

Dhaka-10 by-polls

FROM PAGE 1 press, but also the people from accessing public information.

The court imposed the restriction on journalists Thursday when the special bench of justices M Ruhul Amin, MM Ruhul Amin and MA AZiz started hearing the writ petition.

The High Court on Wednesday stayed the June 6 polls till June 12 on a petition of Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh candidate Abdul Mannan, a retired major, on being refused allocation of his desired poll symbol 'kula'. The returning officer however granted another Bikalpa Dhara candidate, Mahi B Chowdhury of Munshiganj-1, the symbol.

Immediately after the stay order was issued, the returning officer of the constituency in a controversial manner filed an appeal with the chamber judge of the Appellate Division on the same day. A special bench was immediately formed to hear the appeal. The Election Commission however denies its involvement in filing the appeal petition.

Journalists started gathering at the Supreme Court premises before 10.30am when the hearing started yesterday. The court security intercepted them, prompting some 20 newsmen to stage an impromptu sit-in in front of the Supreme Court gate used by the chief justice. They put down pen and notepad and microphone and also tied their

hands with handkerchiefs in a symbolic protest.

Supreme Court Bar Association President Rokaunuddin Mahmud, its Secretary Bashir Ahmed and some other lawyers met the demonstrating journalists.

Rokan told the journalists, "We will go to the chief justice and authorities concerned and convey your message." He suggested the journalists write a memorandum to the chief justice through the Bar Association to enable the association to take the matter up with the chief justice.

Rokan, who represents Mannan in the petition, also briefed the press on the hearing.

Former judge TH Khan on behalf of the respondent gave his arguments till 11.45am. Rokan did his afterwards.

Rokan told the court that in 1996, the Election Commission gave a directive under which a party will be given a single election symbol for all its candidates. In case of Dhaka-10 by-election, Mannan has been arbitrarily denied 'kula' symbol when the EC has already allocated another Bikalpa Dhara candidate the same.

The court told both sides that it wanted to complete hearing by today and Rokan was optimistic about a court ruling on the matter by today.

BSF stops fencing near Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) yesterday stopped fencing the border along Padma Shakhra in Satkhira district following a flag meeting with Bangladesh Rifles (BDR).

Violating a border pact in 1974, BSF members began erecting barbed wire fences along the border in the no-man's land on the Indian side in the morning, locals said.

The BDR sent a protest letter to Goadanga BSF camp asking the Indian side to stop their work, sources said.

The BSF decided to postpone construction work following a flag meeting agreement with its Bangladeshi counterpart in the afternoon, they added.

Anjuman Ara

FROM PAGE 12 Masjid-e-Taqwa at Dhanmondi after Asr prayers yesterday. She was buried at Banani Graveyard.

Qulkhwani of Anjuman Ara will be held at her residence (Flat P-10, Road 9-A, Dhanmondi) on June 1 after Asr prayers.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has expressed her deep shock at the death of Anjuman Ara.

In a message of condolence yesterday, Khaleda recalled with deep respect the contribution of Anjuman Ara to the cultural arena. The prime minister expressed her sympathy for the members of the bereaved family and prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul.

Anjuman Ara was born in a renowned family of Bogra on January 11, 1942. Her father Dr Kasiruddin Talukder was killed by the occupation army on May 29, 1971.

In an illustrious musical career spanning over 40 years, she lent her voice to numerous famous songs in radio, television, film and stage. 'Tumi Ashbe Boley', 'Akasher Hately', 'Key Swaraner Prantore', 'Khokshona', 'Chadni', 'Brishti Johon', 'Shathi Ronger', etc, are only a few of hundreds of her most popular songs that touched the hearts of people over the years.

Anjuman Ara represented Bangladesh in many cultural functions at home and abroad. In recognition of her outstanding contribution to music, she was honoured with "Ekushey Padak" in 2003.

Abducted staff

FROM PAGE 1 of the alleged abductors identified as Abdul Halim, son of Mahatab Biswas of Barkhada, on the outskirts of the town yesterday.

The officer-in-charge of the Sadar Police Station said, "No one came to file any case of kidnap, still we moved on hearing the incident." "We didn't seek any police assistance because the captors threatened to kill Salam if any case is filed," family sources said.

In village Tekala of Daulatpur upazila, an armed gang of about 10 went to the house of Zarfaf Ullah to pick up his son Rabiul Islam 20, a second year student of Daulatpur College, at about 11:00pm.

As the family members shouted for help, the neighbours and 'village defence party' rushed to the spot and ringed the house. The gang then opened fire and hurled crackers on the villagers to make an escape. At least five people including Rabiul were injured.

Police records show at least 13 people were abducted in six upazilas of the district in this month. Increase in the number of abductions, many of which were not reported for fear of reprisal, has caused scare among the people.

Since January, 70 people including 18 school and college students were abducted in the district. Eight of them including three schoolboys were killed and others bought their freedom paying hefty ransom that ranged from Tk 50, 000 to 2 lakh. Police could rescue only three. While talking to this correspondent by phone, Superintendent of Police Saiful Islam, however, denied the allegation of rise in the number of abductions.

New signboard

FROM PAGE 12 Local administration has beefed up security measures in and around the mosque fearing fresh backlash following the incident, police officials said.

Miah Lutfur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (north) yesterday told The Daily Star, "We are keeping watch over the mosque to avert any untoward incident over removal of the signboard."

Islamic extremists under the banner of the International Khatme Nabuyat Movement (IKNM) placed the signboard, which read: "Place of worship for the Ahmadiyyas. Muslims advised not to take it as mosque to be deceived," in front of the Ahmadiyya mosque during an agitation programme after the Juma prayers.

The IKNM organised the programme demanding declaration of the Ahmadiyya sect as non-Muslims.

It's a fraud, CEC

FROM PAGE 1 such a file. So how did I give permission to file the appeal?"

"Truth will come to light," he said. EC Secretary SM Zakaria was allegedly hyperactive in filling the appeal against the High Court stay order on Wednesday.

EC secretariat sources said an official of the attorney general's office came to him after the delivery of the High Court's stay order.

After discussion with the official, Zakaria himself signed a vokalatnama and initiated the move to file the appeal, they claimed. But his vokalatnama was not submitted to the Appellate Division while filling the writ.

Zakaria continued to refuse to comment on the issue. "The matter is sub judice. I cannot say anything about it. We are waiting for the court

order," he told The Daily Star at his office yesterday.

However, a vokalatnama of the solicitor wing of the law ministry was submitted in favour of the appeal.

Barrister Rokaunuddin Mahmud questioned the legality of the appeal. "I will argue tomorrow (Sunday) (in court) on who filed the appeal," he told reporters yesterday.

According to the election law, the service of Mia Mostak Ahmed, who is also the divisional commissioner of Dhaka, is under the EC as he is acting as the RO.

If he violates the election law, the EC, as a quasi judiciary body, can take departmental action against him.

Asked about the provision, the CEC declined to comment, saying: "I would like to talk on the issue later."

Zia's 23rd anniversary

FROM PAGE 1 Chittagong Circuit House.

The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its front organisations have drawn up a 10-day programme to observe the anniversary of its founder.

The programme, which began yesterday, includes laying wreaths at the grave of Zia, Qurankhwani, *milad mahfil*, feeding of the destitute, discussions, photo exhibitions, blood donation and cultural programmes.

President Iajuddin Ahmed in a message said the contribution of Zia to establish multiparty democracy in the country has finally determined his status in history.

The BNP will hoist party flag at half mast and black flag atop its central office and party offices all over the country in the morning.

Leaders and workers of the BNP

and its front organisations will place wreaths, offer *fateha* and participate in a milad mahfil at the Zia's grave.

Khaleda will offer *fateha* and place wreaths at the grave on behalf of the government and the BNP at 10:00am today.

As part of the announced national programmes, the BNP will begin a three-day programme at Dhaka from today.

16 killed

FROM PAGE 1 seriously, when a Dhaka bound passenger bus skidded off the

Hatikunda-Bonpara Highway and fell into a ditch at Charhamkuria village in Tarash upazila early yesterday.

Of the dead, one was identified as Shahadat Hossain, 27, of Kashinathpur in Pabna.

The injured passengers were admitted to Sirajganj Sadar Hospital.

Our Comilla correspondent reported that a truck rammed a bicycle on the Comilla-Sylhet Highway at Kangsanagar under Burichang upazila at 4:00pm yesterday, leaving two people killed on the spot.

One of the dead was identified as Shafiullah, 14, son of Abu Musa of Kangsanagar.

Water sharing issue

FROM PAGE 12 development partners cannot

resolve this sort of problem. The whole issue has unfortunately landed in to a political trap. The people of the region must come forward to resolve the differences. People of India would not like to see their good neighbour Bangladesh suffer," said Kuldip Nayyar.

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed,

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, the Netherlands Ambassador Sjeff Ijzermans, UNDP Resident Representative Jorgen Lissner and Country Representative of International Union for Conservation of Nature Dr Ainun Nishat was among speakers at the seminar, organised by the Centre for Water, Environment and Energy, a non-governmental organisation.

A NH Akhter Hossain, managing director of Dhaka Wasa, and Dr Asif Nazrul of Dhaka University presented two keynote papers on impact of water withdrawal from the upper basin and on legal aspect of water sharing treaty.

Moudud Ahmed said the new government of India seems to be cooperative on the issue of water sharing and has opened a window

to discussion on the river-linking project. It is a mega project and any government cannot ignore public opinion on it, he added.

Morshed Khan said the trans-boundary problem can be resolved only by changing the mindset. Any treaty or convention cannot resolve it until the mindset is changed, he thought.

Hafiz Uddin Ahmed said Bangladesh needs the help of Indian people to get its due share of water. International development partners also have a great role to play, he added.

The UNDP resident representative said development partners cannot solve the regional conflict but can help improve the unequal relationship.

Dr Inun Nishat said the trans-boundary water sharing issue should be resolved immediately as the entire eco-system of Bangladesh is based on river waters. The problem can be resolved through political intervention, he thought.

Former vice-chancellor of Dhaka University M Moniruzzaman Miah and former ambassador Muhammad Zamir also addressed the seminar.

Graft case

FROM PAGE 12 executive director of Asian Surveyors Ltd., and Giausuddin Al Mamun of Rahman Group of Industries Ltd.

Barrister AKM Fokrul Islam, the chief defence counsel of the accused, in the discharge petition said the case was filed during the tenure of the Awami League government with a motive to politically harass them.

He also told the court that the charges brought against them were false, fabricated and concocted. Moreover, the names of two other accused, Afzal Khan and Atosh Khan, were dropped from the charge sheet though their death certificates were not put on the judicial case file.

Special Public Prosecutor Fazlur Rahman Khan submitted a petition in favour of framing of charges against the accused.

All the accused including M Morshed Khan, now on bail, appeared before the court at 4:00pm.

The case filed with Motijheel Police Station alleges that the

5 INDIANS' CAPTURE 2 Biman staff, guesthouse owner shown arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday showed arrested two Biman Bangladesh Airlines staff and the Euro Garden guesthouse owner in a regular case filed in connection with the sneaking of five Indians in a Biman aircraft.

The Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka also placed Biman staff Mamunur Rashid and Abdul Hannan, held on Friday, and guesthouse owner Abdur Rouf Chakladar, on a 10-day remand, sources said.

Airport police picked up Mamun and Hannan after their cell phone numbers were found in the call list of a mobile phone seized from one of the five arrested Indians, police sources said.

"The Biman staff admitted their link with the trafficking gang during interrogation," said a top police official seeking anonymity.

The guesthouse owner has a link with the trafficking group. The gang used to bring Indian nationals to Bangladesh and kept them at the guesthouse with false identity before sending them abroad, police said.

Last week police held Pargas Singh, Nirmol Singh, Manjeet Singh, Mangas Singh and Sandeep Singh, all Sikhs, as they holed up in a Biman aircraft at Zia International Airport. They are now on a 10-day remand.

Bangla Bhai

FROM PAGE 12 taking full in his own hand?"

"The ruling alliance have made Bangladesh a country where the prime minister has no control over her administration. That is why her (Khaleda) reported order to arrest Bangla Bhai is yet to be executed," the AL president said.

Hasina categorically blamed Jamaat-e-Islami for its involvement with at least 12 extremist organisations that are smuggling illegal arms into the country and giving training to their activists.

The opposition leader also said the government has extended retirement age of the chief justice through the 14th amendment to the constitution just to get a like-minded person as chief of the next caretaker government. The incumbent chief justice was BNP's international affairs secretary in the past, she added.

The country is now facing an image crisis abroad due to criminal activities and unabated corruption by the ruling alliance men, she said.

Referring to the recent purchase of two aircraft, Hasina said, "Two 30-year-old aircraft were purchased for Bangladesh Biman and ruling alliance loyalists have made huge money from the deal as new engines were bought to operate the old aircraft."

Nazrul Islam Khan, chairman of Netrakona Sadar Paurasava and Shahid Iqbal, chairman of Mohanganj paurasava also spoke on the occasion.

6 cops hurt

FROM PAGE 12 Tabeur Rahman. Two constables of Special Armed Forces (SAF) were injured in that incident.

Meanwhile, four youths have been taken into custody for suspected links with PBPC (J). The OC refused to divulge their identity.

Four bombs including two petrol bombs were recovered from the spot of the fight.

SI Rafiqul Islam of Khulna Police Station lodged two separate FIRs in this connection yesterday without naming anyone as an accused.

Sources claimed both the factions of outlawed PBPC have reunited recently to renew assaults on police in Khulna and Bagerhat districts. A secret meeting held in Jhenidah with top leaders of the two factions took the decision.

S Asian body

FROM PAGE 12 Police are helping the Islamist force as they are helping Bangla Bhai's men in the northern districts, the statement said and added Bangladesh is going under a Taliban-like rule.

The statement urged the conscious citizens and progressive political parties to get united to resist the religious extremists.

Next ADP

FROM PAGE 1 raise additional resources," he told journalists after the meeting at the NEC auditorium.

Saifur claimed to have taken a number of steps to ensure proper implementation of the ADP.

"We have designed the projects in such a way that more projects are implemented in the rural areas," he said.

The power sector gets the highest allocation of 14.72 percent followed by the transport sector (14.47 percent).

Education and religion get 14.25 percent of allocation, rural development 10.59 percent and health and population 9.78 percent.

The government also approved a block allocation of Tk 40 crore for development works through the newly formed Gram Sarkar.

The government has also given a block allocation of Tk 560 crore to Dhaka City Corporation, information and communication technology field and some projects under power, rail and river transports.

al-Qaeda attacks

FROM PAGE 1 A statement purportedly from Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network posted on Islamist Web sites claimed the attacks.

The group blamed for the September 2001 attacks on the United States has vowed to destabilize the US-allied monarchy and the world's leading oil exporter.

Witnesses said a body had been dragged through the streets, apparently by militants, in the third attack against foreigners in less than a month in the birthplace of Islam. It appeared aimed at the crucial and in part Western-run oil industry.

Al Arabiya aired footage of a man with Western features, slumped in his car, apparently shot dead by the gunmen. It showed a charred car and a third blood-spattered vehicle.

The attack came two days after the top al-Qaeda leader in the kingdom, Abdulaziz al-Muqrin, issued a battle plan for urban guerrilla war, specifying steps militants needed to topple the royal family.

Earlier this month, militants killed five foreigners in an unprecedented attack on a petrochemical site in Saudi Arabia's Red Sea town of Yanbu and dragged the body of an American through the streets.

Muqrin claimed that attack and vowed more in Saudi Arabia and other Muslim states. A German was also shot dead this month in a shopping district in eastern Riyadh.

In Saturday's spree, militants opened fire at the Al-Khobar Petroleum Center building, believed to house offices of major Western oil firms, before storming into the compounds housing oil services offices and homes of employees working there, the security sources said.

Witnesses said two cars with military markings drove into the Apicorp complex where militants shot dead the child.

The gunmen, in military uniforms, also went into the Rami and Oasis housing compounds,

where they took a number of people, including five Lebanese, hostage. Lebanon later said its citizens had been released.

Some employees working for Shell, Honeywell and General Electric lived in one of the compounds. The five-star Oasis residence has housed executives from oil majors Royal Dutch/Shell, Total and LUKOIL who are carrying out gas projects.

"This is clearly targeting the oil sector," said a senior Western executive in the capital Riyadh.

"Gunmen are still on the loose. People are staying in their homes, keeping their heads down. Nobody can give a final figure on the deaths," a Western diplomat told Reuters.

Oil markets have been on edge over the possibility of a strike on oil facilities in the kingdom, the world's biggest crude exporter, that would disrupt supplies.

The attack in the main Saudi oil-producing region came a week after Saudi Arabia pledged to hike oil output to stabilise spiralling prices, and ahead of an Opec meeting next week.

Saudi security forces have arrested or gunned down at least eight of the country's 26 most wanted militants, but their defiance of the crackdown has raised questions about security.

De facto ruler Crown Prince Abdullah has pledged to hunt down militants for "decades" if needed.

The kingdom, a pivotal US ally, has been battling a tide of Muslim militancy linked to al-Qaeda. A string of al-Qaeda-linked suicide bombings in Riyadh last year killed 50 people, including nine Americans.

Last month the US embassy strongly urged its citizens to leave Saudi Arabia.

Anti-Western sentiment in the kingdom has also been fueled by images carried by Arab media of US troops abusing Iraqi prisoners and Israeli tanks razing Palestinian homes.

Pakistan test fires

FROM PAGE 12 India, with which it has fought three wars since both countries won independence from Britain in 1947.

Analysts say the test was meant to tell the Indian government that Pakistan would not lower its guard despite peace moves.

"It's meant to meet technical requirements, ease domestic pressure on peace with India and also convey to the new Indian government that we are going to remain militarily strong," former military general Kamal Matinuddin said.

"It's a combination of all."

A Pakistan military statement said Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali also watched the test-firing, but did not say where the test was done.

"The Ghauri missile...is second only to Hatf VI Shaheen II in terms of range," it said.

Ghauri and Shaheen are different versions of a Pakistani missile series named Hatf in reference to an ancient Islamic weapon.

Pakistan test-fired the Shaheen II, with a range of 2,000 km (1,250 miles), in March. It said it was capable of carrying nuclear warheads to every corner of India.

New Delhi has itself been developing a range of missiles

capable of delivering nuclear warheads, and plans to test some time this year the longest-range version yet of Agni, its nuclear-capable ballistic missile.

Pakistan had informed its neighbors about the test beforehand, the military statement said. Pakistan first test-fired the Ghauri missile in April 1998 ahead of tit-for-tat nuclear tests responding to tests by India. The Ghauri missiles were formally inducted into the military in January 2003.

The latest Ghauri test came a day after the sixth anniversary of Pakistan's nuclear tests.

The military statement said the test aimed to confirm improvements in the Pakistani missile system.

The Ghauri missile was developed by Khan Research Laboratories, Pakistan's main uranium-enrichment facility, which was named for Abdul Qadeer Khan, once revered as the father of the country's atom bomb.

But Khan was sacked this year from his job as a special government adviser after he admitted to exporting nuclear secrets to Iran, Libya and North Korea.

Some experts say the Ghauri missile was developed with North Korean help in return for nuclear know-how.

New Iraq PM

FROM PAGE 1 an interim government to take over from US rule next month, where rival ethnic groups are

seemed to have been completely taken back by the way the 23-member Governing Council announced its choice of Allawi.

The US administration was also caught on the hop by the speed of the announcement. But as a long-time exile in the pay of the CIA, Allawi was always a strong candidate in Washington and US officials were clearly involved in steering the choice.

Ordinary Iraqis know little of a man who spent more than 30 years abroad, first as a medical student in Britain supporting Saddam Hussein's Baath party and later as a wealthy exile who founded the Iraqi National Accord with funds from the CIA.

Aides to Allawi said he was meeting various fellow members of the Governing Council, which will give way on June 30 to the interim government. One said he also expected to meet Paul Bremer, the US administrator in Iraq.

A spokesman for Brahimi said the envoy would now work with Allawi to form a government. Its main task will be to organise Iraq's first free elections in the new year amid widespread violence from sectarian militias and

al-Qaeda-linked Islamists.

In the northern city of Kirkuk, where rival ethnic groups are competing for a share of Iraq's oil wealth, a prominent Kurdish politician was killed yesterday in a drive-by shooting -- the third assassination of a Kurdish official this month.

Colonel Mohammed Hamid, the head of Kirkuk's fire department as well as a senior member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan party, was killed with his wife, sister and another relative when their car was strafed by gunmen in another vehicle.

Desa

FROM PAGE 12 officials of Desa involving over Tk 5, 000 crore have remained unresolved for a long time.

A total of 5,738 objections were raised with regard to the irregularities in Desa since 1971 to March 2004. But during the last 32 years only 1405 objections have been resolved. Today, 4,333 audit objections involving Tk 5,469 crore stand unresolved.

The parliamentary body urged the authorities concerned to initiate steps to settle the pending issues.

The meeting was held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.