

## Dhaka urged not

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In the wake of such clashes, a high-level BDR delegation reached Agartala in India yesterday noon for a meeting with top BSF officials.

DDG of BSF Gajendra Singh Chowdhury welcomed the eight-member BDR delegation led by Deputy Director General Brigadier General SM Golam Rabbani at Tripura border.

IG of BSF for Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur and Nagaland Shri SC Srivastava will lead a 14-member Indian team.

The two sides sit at 9:00am today to deal with a number of contentious issues.

Apart from barbed wire fences, construction of roads, bridges and pump houses on the Indian side within 150 yards of the no man's land will dominate the meeting, said an official at the BDR headquarters.

"Firing on and killing of innocent and unarmed Bangladeshi people by the BSF and Indian citizens are also likely to come up at the talks," the official said seeking anonymity.

The other issues on the agenda are BSF camps on the border, security, obstruction of development work on the Bangladesh side by the BSF, and smuggling of arms and ammunition and drugs.

Indian private television channel ETV yesterday quoted Rabbani as saying that Bangladesh would not allow the BSF to erect fences within 150 yards of the no man's land.

Our Dinajpur correspondent reports: A commander-level flag meeting between BDR and BSF will be held tomorrow near Barshalu

### CONTEMPT CHARGE

## HC asks three dailies to reply by April 13

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday asked editors and publishers of three national dailies to submit by April 13 their affidavits in the contempt rule for running reports on court proceedings in a prayer filed by former inspector general of police Shahudul Haque.

The order came when editors and publishers of the three newspapers -- The Independent, The Daily Star, and The Daily Amar Desh -- sought for a four-week time for submitting the affidavits.

The newspapers face a contempt charge for carrying a report of United News of Bangladesh (UNB) on March 1. The report, released by news agency UNB the previous day, dealt with rejection of a court prayer filed by former IGP Shahudul.

On an application drawing attention of the court to the report, Advocate Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed MP told the court on March 2 that the information in the report was wrong.

In response to the application, the High Court bench comprising Justice Joyrul Abedin and Justice Miftah Uddin Chowdhury had issued a contempt rule against editors, publishers and reporters of the three dailies. The court had also ordered them to appear before it in person.

Editor and Publisher of The Independent Mahbubul Alam, Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star, Mahfuz Anam, and Amar Desh Editor Amanullah Kabir and Publisher Hashmat Ali appeared before the court yesterday.

Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud moved on behalf of Dr Kamal Hossain, counsel for The Daily Star and The Independent while Advocate Joyrul Abedin stood for the Amar Desh. Rokan was assisted by Barrister Sara Hossain and Barrister Tanjibul Alam.

Rokan submitted that the news report published by the newspapers was in fact supplied by news agency UNB, and no reporter from these three newspapers had anything to do with writing the report.

Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed told the court yesterday that he did not submit any contempt petition, rather he just submitted an application to draw the court's attention to 'misreporting'.

Barrister Rokan, at this point, pleaded with the court to clear the defendants of the charge. But the matter remained unresolved as the court fixed April 13 as the next date for hearing.

## AL, BNP lawmakers

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regard," Sheikh Selim added.

Besides, the meeting discussed inclusion of a provision in the law of pension for lawmakers.

Indian parliament members are entitled to pension after the expiry of membership in parliament. "We will examine the [Indian] pension system before drafting the law," Selim said.

The meeting also discussed amendment to the current Warrant of Precedence to place the lawmakers above all government officials including Cabinet Secretary, Chief Election Commissioner and chiefs of armed forces.

The parliamentary standing committee on privileges led by the speaker at a meeting on January 18

village in Atoari upazila of Panchagarh district to defuse border tension.

Colonel Kaiser Uddin, sector commander of 15 rifle battalion of Dinajpur, will lead the Bangladesh side while Commander OP Gour from Kishanganj BSF camp will lead the Indian team.

The BDR and BSF repeatedly traded fire following a dispute over the construction of a dam at Barshalupara in Atoari upazila, panicking people of the area.

According to BDR, Water Development Board (WDB) and other sources, BSF members of Moragati outpost along with over 100 Indian villagers intruded into Bangladesh territory yesterday morning and attempted to stop construction of the dam. They also tried to loot construction materials.

BDR personnel and workers foiled their bid, local sources said.

## Habiganj

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the returning officer or assistant returning officer is March 29. Scrutiny of nomination papers will be held on March 30 while the last date of withdrawal of candidature is April 25.

The seat fell vacant with the assassination of former Finance Minister and Awami League leader Shah AMS Kibria in a grisly grenade attack at Boidyer Bazar in Habiganj Sadar upazila on January 27.

### ZIA BOMB HOAX

## Phone call made to trouble Emirates Police tell court

### COURT CORRESPONDENT

Mahmud Hasan Chishti, arrested on charge of making a bomb hoax at Zia International Airport (ZIA), was placed on a three-day remand yesterday.

Airport police produced Chisti, an employee of Emirates Airlines, before the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka at 1:30pm, seeking a seven-day remand.

The police told the court Chisti made the hoax call to trouble the authorities of Emirates Airlines following a conflict with them.

He was arrested at around 5:30pm on Sunday after Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) officials detected his phone number through a caller ID system.

A Kuwait-bound flight at 7:00am with 200 passengers was postponed for four hours as an unidentified caller threatened to blow up the aircraft the same day.

## Gulshan OC

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Metropolitan Sessions Judge, Dhaka.

After the hearing, Judge Momin Ullah fixed today for order on the issue.

The accused cops are OC Mohammad Nasir Uddin, sub-inspectors (SIs) Mohammad Sharif, Mostafizur Rahman, Asaduzzaman Asad, Mohammad Hasan, Zillu Khan, Mohammad Nayeem, sergeant Mohammad Rahman and constable Syed Zahir Uddin.

Engineer Monzurul Hossain of Power Development Department (PWD), Work Assistant Yusuf Ali, Manager Mohammad Saiful Islam, a peon of Infectious Diseases Hospital (IDH), Ahmed Ali and Forhad Halim were the other accused.

The complainant in the petition said the accused cops in connivance with the other five took the bribe in two terms.

He said the government made an attempt to evict the slum dwellers, who were living in Sattala Basti for long, on June 22, 2003.

The High Court (HC) issued a status quo on the eviction attempt following a writ petition filed by the slum dwellers, he added. The status quo order will remain valid until disposal of rule.

However, Gulshan police on January 8 and 14 raided the slum twice and beat up the men and sexually harassed women, Rabbani said. The police also arrested 300 people but released half of them after taking Tk 10 lakh in bribe, he added.

He said the police sent 150 slum dwellers to a court implicating them in false cases. He alleged the police took Tk 3 lakh from them for the favour of placing them under a section of the Dhaka Metropolitan Ordinance (DMP).

decided to upgrade the privileges of the lawmakers and formed the sub-committee to make a draft for a law to that effect. Yesterday's meeting, held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, was the first meeting of the sub-committee.

Convener of the sub-committee and Chief Whip Khandakar Delwar Hossain told The Daily Star that they have only started to discuss the issues. He however declined to elaborate.

Sub-committee member and BNP lawmaker Mizanur Rahman Minu was present at the meeting.

Prime Minister's parliamentary affairs adviser Saaluddin Quader Chowdhury attended the meeting as a representative of the prime minister.

### 9 INDIANS

## Police quiz BNP leaders

### UNB, Comilla

Police yesterday interrogated Laksham upazila BNP President and former MP Saiful Islam Hiru and three others as to why nine Indians were engaged in building the podium for the prime minister's public meeting.

The other three grilled are Karun Kumar Dev Roy, member of the gate and podium building committee, Nuru Mia, owner of the jeep that carried the Indians from border, and its driver Zahir.

On Sunday night, police interrogated Swapan Saha, senior vice-president of the upazila BNP and convener of the podium-construction sub-committee, for four hours.

The investigation team also grilled Amin, the caretaker of Hotel Plaza where the Indians stayed after they were brought in for the work.

Police declined to reveal the outcome of the interrogation "for the interest of investigation".

The arrested Indians were quizzed yesterday. Police said they noticed "inconsistencies" in their statements.

As a four-day remand of the Indians ends today, police said they are likely to be taken on fresh remand for further interrogation.

Meanwhile, a four-member committee, formed Sunday with Additional Police Superintendent Lutful Kabir as its convener, is investigating the suspicious preparatory work for the prime minister's Laksham public meeting, which was postponed following the detection and arrest of the Indian workers on Friday.

The group of nine, who came to Laksham from the Indian State of Tripura without passport, claimed themselves as decorator-workers during police interrogation.

They were quizzed by intelligence for the third day of a four-day remand.

Different sources said Gautam Bhoumik, the owner of Tarekswar Decorator at Pratapgar in Agartala, used to build podiums for big functions in Comilla. They had also worked for the wedding ceremonies of two daughters of Swapan Saha.

## 3 policemen

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(South) Ansar Uddin Khan Pathan yesterday disclosed before the court that the three were on duty at the time of the incident. He also described the incident that took place at Shahbagh intersection on March 6.

After the incident, the same bench directed the traffic DC to appear before the court with a report giving the names of the traffic police and the records of the case filed in 2004.

The incident took place on March 6, when Justice Sinha was on his way to court with his daughter to drop her at Viharunessa Noon School and College. As they reached Shahbagh intersection at about 8:45am, a traffic police named Shahid signalled him to pull over to receive records of a case filed against the car.

He gave a slip wherein the number of the case was mentioned as Warrant No. 6403/04.

"The concerned judge was bewildered at the behaviour on the part of the members of a disciplined service on duty," reads the court order served on traffic DC on March 6.

"If there was existence of such a case, it could have been served in the usual course as the car in which the judge was travelling is a government vehicle but the traffic police has no authority whatsoever to direct a judge on the way to court to stop his car and serve the papers upon him personally by detaining him on the roadside."

"The acts on the part of the persons involved in the incident are contemptuous, inasmuch as, such acts tantamount to undermining the honour and dignity of a judge of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh," the order continued.

Applying before the court yesterday, traffic DC Pathan sought apology for the incident but said that the on-duty traffic policemen acted in accordance with the directions of the CMM.

Barrister MA Samad, counsel for the DC traffic, told The Daily Star last night that the court exempted his client from any charge in this connection.

Additional Attorney General Abdur Rezzak Khan and Deputy Attorney General Alal moved for the state.

## Finance probe BB

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Finance Secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan yesterday sought one month's time from the committee for submitting a report on the allegation, sources said.

The CAG report said the central bank in FY 1997-98 fixed salary structure and gave time scale to its staff through wrong explanation of the government order and thus made an additional payment of Tk 3.20 crore.

Spending the amount should be considered as a loss of public money, the report added.

The central bank, however, in its reply to the CAG office said it had fixed salary structure and time scale in line with the decision of the bank's board of directors.

The parliamentary committee Chairman Harun Al Rashid said at the meeting that no government organisation is beyond accountability, especially in case of spending public money.

The committee also started looking into several audit objections against Bangladesh Railway and Sadharan Bima Corporation.

However, due to busy schedule of the secretaries to the three ministries concerned, the committee postponed detailed discussion on the issues for the next meeting.

## Reforms in caretaker

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the Election Commission (EC).

The discussants suggested selecting a non-partisan and neutral person from any profession, who is acceptable to all, as the head of caretaker government to hold the national elections in a free and fair manner.

Apprehending rigging in the next election, they said the government has extended the retirement age of justices with an ill motive to make a person loyal to them the chief of the next caretaker government.

The main opposition Awami League (AL) organised the roundtable titled "Democracy and Election: necessity of reforming the caretaker government system" at a city hotel as part of its campaign for reforms of the system.

After the discussion by lawmakers, politicians, legal experts and political scientists, the meeting decided to form an 'all-party committee' within a couple of days to work out concrete proposals on the issue.

The committee will seek opinions and suggestions of all concerned about the caretaker government reforms and make a set of recommendations.

"We will complete this by mid May, before the end of the tenure of the incumbent chief election commissioner (CEC)," said AL General Secretary Abdul Jailul who moderated the roundtable.

Gono Forum President and eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain said, "Without reforms in the existing system of forming caretaker government and the Election Commission, the elections can not be free, fair and just."

"It's an urgent matter and we all should mobilise people to realise the reform demands," he said suggesting the appointment of an honest, neutral, non-partisan and efficient person acceptable to all as the chief adviser.

Comparing election to a game, Dr Kamal said, "If the umpire or the referee of the game is not neutral and impartial, none accepts its results."

Referring to the interim government of 1990, he said, "We did not get enough time to take public opinion on the provision of appointing an acceptable person rather than the chief justice as the head of the interim government."

"We have gathered experiences in the last two elections of 1996 and 2001 and should go for reform of the system to ensure true public representation in parliament," he said.

On strengthening the EC, he proposed that the commission will have to have the power to formulate its own budget and appoint staff who will run the election instead of the employees deputed from the administration cadre.

"I have received a complaint from a member of the Election Commission that his orders were not carried out due to intervention of a secretary," Dr Kamal said.

Without naming anyone, he said some people are trying to create confusion about the demand of reforms in the caretaker government system. "We want to make it clear that we are not against the concept of caretaker government... questions have been raised about how the interim body is doing its duties," he said.

Justice KM Sobhan said rules will have to be framed so that the caretaker government cannot issue any ordinance before the election. He proposed introduction of international election observers from the United Nations and the European Union.

Barrister Amir-Ul Islam proposed formation of a team of 10 ombudsmen in line with the constitutional provision and said the team will not only conduct the general election but also act as watchdog for all time. He said the extension of retirement age of judges has damaged the integrity of the judiciary as "many are now calculating when he or she will become head of the caretaker government."

Mujahidul Islam Selim, general secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), supported the idea of caretaker government reform and called for a united movement and political parties to realise the reform demands.

He placed a number of reform proposals that included prohibiting loan defaulters and fundamentalist parties from contesting the national elections.

## Fiscal comfort

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which accounts for 1 percent of the GDP. This has only one meaning -- the tax-GDP ratio will decline and go off the government's PRSP target.

The other strain that will develop in the economy is in the budget deficit. Traditionally, budget deficit undershoots at the end of the year, which means the actual deficit is less than targeted. However, with a dismal revenue situation and expenditure overshoot in the first six months, it will be hard to expect such a saving grace.

The current expenditure in the first two quarters of FY05 totalling Tk 121 billion shows a runaway 22 percent increase from last fiscal's same quarters mainly because of flood-induced spending. More expenditure shocks are on way as the government plans partial implementation of the pay commission report in January. And a rise in savings certificate interest rate is on cards. The other cushion that the economy used to have in lower ADP expenditure will also not be there. This means the budget deficit will remain almost stagnant at 4.7 percent of the GDP, as targeted in the PRSP.

But these developments will unfold another major challenge -- to rein in domestic financing to the target of 1.9 percent of GDP. This can be achieved only if external financing assumption of 2.4 percent of GDP can be maintained as

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President Hasanul Haque Inu tabled a few proposals regarding the functioning of EC. He demanded resignation of the present CEC and appointment of a new one through consensus.

The polls should be conducted by permanent officials of the EC," he said opposing the existing system of appointing returning officers and assistant returning officers from the administration cadre of the government.

The JSD president also demanded introduction of voter identity cards to check false voting. He sought a clear definition of the routine duties and policymaking work of the interim government.

Presenting the keynote, Professor Shamsul Huda Haroon suggested amending the system of appointing a judge as the head of caretaker government. He said the judges should be included in the advisory committee of the caretaker government.

"You should not always pick up the chief justice as the chief of the caretaker government. Better you can choose the chief from a wide range of professionals, credible to all party and opinions, coming out from the narrow one," he suggested.

"In parliamentary system, head of the state is a titular head. But it is opposite in the caretaker government. Here, head of the state is also the head of three services -- army, navy and air force. The caretaker government is also accountable to him. For all these reasons, a balance of power in the caretaker government is needed," he added.

Workers Party General Secretary Bimal Biswas, Gontolanti Party President Azizul Islam Khan, Prof Borhanuddin Khan Jahangir, Prof AK Azad Chowdhury, Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, Prof Harun-ur-Rashid, Editor of the Bangladesh Observer Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury and AL advisory body member Dr SA Malek took part in the discussion.

Senior Awami League leaders Zillur Rahman, Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Abdur Razzaq, Matia Chowdhury and ASHK Sadeque were present in the meeting.

### OTHER PROPOSALS

The discussants came up with a wide range of reform proposals for the caretaker government system and the EC.

They said the EC should have a separate secretariat of its own and it should have financial authority. The CEC and other election commissioners must be acceptable to all. Not only the judges, member of other professions such as lawyers, teachers and former bureaucrats can be the chief of the caretaker government, they said.

Another proposal was that the interim government will discharge only 'routine functions' and shall not take any 'policy decision'.

Powers of the president and chief of the interim government have to be defined clearly and charges of the armed forces division should be given upon the chief adviser and the armed forces should not have the magistracy power, they suggested.

### CCC ELECTION

## AL nominates Mohiuddin

### STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The main opposition Awami League has nominated Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury to retain his post in the upcoming CCC election.

An extended meeting of the Executive Council of the AL Chittagong city, north and south units nominated Mohiuddin on Sunday evening.

Chaired by Chittagong city AL President and former minister MA Mannan, the meeting at Muslim Institute auditorium unanimously nominated Mohiuddin, also general secretary of city unit AL.

He was elected CCC mayor in the 1994 and 2000 elections as a candidate of Chittagong Nagorik Committee. He will contest the next election as an AL candidate for the first time.

agreed in the Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF) of the IMF.

However, when this external financing framework was agreed upon, it was thought that two PRGF tranches of \$70 million each would be available in January and June. Both of them remain uncertain now because of non-fulfilment of a number of major conditions. Disbursement under the World Bank's Development Support Credit III is still not in sight.

These mean the government will have to take recourse to domestic borrowing, upsetting the target of 1.9 percent of GDP.

More worrying is the development in the external sector with exports dipping rapidly. When the fiscal year began, exports had a 28 percent growth, which has now gone down to a piffing 10.5 percent. This coupled with fiscal overrun will ultimately put strains on foreign exchange reserves now just around \$3 billion.

## Ammo haul

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led by Hasinur Rahman raided a remote area of Naikkhongchhari and seized the arms that were found abandoned.

However, none was arrested in this connection.

## UAE bans use of child camel jockeys

### AFP, Abu Dhabi

The United Arab Emirates on Sunday ordered a ban on the use of children as jockeys in camel races, a favorite sport in the oil-rich Gulf region that has been widely criticised over the use of minors brought in from poor parts of the world.

From April 16, it will be illegal for jockeys under the age of 16 and weighing less than 45 kilograms (100 pounds) to race, according to the official WAM news agency.

A similar move was announced in December by neighbouring Qatar, which has plans to instead use robots as jockeys.

Since 1993, the UAE has banned the use of children under 15 but abuses are widespread and no-one has ever been brought to justice.

Gulf Arab monarchies are trying to bring order to the national sport in the face of protests over the trafficking of young children from the Indian subcontinent and Africa as jockeys.

The US State Department and human rights groups have raised the alarm over the exploitation of children by traffickers who pay impoverished parents a paltry sum or simply kidnap their victims.

The children, mostly from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, are then smuggled into the Gulf states.

They are often starved by employers to keep them light and maximize their racing potential. Mounting camels three times their height, the children -- some as young as four -- face the risk of being thrown off and trampled.

## Cabinet okays formation of wage body

### BSS, Dhaka

The cabinet yesterday approved a proposal for the formation of national wages and productivity commission-2005 to recommend new wage structures and related facilities for the workers of the state-run industrial units.

The approval came in the weekly cabinet meeting held at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in the chair. It kayed the internal procurement target and price of wheat in 2005. As per the cabinet decision, 50,000 metric tons of wheat will be purchased from the growers at Tk 12 per kilogram from March 24 to June 30.

The report of the special committee on abandoned property was also placed in the meeting.

## Dr Kamal

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Dr Kamal was addressing a roundtable in the city organised by main opposition Awami League on proposal for reforms in the caretaker government system. Some people are trying to create confusion about the demands for reforms in the caretaker government and the Election Commission, the constitution expert said, adding, "We should be aware of them."

"This person (Moudu) had also termed the interim government of 1990 unconstitutional just a day before the then acting president Shahabuddin Ahmed took charge."

"At that time, the present day law minister was the vice president and asked why an interim government was necessary when a vice president existed in the country," he said.

## Detective

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Galib on February 23.

Following the decision to form a high powered detective committee at yesterday's law and order committee meeting, State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfuzzaman Babar directed the police to conduct block-raids at different hotels and slums in the capital to nab hiding criminals, BDNEWS adds.

The minister also directed the officials concerned to take steps for quick disposal of the cases pending for over five to six months.

"Police are hunting for Bangla Bhai," the minister said.

Police and officials of Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) will conduct joint drives to nab the drug peddlers in the city, he added.