

HC halts election to JS reserved seats for women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday directed the government and the Election Commission (EC) not to hold polls to 45 seats reserved for women in the Jatiya Sangsad, until hearing of a writ petition challenging the election process.

The HC bench of Justice MA Matin and Justice AFM Abdur Rahman passed the order following a petition filed by 13 women leaders seeking an injunction on the polls

process. The court fixed February 23 for hearing the petition.

On December 14 last year, the HC had issued a rule on the government asking it to explain in two weeks' time why the law providing for election to the reserved seats for woman should not be declared unconstitutional.

The court, however, had not then ruled on whether there should be a stay of operation of the law itself.

Two more writ petitions relating to the 14th amendment to the con-

stitution, which provided for the 45 reserved seats for women in parliament, were filed earlier and the HC had issued separate rule following the petitions.

The Jatiya Sangsad on November 29 last year passed the bill for indirect election to the reserved seats on proportional representation of political parties or alliances amid strong protests by the opposition lawmakers.

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SAARC SUMMIT

Date to be set with consent of 3 tsunami-hit member states

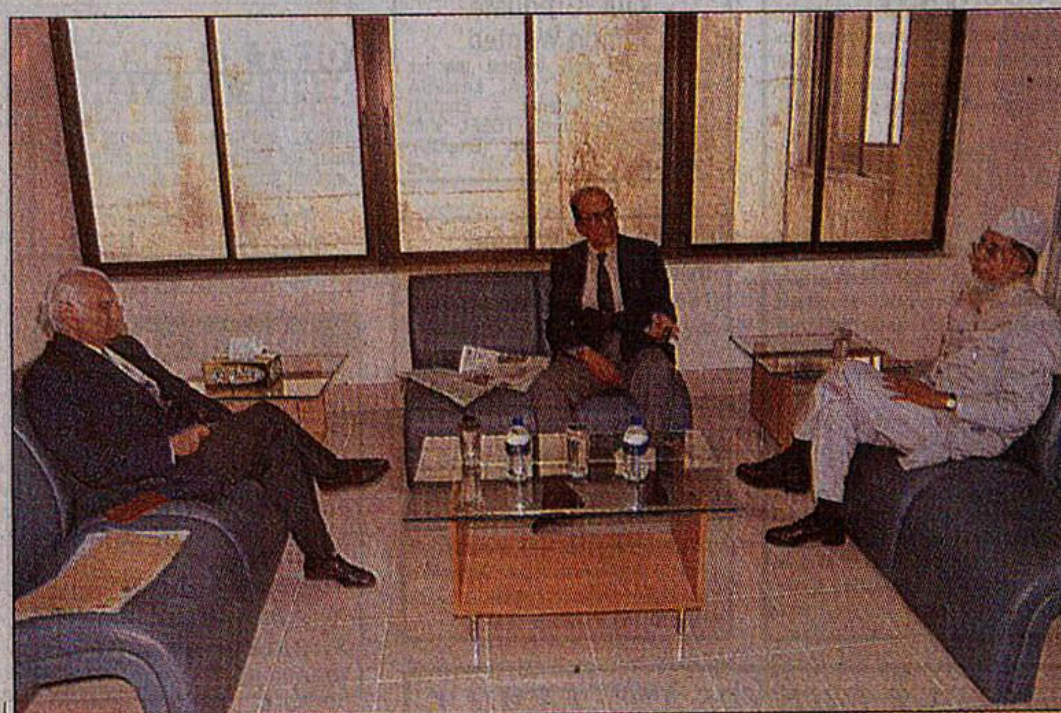
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 'convenience' of the three tsunami-affected member countries will get priority in fixing a fresh date for the postponed 13th Saarc summit, which is now likely to come after a summit of world leaders for post-tsunami rehabilitation on January 6 in Indonesia.

"We feel that considering their (the affected countries') psychological and physical conditions after the tsunami, their convenience will receive priority in fixing a new date for the summit," Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan told reporters in his office yesterday.

Morshed explained that leaders of Sri Lanka, India and the Maldives, the three affected states, will have a

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Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Justice Sultan Hossain Khan, centre, talks with ACC members Maniruddin Ahmed, right, and Maniruzzaman Miah at their new office at Agargaon in the city yesterday.

Army-criminal 3-hour gunbattle in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Security forces fought a three-hour fierce gunbattle with a band of criminals in a remote hilly area in Bandarban early yesterday exchanging around 500 shots.

The criminals used sophisticated weapons including rocket launchers during the shootout in Lulain, SEE PAGE 11 COL 2

Clarification

The Ministry of Agriculture has sent a clarification to The Daily Star regarding a report titled "Ministry 'ignores' blocks Tk 43 crore farm funds" published on January 2, 2005.

The ministry stated that "In fact, the Ministry of Agriculture appreciates Finance Ministry's support and co-operation with the Ministry of Agriculture in improving the present status of the agriculture sector, focusing it as the driving force of the economy, and (in) revitalising this sector."

ACC hamstrung by crises

Acting Secretary Matin resigns; commission stumbles without staff, rules

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Confusion reigns supreme at the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) which is yet to set its rules, regulations and staffing one and a half months into its formation.

The situation only worsened as former director general (DG) of the now defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac) and Acting ACC Secretary MA Matin resigned yesterday, a day after the government had announced all Bac staff as 'reserved

and not to work for the commission'.

The relocation of the commission from the Bac office in Segunbagicha to Agargaon yesterday did not help either.

In his resignation letter to the ACC chairman, Matin regretted discontinuing his job. He said the Cabinet Division's controversial decision about the Bac employees has resulted in a stalemate and there is no congenial atmosphere at the commission to continue working.

Matin alleged the Cabinet Division took the decision, though it was contrary to a clear opinion given by Attorney General AF Hassan Arif that all Bac employees would be absorbed into the ACC after dissolution of the bureau.

Earlier, after the formation of the ACC, the government had cancelled the contractual service of Matin but the ACC chair appointed him as secretary to the commission in addition to his job as the Bac DG.

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Baghdad governor assassinated

Bomber kills 11 at police checkpoint

REUTERS, Baghdad

Gunmen killed Baghdad's governor in Iraq's highest-profile assassination in eight months and a suicide bomber killed 11 people at a police checkpoint yesterday in an escalating campaign to wreck the January 30 election.

The shooting of Governor Ali al-Haidri in a roadside ambush showed insurgents' power to strike at the heart of the governing class, raising fresh doubts as to whether security

forces can protect politicians and voters as the ballot draws near.

The assassination took place hours after a bomber rammed a fuel truck into a checkpoint near Baghdad's Green Zone, a sprawling compound housing the Iraqi government and the US and British embassies. The vehicle went up in a giant fireball that rocked the capital.

The blast killed eight police commandos and three civilians and wounded 60 people, bringing fresh

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BNP's countrywide organisational drive begins

UNB, Thakurgaon

BNP's countrywide organisational drive with a 18-point agenda started here yesterday with a grand conference attended by grassroots level party leaders and activists.

Calling the grassroots level leaders pillars of the party, BNP Senior Secretary General Tarique Rahman said their support and cooperation will help to strengthen the party in rural areas.

Sustainable development of the country is not possible without development of rural areas, Tarique said, adding, "We have come to the

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HUGE GAS BILL ARREARS

Petrobangla seeks cabinet help

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Petrobangla has turned to the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs to recover its arrears of gas bills worth Tk 697 crore from 30 government entities, including a number of ministries, and three autonomous institutions.

In a request, which will be tabled before the committee today, Petrobangla says the delays in payments have put it into a corner, as it has to pay millions of dollars every

month to international oil companies to purchase gas.

The state oil and gas authority complains a dearth of funds has also stalled some of its urgent gas-related development projects. If the arrears were cleared, Petrobangla adds, it could start some gas exploration and development work.

Petrobangla says it has written several letters to the defaulters to pay up the bills without any positive reaction.

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The Suit King of The Garment

If any man runs for president, goes for high profile speech engagement, a high level job interview or books a good table at a very posh restaurant, it is likely that he will be wearing a suit. The suit with matching shirt, tie and a pair of shiny shoes, when worn knowledgeably remains the outfit of official power, signifying diplomacy, civility, and a great display of physical confidence and grace. It is the final statement of man's social class. The majesty of suit is beyond comparison.

Even though the fashion in context of a man's suit has changed, but their basic pattern has not. Over the last century through the period of great social and cultural change the suit continues its eternal journey to dynamism of its unique composition, character and supremacy. No one has yet to devise any surrogate.

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