

HC orders army presence in all polling centres

By-polls tomorrow; troops called out; campaign comes to a close

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday directed the government to deploy the army in all polling centres on the day of Dhaka-10 by-election, while voters focused their attention on the apparently tight race tomorrow.

Hours into the interim court order, the government called out the army to tighten security during the polls to the constituency that fell vacant with the resignation of retired army major Abdul Mannan from the House and the ruling BNP on March 10.

An HC division bench also asked the government to explain in two weeks why it should not be directed

to deploy armed forces in all polling centres in line with an Election Commission (EC) decision.

Earlier, the EC asked the government to commit at least five army personnel along with police, para-military forces and ansars to each of the constituency's 103 polling centres.

But the government on Sunday virtually rejected the EC's request for army deployment in every polling centre, as the home ministry reviving an earlier circular informed the EC that two companies of army would be deployed as strike force in the constituency, not every voting centre. The government stance forced the EC to depend on the court

The HC in yesterday's order did not specify the number of army personnel to be posted to every polling centre for duty.

Division Bench of Justice Abdul Wahhab Miah and Justice Zinat Ara issued the order after a writ petition filed by Mannan, now Bikalpa Dhara candidate, and three other nominees on Sunday.

Earlier, HC Division Bench of Justice MA Matin and Justice Tarkil Hakim heard the petition, but Hakim was absent yesterday because of his illness, prompting Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassir Husain to send the case to another bench for disposal.

Continued Ariff: "The authorities will now decide how many army personnel will be deployed."

After the order, Attorney General

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AF Hassan Ariff told newsmen quoting the court order that the word 'armed forces' carries a wider meaning. "It includes VDP (Village Defence Party), Armed Police Battalion and other law-enforcement agencies," he said.

"The petition was filed after the Election Commission decision for deployment of five army personnel in each polling centre. The court rejected it (the EC decision) and asked the government to deploy necessary armed personnel in each polling centre," he said.

Continued Ariff: "The authorities will now decide how many army personnel will be deployed."

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Bhuiyan offers talks to end hartal culture

Hamid warns against a law, calls for consensus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling alliance yesterday offered Awami League (AL) dialogue to end politics of hartal, urging the main opposition party to help the government stop law and order slum.

"Give us the names of your representatives. Let's sit across the table and discuss ways to bid farewell to hartal, which cripples the economy," LGRD and Co-operatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told the Jatiya Sangsad, taking part in a discussion on the proposed budget.

Bhuiyan, also the secretary general of BNP, was responding to a previous proposal of the Awami League, reiterated yesterday by Deputy Leader of the Opposition Abdul Hamid in the House.

One of the five items dropped from the finance bill is raising of

income tax at source for land registration to 10 percent from the existing 5 percent.

"During the Awami League regime, the tax for land registration was 29 percent," said Saifur. "After coming to power, the BNP reduced it to 14.5 percent. It was then suggested that further reduction will increase tax collection. But this did not happen. Tax collection has gone down. That is why I proposed to raise it to 10 percent."

"But as everyone wants it to be at 5 percent, we reduced it again,"

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FINANCE BILL PASSED

Duty withdrawn, cut on 5 items

Budget for FY05 to be approved today; land registration, soap industry, poultry, CR coil, CNG bus get relief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliament yesterday passed the finance bill for FY05 with amendments to withdraw and reduce proposed supplementary and import duty on five items, a day before the budget is approved.

"This is not an over ambitious budget," said Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman before the bill was passed. "Next year, we will present a bigger one."

One of the five items dropped from the finance bill is raising of

SAIFUR SAID.

Another proposal to increase import duty on raw materials for soap industry to 25 percent from 15 percent was dropped.

The new budget proposed 7.5 percent duty on medicine for poultry. But this was withdrawn in view of the tough time faced by the poultry sector.

The proposed 10 percent supplementary duty on CR coil, a raw material for corrugated tins, was also dropped.

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AL's positive role must for better law, order

PM says budget implementation depends on shunning politics of hartal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday sought cooperation from the main opposition Awami League (AL) saying its 'positive role' is a must to ensure political stability for implementing the new budget properly and improving law and order.

Participating in the discussion on the proposed budget for fiscal 2004-05 in parliament, Khaleda said, "We will be able to implement the new budget properly if they (the opposition party) shuns politics of hartal that creates chaos and if they practise healthy politics."

"Without cooperation from all political parties including the main opposition, it is not possible for the government alone to ensure peace and order in the country," said

Budget to burden tax on people

Hasina at JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition in the Jatiya Sangsad Sheikh Hasina yesterday accused the government of planning to impose extra-budgetary taxes to exploit people.

Taking part in the discussion on the proposed budget for fiscal 2004-05 in the House, Hasina said the budget has set a target of additional revenue of over Tk 5,300 crore without mentioning sources of the revenue. "How can the government realise the money without imposing fresh taxes?" she questioned.

She termed the finance minister's claim of no fresh tax in the proposed budget a bluff.

Bitterly criticising the government for its "failure to check law and order downslide," Hasina, also president of the main opposition Awami League (AL), asked why people will pay tax as the rulers have absolutely failed to ensure security

of their lives.

The proposed budget will not bring any change in the socio-economic condition of the masses as it has failed to address crucial problems facing the country, she said.

"This budget cannot lead the country towards self-reliance and fight poverty and price spiral of essentials... It lacks specific guidelines for new investments, industrialisation and employment," Hasina said rejecting the budget.

The AL chief demanded withdrawal of proposed value added tax (VAT) for housing industry, on LP gas cylinders and CI sheets and import duty on newsprint, wood and spare parts.

During her hour-long speech, the opposition leader analysed different aspects of the budget and said the finance minister has shown growth rate at 5.52 percent against

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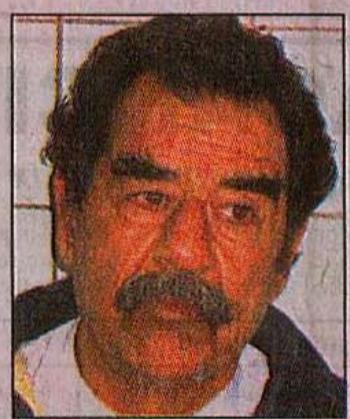


Army personnel unload supplies from a pick-up to camp on the Dhaka University campus yesterday, a few hours into a High Court directive to the government to deploy army at all polling centres in Dhaka-10 constituency during tomorrow's prestige polls.

PHOTO: STAR

Saddam to be handed to Iraqi custody today

AFP, Baghdad



Saddam Hussein

RABBANI MURDER
Sacked KEPZ chief, 6 others face charges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday pressed charges against seven people including prime suspect Abu Naser Chowdhury for the murder of Korean Export Processing Zone (KEPZ) managing director Ghulam Rabbani.

The investigation officer of the case, Panchalish Circle Assistant Commissioner of Chittagong Metropolitan Police Faruq Ahmed submitted the six-page charge-sheet to the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM), Chittagong at noon. The CMM ordered sending it to the Court of Metropolitan Sessions Judge for next course of action.

Terminated former KEPZ managing director Abu Naser

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PETITION AGAINST CARETAKER GOVT HC appoints two legal experts to seek advice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday appointed two senior lawyers as specialists to assist and advise the court on a writ petition challenging the validity of the 13th amendment to the constitution that allows general elections under caretaker government.

A larger HC bench of three judges appointed Barrister Rafiqul Haq and Advocate Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan as "amicus curiae" or friend of the court on the first day of hearing on the petition yesterday.

Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassir

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Husain formed the bench with Justice Jainul Abedin, Justice Awlad Ali and Justice Mirza Hossain Haider earlier this month for the hearing on the petition.

Supreme Court lawyer M Salimullah filed the petition on January 25, 2000 and the court issued a rule asking the government to explain in three weeks why the 13th amendment should not be declared unconstitutional.

The petitioner says the democratic structure of the government is the basic principle of the

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British envoy set to return to Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

British envoy to Bangladesh Anwar Chowdhury, who was injured in a grenade attack at Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) Shrine in Sylhet, is set to return to Dhaka after medical treatment in London for over a month.

"He will arrive shortly," said Milli Sengupta, head of press and public affairs of the British High Commission in Dhaka. However, she declined to provide any specific date.

She was reluctant to give details about his arrival saying that security issues were constantly under review.

Unknown assailants targeted Chowdhury, the first Bangladeshi

No headway in Balu murder case

Police hope to make breakthrough in 72 hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

hours."

On the motive behind the murder, Ali said by it the communist extremists wanted to create public panic, as most of the businessmen had stopped paying tolls to them. But he did not elaborate.

The KMP commissioner did not rule out the Khulna Press Club president's leading role against the murderers of journalist Manik Saha as another possible reason for the June-27 grenade attack. Balu was on the hit list of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP),

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63 Rab men rewarded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

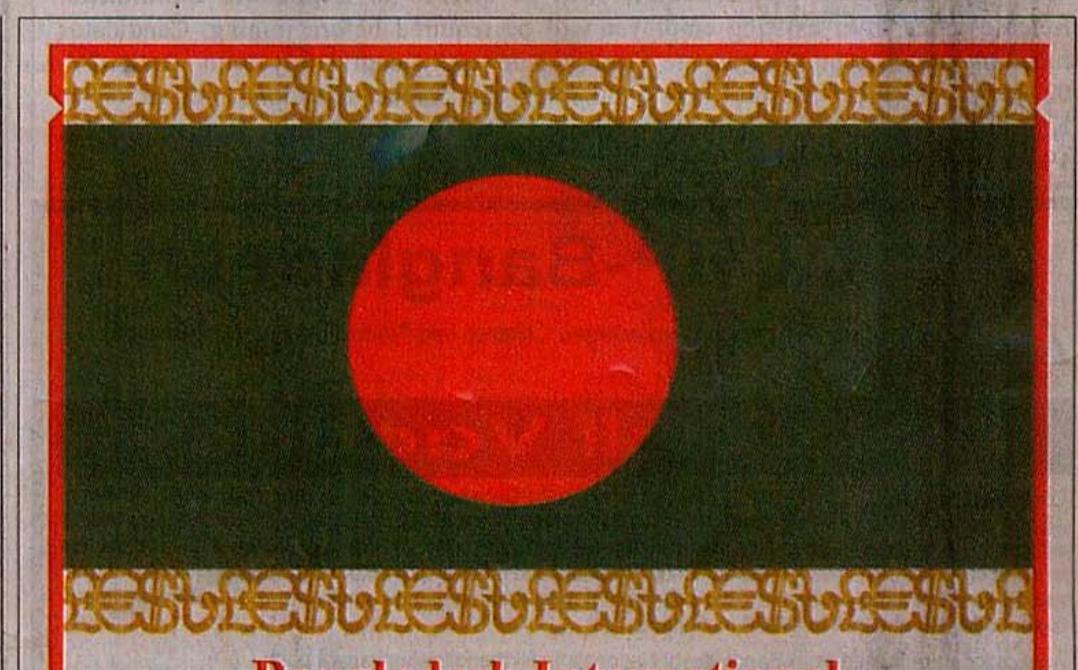
Home ministry yesterday rewarded 63 members of Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) for their 'outstanding performance' in arresting country's one of the most wanted criminals--Picchi Hannan and his accomplices on Saturday.

A cheque for Tk 10 lakh and a certificate were handed over to Lieutenant Colonel Chowdhury Fazlul Bari in a simple ceremony at the home ministry yesterday.

"We want to appreciate people who want to work," Lutfuzzaman Babar, state minister for home affairs told in his speech, adding, "if we can improve law and order, a whole lot of investment will be attracted to the country."

The arrest of Picchi Hannan will

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