime Minister and Leader of the House Khaleda Zia despite the quorum in the House at the scheduled time on Thursday.

The second sitting on Sunday witnessed a 25-minute delay. The quorum crisis worsened on the third working day yesterday when the session resumed 40 minutes late.

The House witnessed only 12 lawmakers present at the time of

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No artiste, presenter of state-run media blacklisted: Moyeen

UNB, Dhaka

Information Minister Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan yesterday informed the parliament that the present government did not blacklist any artiste, presenter or producer of state-run radio and television.

"Present government believes in objectivity and ethics," he said answering a supplementary question by his party lawmaker Manirul Huq Chowdhury who wanted to know if the Awami League government had blacklisted any artiste, newscaster or technician in the last five years.

Dr Khan said that in a democratic system the previous government is supposed to give its own account for its rule.

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Syed Yusuf Hossain