

AL, allies to launch

FROM PAGE 1
Political experts have also contributed in preparing the set of proposals.

To give a final touch to the drafts prepared by a committee comprising senior leaders of the AL, 11-party alliance, JSD and NAP, the opposition leaders held a series of meetings yesterday.

Eminent lawyer and Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain, who returned to country yesterday, was informed about the reform agenda in the evening.

Dr Kamal said the opposition parties have agreed on a common decision regarding the electoral and caretaker government reforms. "We will move ahead jointly with the reform proposal," he added.

He added two clauses in the reform agenda. According to one clause, the reserved women seats will be 50 percent of the total seats, in proportion with women's votes. The other clause states no person with criminal records can be associated with the political parties.

"We have suggested a balance of power between the president and the chief adviser during the interim period," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said. Besides, there is a set of proposals to make the EC a truly independent body, which will have absolute power in holding the elections, he added.

Sources in the opposition camp said the reform agenda suggests appointment of the chief adviser through consensus of all political parties and that he cannot have association, present or past, with any political party. Besides, the proposals suggest that the caretaker government will discharge routine work only and shall not take any policy-making decision. The Ministry of Defence has to be put under the chief adviser of the caretaker government, it says.

Bimal Biswas, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Bangladesh, a component of the 11-party alliance, yesterday said reforms could be brought without amending the Constitution. One of the main proposals of the opposition -- appointment of the chief adviser through consensus of all parties -- is possible under the Clause 5 of Article 58C of the Constitution, he said.

Caretaker Government System

The agreed document has following proposals about reforms in the caretaker government system:

The chief adviser and other advisors of the caretaker government should be appointed through consensus of all political parties and acceptable to all. The chief and other advisors shall not have any active involvement, present or past, in any political parties.

The president will act on the advice of the chief adviser of the caretaker government.

The caretaker government will remain accountable to the constitution, and chief adviser will enjoy the same rank, status and power like the prime minister, and the advisors of the ministers.

The Ministry of Defence has to be put under the chief adviser of caretaker government instead of the president.

The interim government will discharge only routine functions and shall not take any policy decision. It will only assist the Election Commission (EC) in holding the general elections.

Reforms in the EC and some electoral laws

The opposition camp proposes a set of suggestions to make the EC an independent and active body and demand reform in some electoral laws.

The appointments of the chief election commissioner and other members of the EC have to be made in consultation with all the active political parties.

The EC will act with discussion and suggestions of different political

Cop dies, 6 hurt

FROM PAGE 20
truck coming from opposite direction.

Police constable Ayub Ali, 40, died on the spot and six others were injured. The minister's car, which was behind the protection car, escaped the accident.

The injured policemen are ASI Azhar Ali, 40, Naik Imrul Kais, 35, constables Rabiul, 35, Masud, 34, Fakrul Islam, 35, and driver Arjan, 35.

Of them, Masud and Kais were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College and Hospital in a critical condition while four others to Pabna and Ishwardi hospitals.

Later, the minister visited the injured policemen at Ishwardi hospital and asked the doctors to provide proper treatment for them.

In a separate road accident near Mathpur on the Pabna-Nagarbari highway, one person died and 12 others were injured at a bus overturned on the road about 11:30am.

Locals said the accident occurred as the driver of the Pabna-bound bus from Nagarbari lost control over the steering.

When local people were rescuing the injured, a truck coming from opposite direction hit the bus, killing one of the rescuers, Saiful Islam, 20, on the spot.

Angered by the incident, locals put up barricades on the highway, blocking the traffic for three hours. Later, police came to the scene and cleared the road.

In another accident, a passenger of a rickshaw-van died and two others were injured when a truck hit the van at Gokulnagar on the Ishwardi-Rajshahi highway at about 1:00pm. The victim's identity could not be known.

parties.

All must respect the EC and its integrity as a constitutional body.

The EC must remain free from control of the executive branch of the government and have rights to recruit its staff. The EC will have to extend its structure at the upazila levels.

The EC will have to have the power to formulate its own budget and appoint staff who will run the election instead of employees deputed from the administration cadre.

It must also have the independence in appointing returning officers, presiding officers and others in charge of the election duties. The government should meet all directives and requirement of the commission.

The commission has the right to take actions against any official if found guilty during the electioneering.

The EC will declare the election schedule and formulate election rules independently.

The EC will have the power to postpone elections due to violation of the electoral rules and regulations, and magistracy power to take actions against the culprits.

The voter list has to be prepared transparently, while voting rights of the expatriates and a separate voter list for the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) have to be ensured.

The EC will form all-party election observation groups to monitor the elections.

Lists of international election observer groups will have to be publicised at least a month before the election.

The EC will demarcate the constituencies.

Votes will be counted in presence of the agents of all candidates at the polling centres, and copies of election results will have to be distributed to them, the candidates and the election observers from the centres.

The election tribunal will dispose any case regarding the election results within two months and the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court will dispose such cases within three months, if there is any appeal.

A sub-clause in the reform proposals says an election officer will monitor electoral expenses of the candidates in every constituency and send reports to the EC secretariat.

In order to protect the election process from the destructive impact of black money, candidates must make public declaration of their assets and their dependants. All candidates must submit statements of their election expenses within seven days of polls.

All candidates have to provide personal information of their academic qualifications, source of income, description of assets and liabilities to the EC.

None can contest the election from a political party unless he is involved with the party for at least three years. Black money holders, loan defaulters and relatives of loan defaulters, persons who opposed the Liberation War, and any government or army official before five years of his retirement or removal from the job will not be eligible to contest in the election.

It suggests imposing ban on using religion as a tool to seek votes in the election. It also wants ban on electioneering at religious places including mosques, temples and churches.

Flash flood

FROM PAGE 20
flood exposing some 50,000 people of the area to intolerable suffering.

The government response has been inadequate except for a few areas. In Sherpur, the district administration has allocated Tk 1 lakh, 50 tonne rice and dry food, of which Tk 30,000 has already been distributed, said MAN Siddique, DC of Sherpur.

ACC plans

FROM PAGE 20
"There is a graft-glut at the ports. We'll be able to curb corruption if we can set up offices at ports," Justice Sultan told The Daily Star.

Prof Miah will sit with NBR officials next week to seek their cooperation in tracing tax evasion at different ports.

The commission will deploy vigilance teams at the ZIA, Chittagong and Benapole ports if the government does not allow it to set up the offices, said the ACC chairman.

The experience of having graft watchdogs at ports was not encouraging though. The now-defunct Bac (Bureau of Anti-corruption) office at the ZIA was closed down on higher authorities' orders after it seized a huge illegal consignment in 1988. The office was set up to keep an eye on tax collection, smuggling of contraband goods and currencies, and passport-related corruption.

The commission will sit again on July 20 to decide on approval of the charge-sheet submission of 21 corruption cases, filed by Bac.

Prof Miah observed that it would be illegal to give approval unless there is a rule. "Since the rule is yet to be formulated, any approval in this regard will be illegal," Prof Miah told The Daily Star last night.

But both Justice Sultan and Maniruddin opposed his view.

"I don't think giving approval before the formulation of rule is illegal. And, it will not be wise to stop the process only because we don't have a rule," the ACC chairman told this correspondent.

Section 32 (2) of the ACC Act says the procedure of approval will be decided by rule, which will be formulated by the commission and approved by the president.

Truce in danger as Lanka rebels pull back

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels withdrew from government-controlled areas in the restive east yesterday as diplomats and analysts warned that a three-year truce after two decades of civil war could be in danger of rupturing.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) -- who are allowed to move through government areas under the ceasefire -- have threatened to use armed escorts to safeguard against attack, a move that would violate the truce and raise the spectre of possible confrontations.

A rebel ultimatum demanding government safety assurances expires later on Thursday.

"LTTE cadres have withdrawn from their offices in the government-controlled areas in the east due to increased ceasefire violations by the military," rebel media coordinator Daya Master said, referring to offices of the Tigers' political wing.

"The LTTE is moving to alternative places for their own safety, he added.

Sri Lanka's military has boosted troop numbers on patrol in the east as tension escalates over a spate of deadly attacks which the army blames on feuding between the mainstream rebels and a renegade faction. The Tigers accuse the military of helping breakaway cadres mount attacks.

"The situation is very serious," said one senior foreign diplomat on condition of anonymity. "But I don't think it will be war."

The standoff comes just weeks after President Chandrika Kumaratunga's government agreed to share \$3 billion (1.7 billion pounds) worth of tsunami aid with the Tigers, whose war for self-rule was pushed into limbo by the 2002 truce.

Kumaratunga appealed for calm on Thursday, saying unspecified measures had been put in place to stabilise the situation, and other measures would also be implemented to ensure strict adherence to the ceasefire.

"The President appeals to all concerned to exercise restraint and contribute towards normalising the situation," her office said in a statement.

Donors had hoped that the tsunami aid deal could help jump-start talks to permanently end the island's protracted civil war, which killed more than 64,000 people. Peace talks stalled two years ago and attacks have gained momentum in recent months.

Instead the pact led to the split of Kumaratunga's ruling coalition, now reduced to a hamstrung minority in parliament and struggling to govern, adding political instability to the mix.

Britain reviews power to ban pro-terrorism foreigners

AFP, London

Britain, in the wake of the London bombings, is reviewing its power to exclude foreigners who incite terrorism, Prime Minister Tony Blair's spokesman said yesterday.

Briefing reporters on Blair's weekly cabinet meeting, he said Home Secretary Charles Clarke had started "an immediate review of his powers to exclude people from this country who are likely to incite terrorism".

He said Clarke, as the senior minister in charge of public security and immigration, already has the authority to ban foreigners from Britain "if their presence is not conducive to the public good".

"Fourteen people were excluded in 2004 on that basis, 12 of them on national security grounds," Blair's spokesman said.

"This included a radical Pakistani cleric who was in the country on a visitor's visa and who spoke at a mosque in Glasgow to encourage jihad," he said, without identifying the cleric.

He said Clarke, as part of his review, was considering how Britain might "automatically" react to the exclusion of a foreigner by another country, such as the United States or an EU member state.

Clarke is also considering whether to slap conditions on asylum-seekers and those given the right to stay permanently in Britain, expressly prohibiting them from inciting terrorism.

Blair's spokesman said the prime minister would be meeting in the coming days with police and intelligence chiefs, Muslim community representatives, and leaders of the main opposition parties to seek a consensus on the "pace and content" of new anti-terrorist legislation.

Britain's core anti-terrorist law remains the Terrorism Act 2000, but it is to be complemented next year by legislation that would outlaw both "acts preparatory to terrorism" and condoning terrorism.

Fifty-two people are confirmed dead, and hundreds injured, after three Underground subway trains and a double-decker bus were attacked last Thursday by four apparent British-born suicide bombers.

Blair has linked the attacks to Islamic extremists and Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaeda organisation, as police step up hunt for those who masterminded the bloodiest attacks on British soil since World War II.

When innocents

FROM PAGE 1

intentionally in the incidents.

The killing of Jagannath University student Iqbal Hossain Masum, Jubo League leader Abul Kalam Azad Sumon and caretaker of a house Mohammad Sohel in the so-called crossfire in the last two months embarrassed the authorities as none of them were involved in criminal activities.

The police branded Masum as a criminal and an accused in four murder cases. They also said he was killed in an encounter with 'Cheetah', a special force of Detective Branch (DB). But his family members said he was innocent. He was killed in cold blood after being picked up from a family programme, they said.

Newspapers' investigations also did not find Masum's name in the FIR (first information report) of the murder cases.

The police claim that Masum's name came in the confessional statement of a man arrested in connection with a double-murder in 2003. The man told a magistrate that six people including he and Masum were involved in all the four murders. But his statement created controversy over Masum's involvement.

Jubo League leader Abul Kalam Azad Sumon was killed on May 30 this year. Rab claimed that he was killed in a "shootout" with them in Rampura, but witnesses said he was picked up from Goran on the previous day.

The Rab dubbed Sumon as notorious "Goaliya Sumon" saying he was accused of murdering one Fazlu at Bhuiyanpara in Khilgaon and slaughtering one Belayet near Goran Shahi Masjid. But an investigation by The Daily Star revealed that there were no proof of Sumon's involvement in criminal activities and his addresses mentioned in the charge-sheets of the two murder cases were full of discrepancies.

The Daily Star probe also revealed that the killed Jubo League leader and the Rab-claimed "Goaliya Sumon" were not the same person.

Sabujbagh police said "Sumon" is accused in three cases, one each for murder, rape and theft in 1996 and 1997. But there is no accused named "Sumon" in the charge-sheet of the 1996 murder case.

In the charge-sheets of the rape and theft cases, police accused Sumon mentioning his father's name as "Hakim." But both the permanent and present addresses mentioned in the charge-sheets were wrong.

On May 9, a patrol police team of Kafur gunned down Mohammad Sohel who had been working for the last 15 years at the house of a businessman at Monipurpara. Family members claimed there was not even a general diary against him. But the police branded him as a mugger to justify his killing.

The police said Sohel was killed when they opened shots on a gang of muggers who hurled bombs at the cops after being challenged during an act of mugging.

A day later the truth came to light when a rickshawpuller, Benzir, said Sohel was not among the muggers. He told an advocate that the police nabbed Sohel when he was going home by his rickshaw during the incident.

The rickshawpuller said the policemen asked him to go and picked up his passenger (Sohel) who was later found shot dead.

A key witness to Awami League (AL) lawmaker Ahasanullah Master murder Sumon Ahmed Majumder

Price hike dwarfs

FROM PAGE 1
market report showed the prices of rice to have risen by 4 to 5.2 percent in just a month. And rice price accounts for 60 to 70 percent of the inflation.

But the prime minister in her July 10 speech in parliament accused the media of misreporting on price hike of essentials and claimed prices are within the reach of the common people.

According to a BBS report, during the end of 2001 an agricultural labourer used to earn Tk 67 a day on an average, which rose to Tk 77 during the end of 2004. His income rose by just Tk 10 in three years.

On the other hand, the TCB report put the price of coarse rice that would cost Tk 13 to 14 per kg in November 2001 at Tk 16.5 to 18 yesterday, indicating an increase of Tk 3.5 to 5 in the price range. It means, an agricultural labourer loses the rise in his income buying only two kgs of rice.

INFLATION SITUATION
Inflation has risen in both average and point-to-point basis. On a point-to-point basis, inflation in food items in May rose by 24.2 percent point from the previous month, standing at 8.26 percent. In case of non-food items, the rise was 35 percent point, standing at 4.80 percent.

On an average, inflation rose by .11 percentage point from the previous month and stood at 6.3 percent in May, overruling the government estimate of below 6 percent inflation in fiscal year 2004-05.

Every year since the present government came to power in October 2001 inflation has persistently bumped up, and since the last fiscal year (FY) it has been increasing every month.

The point-to-point inflation was 1.66 percent in FY01, 3.58 percent in FY02, 5.03 percent in FY03 and 5.64 percent in FY04.

The government in consultation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) set the estimated rate of average inflation for the current fiscal year at 4.5 percent. But the continued price-hike of essentials does not support the feasibility of

died from serious torture at Tongi hospital on July 16 a day after he was picked up by the elite anticrime force Rab.

The Rab claimed that they arrested Sumon, a Jubo League leader, when he was collecting Tk 50,000 in illegal tolls from a local businessman. But his family members said that he was nabbed from his house.

Madrasa teacher Shahnewaj Titu died from his wounds at a hospital in Chittagong on August 6 last year, two days after he was arrested by Rab allegedly with 10 bullets of AK-47 rifle.

The Rab claimed Titu, 25, suffered injuries while trying to evade arrest by jumping from the roof of a hotel, but family members said he died from torture in the elite force's custody after arrest.

A Rab claim on the death of Nazmul Islam Bhuiyan at Kararchar under Shibpur Police Station in Narsingdi on May 11 was also found to be false.

The Rab claimed that Nazmul, armed and accompanied by several friends, gathered at a place for mugging. Later, he died in an encounter with Rab members.

However, witnesses said Nazmul who had no criminal records was talking to two people when some Rab men appeared in plainclothes. Nazmul failed to recognise the Rab men and engaged in an altercation with them.

During the altercation Nazmul pushed one of the Rab men. Then the Rab men fired a couple of blank shots and then shot him dead in cold blood, the witnesses told The Daily Star, wishing anonymity.

Four people were killed in Rab action at Gutia village in Tongi on November 19 last year. Rab claimed that they were killed in an "encounter" after the Rab members raided a house where they were holding a meeting before committing a robbery. Locals however told a different story.

They said the victims' rivals had raided the village before the Rab action and when the villagers gathered at a house to challenge the attackers, the rivals tipped the Rab that a gang had taken shelter in the house.

When the Rab members raided the house at night, the inmates caught one Rab member mistaking him for a robber and chopped him. Soon the Rab members opened fire and killed them, the victims' family members and neighbours told The Daily Star.

Besides, the death Shahjahan, employee of a shoe shop, on July 9 last year in Rab custody, the killing of 65-year-old dead writer Mohammad Ali inside his house at Zafarabad in Mohammadpur on July 13 last year, the killing of Anisur Rahman on September 31 after Rab arrest and of Hafizur Rahman Wasim, an Old Dhaka trader, on October 11 last year in police custody are examples of killing people having no criminal records.

NOAB, BSP

FROM PAGE 1
The monitoring committee should be formed as per the High Court rule and it should function under the wage board chairman, the BSP and the NOAB said in a joint statement.

Legal procedures for the monitoring committee should be complete before forming the wage board, the statement said.

Fu Wang fined

FROM PAGE 1
responsible for selling substandard products.

The courts also sentenced more than 100 people to various jail terms for spraying toxic chemicals on green mangoes and bananas for quick ripening of the fruits.

Following a series of reports run by The Daily Star last month on adulterated and poisoned food, the home ministry formed the mobile courts. Every day they are raiding fruit markets, rice shops, dried fish shops, restaurants, bakeries, sweetmeat shops, and soyabean oil and spices producing companies, sources said.

During the drives, the courts fined Cocola Food Products, Banoful and Co, Muslim Sweets, Ambala Sweets, Nabisco Biscuit and Bread Factory, Haque Brothers, Bikrampur Mishthanno Bhandar, Kohinur Food Products, Mousumi Food Products, City Vegetable Oil Mill, Maria Food Products and Prime Bread, among other companies.

"We are not concentrating only on food items, we are also checking fake and risky goods. We are conducting drives almost every day," said M Rokmoudoulah, magistrate of the CMM Court, Dhaka who conducted the drive yesterday in Gulshan area.

Magistrate ABM Abdul Fattah conducted the drive in New Market area. "We have found faults in almost all food items," he said.

BNP won't win

FROM PAGE 20
The AL would not have faced such a defeat in the last general elections had it not come down heavily on the Kawmi Madrasa, he said.

Other committee leaders said it is unfortunate the alliance government is also paying no heed to their demands.

The memorandum included demands for an independent Arabic university for madrasa education and declaration of Ahmadiyyas as non-Muslim.

Saudis significant

FROM PAGE 20
online discussion with readers of The Washington Post.

The kingdom has been stepping up its counterterrorism campaign since May 12, 2003, when triple car bombings at a housing compound in the Saudi capital of Riyadh killed 34 people, including eight Americans.

Ten get life

FROM PAGE 20
killing the policemen.

Of them, Abdur Rashid alias Tipu, second-in-command of outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP), was killed in "crossfire" in July last year.

The charge sheet was submitted to a court on January 9 last year by Sub Inspector Ashrafuzzaman of Rupsha Police Station as investigating officer (IO).

The case was later transferred to the Speedy Trial Tribunal, Khulna, on February 1 last year.

JS body

FROM PAGE 1
increased, but it is only in Dhaka and its adjacent areas," Committee Chairman Mohammad Shajahan told reporters after the meeting. The price is low outside Dhaka, he claimed.

The food ministry officials told the meeting that the procurement target will be fulfilled. Seventy percent of the target has already been achieved, they said.

The parliamentary body also discussed the possibility of starting OMS of rice again and hoped the programme will begin on time.

Jute, textile

FROM PAGE 20
24-hour strike at all mills and factories.

Shiipa Sramik Karmachari Rakkha Samanny Parishad, a platform of workers, today holds a rally at Muktangan in the capital and takes out procession supporting the hartal.

The 11-party combine yesterday held a rally at Muktangan and urged people to make tomorrow's hartal a success.

Meantime, police arrested three city unit leaders of Workers Party of Bangladesh at Secretariat gate for distributing leaflets in favour of tomorrow's hartal.

The arrestees are Mostafa Alamgir Ratan, Zakir Hossain and Sohel.

Charges framed

FROM PAGE 20
summoned Azhar Ali, complainant in the case, and four witnesses to appear before it the same day.

Earlier on July 9, Inspector Shamsul Islam of Detective Branch of police, also investigation officer, pressed charges against Juffikar.

Twenty-two people were shown as prosecution witnesses in the charge sheet.

SUST closed

FROM PAGE 1
JCD over extortion and establishment of supremacy on the campus.

Liton, a resident of Dagonbhuiyan upazila in Feni, was also involved in such activities and was temporarily expelled from the JCD in 2004.

The JCD general secretary of the university unit however claimed the attack was a result of personal enmity.

Develop strategic

FROM PAGE 1
she told the business and industrial leaders of Japan.

Khaleda said Japanese investors can take advantage of this great combination low business cost and huge market potentials and invest in various competitive sectors of Bangladesh.

The sectors are readymade garments, textiles, man-made fiber, agro-processing, leather products, pharmaceuticals, ceramics, energy, power and infrastructure development.

The prime minister said global consumers are gradually getting familiar with Bangladesh primary commodities and manufactured items. She told the meeting that the products of Bangladesh origin are getting international recognition for their high quality and competitive price.