

AL to decide on JS joining June 20

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A final decision on ending the prolonged parliament boycott and joining the budget session would be taken on June 20 at a joint meeting of AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC) and AL Parliamentary Party (ALPP) in the city, a meeting of the party's presidium decided yesterday.

Party chief Sheikh Hasina chaired the meeting held at AL's Dhanmondi office last night.

Earlier on June 10 and 11, a meeting of ALCWC decided, in principle, to join the parliament without arriving at a probable timeframe in that regard.

Yesterday's presidium meeting also decided to observe the 'Anti-repression and Prisoners Release Day' across the country on June 26.

The meeting also discussed, in length, about observing the party's founding anniversary on June 23.

22 ASPs get promotion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-two assistant superintendents of police (ASP) have been promoted to the additional superintendent of police (Add. SP) and transferred to their new offices yesterday.

Following are the police officers promoted to the additional superintendent. Mahfuzul Islam was transferred to Rangpur, Humayun Kabir and Shahidullah Chowdhury to the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

AKM Awaiad Hossain was transferred to the Special Branch (SB) of Police, Dhaka, AKM Masum Rabbani to Khagrachhari, Saif Aziz to Chittagong, Rezaul Karim to Rajbari, Shawkat Hossain to Tangail and Rezaul Ahmed to Narshindi.

Mohammad Shahrier has been transferred to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Dhaka, Mahbubur Rahman to Khagrachhari, Mohammad Ali Miah to the SB Headquarters, AKM Masudul Alam to Kurigram, SM Rokonuddin to Chapai Nawabganj and Abdullah-Al-Manun to Sylhet.

Azizur Rahim has been transferred to Madaripur, Mostafa Kamal to Pirojpur, Harunur Rashid to Thakurgaon, Akkas Uddin Bhuiyan to Jamalpur and Jahangir Hossain Mattubar to Nilphamari.

JS body discusses bill seeking spl powers for MPs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Private Members Bill and Resolution at a meeting yesterday discussed the much talked about bill seeking some special powers and privileges for MPs, including a bar on reporting certain parliamentary issues in the press.

The meeting, with Committee Chairman Md Mozammel Haque in the chair, scrutinised findings of the sub-committee formed to look into the proposed clauses that might go contrary to fundamental rights.

The sub-committee headed by Col. (ret'd) Shawkat Ali of Awami League is expected to have another meeting on June 24 to finalise its draft report. It is scheduled to submit its report to the committee at its next meeting on July 1.

As the proposed law angered a section of the ruling party while it was placed in the House three months ago, Abu Hena, the ruling party lawmaker who piloted the bill, told yesterday's meeting that he

SEE PAGE 11 COL 7

Cabinet okays trade accord with Moldova

BSS, Dhaka

The Cabinet yesterday approved the signing of the trade agreement between Bangladesh and the Republic of Moldova.

The Cabinet at its regular meeting chaired by Prime Minister Khaleda Zia also approved in principle the draft of the Fire Prevention and Extinguishing Bill-2002, an official handout said.

Cabinet minister and state ministers in charge of the ministries attended the meeting held at the Cabinet Room of the Prime Minister's Office.



People flock to the Third Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka to hear the judgement in the Rubel Murder case yesterday; and(right) convicts AC Akram Hussain, Mukul Begum and sub-inspector Haiyatul Islam Thakur after the judgement.



PHOTO: STAR

Recruiters rip recruits off

Workers pay 'unofficial fees' at several stages thru' middlemen

RAFIQ HASAN

Workers going abroad through recruiting agencies are being exploited at different stages and in various forms, pushing up overseas employment cost three to five times the government-fixed rate, sources said.

An unskilled worker has to spend at least Tk 1.20 lakh for going to Saudi Arabia as a cleaner or construction worker with a pay of Tk 5,000 to Tk 6,000 per month.

The government-fixed rate for sending a worker abroad is only Tk 50,000.

A skilled worker however has to spend a less amount -- Tk 80,000 to Tk 1,00,000 -- for going to Saudi Arabia, the main destination of Bangladeshi workers. They also get higher pay -- Tk 13,500 to Tk 15,000 -- but they are only five per cent of the total number of workers going to that country.

On the other hand, if a worker wants to go to South Korea, he has to spend at least Tk 2.60 lakh.

"It is a big chain as many people in the governments of the sending and the receiving countries are taking 'unofficial fees' through a ring of middlemen, agents and sub-agents," said Golam Mostafa, secretary general of Bangladesh Association of Recruiting Agents (BAIRA.)

Besides, Bangladesh government has increased passport fees and takes fees for 'immigration permit' and some other charges for allowing a person to go abroad.

The receiving country also takes fees from foreign workers, such as

fees for residence permit. In Saudi Arabia, a worker has to pay Tk 22,500 (1500 riyal) for permission to stay for one or two years.

Although Saudi employers are supposed to pay the fees, they charge it from the workers while giving visa advice.

According to sources, a recruiting agent in Bangladesh has to spend at least Tk 2000 to 3000 more than the official charges for getting permission from the Ministry of Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment and the Bureau of Manpower Export and Training (BMET) for each worker.

Besides, it is too much for a worker to pay Tk 5,000 for passport and Tk 1,800 in travel tax, Mostafa said.

He claimed that the total cost could be reduced to one third if the 'role of middlemen, unhealthy competition among recruiting agencies and unnecessary charges' are eliminated from the process. Some agents stay in Saudi Arabia and Malaysia and create an unhealthy competition for 'buying visa' from the employers. "This is a major cause of increase in overseas employment cost".

Such a 'visa business' has developed although it is not allowed by any of the governments concerned, he pointed out.

When contacted, State Minister for Expatriate Welfare and Overseas Employment Mohammad Quamrul Islam said the government is trying to introduce a new system to ensure that recruiting agents cannot take exorbitant fees.

A data-base system would be applied first for sending workers to

SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Retaliation only way to stop attacks on AL, says Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday visited two seriously injured party workers at Pangu Hospital and said retaliation was the only solution to stop attacks and atrocities by the ruling party cadres.

"This government is totally shameless. Mere verbal demands are not enough, counter action is necessary to stop such attacks, torture and killings," she said in an angry outburst after seeing the condition of the two injured workers.

The injured, both named Bazul Rahman, are activists of Awami League and were attacked by the ruling party cadres for that reason, Hasina said.

One of the victims, a small trader from Chowgachha in Jessore, has

been admitted to Pangu Hospital with broken legs on June 9. His family came under repeated attacks after the October 1 general election last year.

Victim's father Abdul Berek Mondal said his eldest son was also beaten earlier by the BNP cadres. Bazul is the second of his five sons. Berek Mondal, also came under attack two years ago.

His daughter, Rupali Begum got married to a young man of a family that supports BNP. After the election, Rupali's husband divorced her only because she came from a pro-AL family. Rupali committed suicide out of shame, Berek Mondal told the opposition leader with tears in his eyes.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3



Landslide win for Chirac's party in parliament

REUTERS, Paris

French President Jacques Chirac's centre-right won a landslide parliamentary majority on Sunday, turning the tables on the left and denying Jean-Marie Le Pen's anti-immigrant National Front any seats at all.

It ended five years of power-sharing 'cohabitation' between the conservative president and a left-wing parliament that many voters felt had frustrated reform and encouraged extremism.

With some counts continuing, official results gave Chirac's newly founded Union for the Presidential Majority (UMP) and its allies a clear majority in the 577-seat National Assembly.

Projections based on completed constituency counts and exit polls forecast they would win 390-402 seats in all.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

JCD leader shot dead in Banskhali

UNB, Chittagong

A local leader of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) was shot dead at Kadukkhali village in Banskhali upazila here yesterday.

Police said a gang of armed youths picked up Touhidul Islam, joint secretary of Banskhali JCD, from his house at about noon and shot him dead at a place near his house.

Police arrested Hamidul Haq and Obaidul Haq in connection with the killing after victim's father filed a case with Banskhali police.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



PHOTO: STAR

BUET students line up in a human chain demanding punishment to the killers of Sabequn Nahar Sony, in front of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh in the city yesterday.

'Arrest Sony's killers, punish them'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The students of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) yesterday formed a human chain in front of the Engineers' Institute of Bangladesh, demanding immediate arrest and punishment of the killers of Sabequn Nahar Sony, a BUET student.

Sony was killed on June 8 in a cross-fire between two rival factions of the ruling BNP's student front Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) on the BUET campus. But the main suspects in the killing are still at large.

A number of socio-cultural and other organisations and hundreds of people from various walks of life also joined the human chain. The organisations included Sammilita Nari Samaj, Bangladesh Group Theatre Federation, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, Samajtantrik Mahila Parishad, Narigrantha Probartana, Shrama Bikash Kendra, Karmajibi Nari, Sangjukta Mahila Parishad, Nari Mukti Sangsad, Sammilita Sangskritik Jote and Nari Mukti Sangsad.

Addressing the participants, renowned educationist Prof Sirajul Islam Chowdhury said people would spontaneously support the ongoing movement of the students for punishment of the criminals.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Tarique refutes allegations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tarique Rahman, eldest son of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, yesterday refuted allegations that the Hawa Bhavan, the election office of the BNP, exerts influence on the government's policy decisions and activities.

Hosting a luncheon at a city hotel for journalists yesterday, Tarique described the Hawa Bhavan as the secretariat of the BNP chairperson. He explained that it assists the BNP's chairperson and secretary general with data and information regarding implementation of the party's election manifesto.

Introducing himself as an ordinary BNP worker, Tarique also refuted allegations about the Hawa Bhavan's interference in changes in the administration.

He urged all not to entertain anyone abusing the image of the Hawa Bhavan to gain any undue favour or advantage.

Replying to a query, Tarique expressed his readiness to accept

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

'Delhi considering duty-free access of 40 more items'

STAR REPORT

India is considering duty-free access of another 40 Bangladeshi items to its market, its High Commissioner ML Tripathi has said.

He however said, "Only duty-free access will not solve the problem of trade imbalance. You have to expand your export basket by adding goods and services that can find a place in the Indian market on their own in a competitive manner. Gas and transit/transshipment come to mind in this context".

He was speaking at the inaugural ceremony of a three-day Indian Textile Exhibition--ITEXPO'2002 -- at Sonargaon Hotel here yesterday.

Mahmudur Rahman, Executive Chairman of the Board of Investment (BOI) was the chief guest at the function.

It was also attended by, among others, Yousuf Abdullah Harun, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of

Commerce and Industries (FBCCI), Wali Bhuiya, president of the Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FCCI) and Farid Uddin Ahmed, president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCCI).

The Synthetic & Rayon Textiles Export Promotion Council (SRTEPC) of India organised the function, presided over by its chairman Sanjeev Saran.

At the last commerce secretary level talks in Dhaka on April 9-11, India agreed to provide duty-free access to 40 Bangladeshi items. But India has not yet taken any follow-up steps in this regard, according to officials and traders here.

Tripathi expressed his disappointment that after the April agreement, some media reports in Dhaka had said that only a few of the 40 items had actual export potential.

"This list was given by your Commerce Ministry", he said.

He however said, "This matter can be further discussed in a spirit of goodwill and cooperation".

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

