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**WOMEN'S RESERVED SEATS
Polls schedule
at end of
EC talks**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission at a meeting yesterday decided to declare the schedule for the election to 45 reserved seats for women after the ongoing dialogues with the political parties end on July 28.

"The election will be held within the time limit set by the court," Chief Election Commissioner MA Aziz

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**Saifur brands
media as
worst enemy**

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday branded Bangladesh media as the "worst enemy" of the country for projecting "negative images" abroad.

"Bangladesh has made a lot of progresses and gained substantial achievements compared to

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Name-only parties to rule EC talks today

**CEC finds nothing to do over AL's not joining
crowded dialogue; EC backtracks its
decision, invites more outfits**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As many as 72 political parties, mostly in name only, sit with the Election Commission (EC) today with the mainstream opposition parties including Awami League (AL) opting out of the much-hyped dialogue on voter list.

The number of political parties invited was raised to 114 yesterday, ignoring an EC decision to invite the 96 parties that were granted election symbols in the last parliamentary polls.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz, however, said the door is open for any political party to furnish the commission with their opinions on the voter list. "We did not put a ceiling on the number of

parties to be invited to ensure that nobody is deprived," he told reporters at his office yesterday.

EC secretariat officials said they had not planned the event to be attended by such a large number of political parties. The commission has increased the number whimsically and as a result, the initiative may turn out to be a complete farce, they added.

It is unprecedented that the EC has invited so many minor political parties to a dialogue with it. Twenty political parties were invited to sit down with the commission in the run-up to the last parliamentary elections, said officials.

About the mainstream opposition parties boycotting the dialogue, the CEC said he has nothing to do if any

party decides not to join. He said he hopes BNP Jatiya Party (Ershad), Jamaat-e-Islami, among major political parties will participate in the dialogue. "We'll decide on the voter list after talks with those participating in the dialogue," the CEC said.

AL and its allies have rejected invitation to the talks and said the commission has arranged the dialogue with 114 political parties to be held in only three days with an "ulterior motive".

The opposition leaders maintained that they have already proposed a set of proposals for reforms in electoral and caretaker government systems and that includes also the one for a fresh voter list.

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**48-km Dhaka
Bypass to
open in Dec**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Bypass will be opened for traffic from December to enable the vehicles from outside Dhaka and bound for Chittagong and Sylhet to avoid the snarl-ups of the capital.

According to sources, the 48-kilometer road will be helpful especially for the vehicles from Greater Mymensingh and 16 northern

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**Drug control
bill approved**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet at its weekly meeting yesterday approved the draft of "Drugs (Control) (Amendment) Law, 2005" submitted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Health Secretary AFM Sarwar Kamal told The Daily Star last night the cabinet approved the amendment bill, which would restrict import of any generic drugs during its registration process.

Importers now have to produce documents to confirm the product

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LIFE IN LONDON AFTER BLASTS

When time is wrong at Brick Lane

INAM AHMED, from London

The pink and white draped tables brood over the bright London afternoon. The neatly stuck napkins in the crystal glasses wait for customers, and nobody comes.

Koysor Ali sips the red drink from his glass balanced on his thigh and looks empty out on the Brick Lane street. His two service boys and chef, they all stand at the counter of Curry Bazar, are solemn faced. Today is Sunday, the day the famous Brick Lane Sunday market sits. Their restaurant should have been buzzing with customers. But it is not. The huge eight feet by seven feet wall paintings of tea gardens in Sylhet and elephants roaming in strange land supposed to be Bangladesh hanglonely on the walls.

"Business is down since the London attacks," Koysor, who has been living in London for the last 35 years and saw many a downside of the great cultural melting pot, says gloomily. "On any given day, I could make 1,500 pounds, today I have hardly raked in 200 pounds. Today's Sunday market went blank."

Walking along the Brick Lane of the famous Bangla Town, the name comes from the huge Bangladeshi populations that live here, gives a strange feeling today. The streets which used to pulsate with vive and fun seem desolate. Even the Bangladeshis are not seen in numbers. They come in ones and twos and quickly head for their destinations -- no roadside gossips, no loitering.

The Bangladeshi community in

London today seems to be in the grip of an unknown fear -- fear from both sides, the unknown attackers who had wrecked havoc on two previous Thursdays and the fear of a backlash and of harassment by police. More than that they face an uncertain future in their business, which again is predominantly restaurant industry -- there are an estimated 6,000 Bangladeshi owned restaurants in London alone.

"The English are hesitant to eat at our restaurants now," says Koysor. "If things don't turn for the worse, if no more bombings occur, things may get well again. But how long will it take?"

At the Shampun on the lane, the situation is the same. The owner, a big-bellied man, stands outside with

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**6 Pakistanis hunted
over Egypt bombs**

AFP, Al-Arabi

Egyptian police exchanged fire with gunmen yesterday as they hunted for six Pakistanis suspected of involvement in deadly bombings in the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh.

The firefight with Bedouin gunmen erupted in the mountainous interior of the Sinai peninsula some 30km from the scene of Saturday's carnage on the coast, security officials said.

It came after police surrounded the nearby villages of Knurum and Rweissat in overnight raids, they said. "Two Pakistanis had been staying there and it is suspected that the bombs were assembled in this area," an intelligence source said.

Hospital officials say the trio of bombings -- Egypt's deadliest attacks -- killed 88 people while the health and tourism ministries have reported up to 64 confirmed dead.

The resort was packed with tourists when the pre-dawn bombs went off and foreign embassy officials were still in Sharm el-Sheikh Monday, as more than 30 bodies were still to be identified and foreigners continued to scramble for flights home.

Pictures of the six Pakistanis believed to have entered Egypt in early July were distributed to police stations in the Sharm el-Sheikh area after the attacks, which followed another bombing spree in Sinai resorts in October.

Their passports were found in an unspecified Sharm el-Sheikh hotel, police said, adding that one of them may have died in the deadly bombings but stressing that the Pakistanis were not necessarily the bombers.

Pakistani authorities said they had yet to be approached by their Egyptian counterparts about the six suspects.

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**Tk 4,000cr spent in
last 5 days of FY05**

Saifur unhappy over reckless spending

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday said Tk 4,000 crore was spent by various ministries during the last four or five days of the last fiscal year, which he termed "an example of how public money is wasted."

Until June 26, money allocated for different ministries lay idle in the banks and it was spent recklessly in the last few days, he said at a meeting on midterm budget framework with the high officials of Finance Division, Planning Commission at the NEC auditorium.

Saifur said under the framework each of the ministries will prepare its own budget which will be reviewed in December. Money will be taken back from the ministries failing to spend its allocation and then it will be redirected to other priority pro-

jects. In the last fiscal year, four ministries were given the responsibility to prepare their own budget and from this year another 10 ministries will do it.

The finance minister explained the rationale behind such move at the meeting where different ministries expressed their views about this new initiative aiming at empowering the ministries to make their budget and ensure its implementation.

Saifur said very often lawmakers come with applications for building a road or any infrastructure in their constituency, showing the project cost estimated by contractors. If the Finance Division raises question about the merit of the project they start complaining that the division is not releasing funds for the project.

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PHOTO: STAR

A truck lies trapped in a pit on the road near Malibagh level crossing in the capital yesterday. The road was dug a week back for repairing a culvert.

**PRESIDENTIAL AMNESTY
AL demands
removal of
Moudud,
Babar**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday demanded removal of the law minister and the state minister for home affairs for "mis-guiding" the prime minister and the president in granting presidential amnesty to a ruling party man sentenced to death in a double murder case.

"The law ministry suppressed the facts of the double murder case judgement and did everything to convince the prime minister for recommending the president to grant the clemency," AL presidium member Suranjit Sengupta told a press conference at the party office.

Mohiuddin Jhinto, president of BNP's Sweden wing, was awarded

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2	To check e-mail	inbox	inbox
3	To read e-mail	read<space>e-mail no.	read 1
4	To send e-mail	e-mail address<space>e-mail message	naima@yahoo.com How r u?
5	To reply e-mail	rep<space>e-mail no.<space>reply message	rep 1 Fine, thank you
6	To forward e-mail	fw<space>e-mail no.<space>e-mail address	fw 3 faisal@hotmail.com
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