

Tk 146cr sought for voter list

Ministry sends back EC file for procedural flaws

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday sought Tk 146.29 crore for preparing a fresh voter list for the next parliamentary election.

The EC Secretariat requested the ministry to sanction the fund as soon as possible. But the ministry sent the file back to EC on the grounds of procedural flaws, officials said.

Considering inflation and inclusion of one crore new voters, the EC has prepared the budget which is Tk 50 crore higher than the expenditure of the last electoral rolls.

It cost about Tk 96 crore to prepare the last electoral rolls in 2000

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MAOISTS' MEETING Security alert on Rajshahi border

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Law enforcement agencies yesterday intensified watch along the frontier between Rajshahi division and India on reports that the Maoist forces began a secret meeting on Wednesday.

Sources said top officials of law enforcing agencies were alerted about the presence of foreign rebels and was asked to monitor the northern border closely.

A Maoist source told the Daily Star the secret meeting, which is likely to end today, is a preliminary meeting for the 4th conference of Coordination Committee of Maoist Parties and Organisations of South Asia (CCOMPOSA).

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Back home with horrifying tales

36 camel jockeys return from UAE

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirty-six children who were used as camel jockeys along with their 41 "guardians" returned to the country yesterday after passing horrifying days in the oil-rich United Arab Emirates (UAE) for the last couple of years.

They were brought back through the government initiatives in assis-

tance with United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) and International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

A three-member delegation led by Abdur Rauf, additional secretary of the home ministry, accompanied the group in the Bangladesh Biman BG-028 that arrived at Zia International Airport (ZIA) at about 10:30am.

State Minister for Home Affairs

Lutfuzzaman Babar welcomed the children while Unicef Resident Representative Marten Giering and Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) Executive Director Salma Ali were present.

The sickly and skinny children aged between four and 15

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PHOTO: STAR

END OF A NIGHTMARE...Thirty-six Bangladeshi children, subjected to inhuman treatment while being used as camel jockeys for years in the UAE, arrive at the Zia International Airport yesterday.

Dhaka sits with S'pore, Islamabad next week for consultations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka next week sits in separate annual consultations with Singapore and Islamabad to enhance bilateral trade, investment and other economic co-operations in potential sectors.

The first-ever foreign secretary level yearly consultation with Singapore will be held on August 14-15 in Singapore.

Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin will lead the Bangladesh delegation to the two-day talks seen as an important follow-up action to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's March 20-22 visit to the city state.

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UK Muslims want sermon in English

Finds MORI-BBC survey

ANSAR AHMED ULLAH from London

A 65 percent majority of UK Muslims are for Imams to deliver sermons in English, suggest the findings of a recent survey conducted by MORI Social Research Institute for the BBC.

Approximately two million Muslims live in the United Kingdom, mainly in the large metropolises including London, Birmingham, Bradford, Manchester and Glasgow.

Among them are Cypriot, Turkish, Kurdish, Yemeni and Arab Muslims in significant numbers, along with the more recently arrived refugees from Afghanistan, Iran,

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Muggers shoot 2, loot Tk 14.4 lakh

RMG officials come under attack at factory gate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Armed muggers yesterday looted Tk 14.4 lakh after shooting and injuring one of the two officials of a garment factory at city's Dakkhin Khan in Uttara.

A gang of three struck accountant of Nipa Garments Mohammad Ibrahim from behind as he and security personnel Abdul Jabbar reached the factory gate after drawing the cash from a bank at Malibagh at about 2:30pm, police

said quoting witnesses.

"As Ibrahim fell on the ground unconscious, the criminals grabbed the bag that contained the money and tried to flee," duty officer of Uttara Police Station quoted a witness as saying.

When the criminals were fleeing the spot with the cash, Jabbar, a retired army person, tried to grab one of them. But the gangmen fired on him. Jabbar collapsed to the ground receiving two bullets in the

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Manmohan apologises to Sikhs for 1984 riots

IANAS, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday apologised to his Sikh community and the nation for the 1984 anti-Sikh riots that some leaders of his Congress were accused of instigating after Indira Gandhi's killing.

"I have no hesitation in apologising not only to the Sikh community but to the nation because (the riots) negated the concept of nationhood," Manmohan Singh said in the Rajya Sabha, to loud desk thumping from the treasury benches.

"I bow my head in shame for what happened... but there are ebbs

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FOOD ADULTERATION

Mobile court faces obstruction in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The lone mobile court of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) conducting drives against adulterated food faced obstruction and 'verbal threat' while raiding a reputed fast food outlet in the port city yesterday.

CCC Magistrate Syeda Sarwar Jahan fined the shop, Well Food Center, Tk 1,31,600 and sent three of its employees including a managing partner to jail with different terms.

In the capital the same day, 15 restaurants, sweetmeat shops, bottled water factories, ice cream factory, and canteens were fined Tk 2.22 lakh by mobile courts.

In the port city, Well Food Center situated on OR Nizam Road was fined for keeping stale, discoloured meat in the refrigerator, selling unhygienic noodles, and manufacturing and marketing bread and chanchur without Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) license. The magistrate also found there burnt soybean oil stored to be used again.

During the raid, Well Food employees got involved in an altercation with Magistrate Sarwar Jahan and tried to mislead her, claiming everything there was quite okay and

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CNG DRIVER KILLING IO ignores court order in filing charge sheet

COURT CORRESPONDENT

In submitting the charge sheet of the killing of a CNG-run autorickshaw driver during May 21 harel hours, the investigating officer (IO) did not follow the court order that asked him to merge the second case on the killing filed by the victim's wife.

The IO, Sub-Inspector Sardar Yunus Ali of Khilgaon Police Station submitted charge sheet against eight leaders of Awami League and its youth and student wings.

The autorickshaw driver, Amir, died four days after he was set on fire at the Baspatti Road crossing in the city's Khilgaon area on May 21 this year when he took out his hired autorickshaw during an Awami

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5,050 graft cases gathering dust

Govt fails to give ACC necessary guidelines to expedite disposal

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

Uncertainty looms large on 5,050 on-trial corruption cases filed by the now-defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac) as the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) finds that there is no clear provision in the ACC Act that allows it to deal with such cases.

The commission, tasked with dealing with the cases, sought legal opinion from the government in this regard, terming removal of the complication very urgent for public interest. The government, however, failed to give any suggestion to

expedite the trial process, which is apparently benefiting the accused in these cases.

Instead of giving any clear instruction, the government told the ACC that the cases might be dealt with by the commission's prosecution unit, which is to be formed formally after the government approves the complete ACC organogram.

However, it is uncertain when the draft organogram will be finalised as the government recently sent back a draft to the commission saying it was not properly formulated.

Since the formation of ACC on

November 21 last year, the commission has been passing through a dilemma about how to deal with the cases as the staff of its predecessor Bac, who were earlier dealing with the cases, were reluctant to go to the court. The officials said they were declared as the government's reserved employees and were instructed not to involve themselves with the ACC.

The commission also could not put pressure on them in this regard for the same reason.

Meanwhile, the High Court has stayed the trial of 773 of the 5050

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Army men in jail posts rankle officials

ZAYADUL AHSAN

Militarisation of the jail administration has sparked resentment among the jail officials as the government is appointing army officers one after another to the top positions of the Prisons Directorate, violating the recruitment rules.

After appointing army officers as the inspector general (IG) and additional IG of the Prisons Directorate, the government has now decided to appoint another army officer as deputy inspector general (DIG) of the directorate.

The decision intensified the resentment among officials of the Prisons Directorate as the directorate officials are deprived of promotion to the top posts.

The directorate saw the practice of appointing army officers as IG (Prisons) on deputation since 1977. But neither the existing recruitment rules nor the proposed new rules allow the appointment of army officers to these posts.

The establishment ministry in 2001 opposed the appointment of an army man as IG (Prisons), but it failed to make any impact on the government decision.

Jail officials have also submitted an application to the home ministry for cancelling the decision of appointing an army man as DIG (Prisons), but a ministry official said the decision is nothing new as the practice has been going on for the last three decades.

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PHOTO: STAR

Members of a mobile court show to journalists unhygienic edible oil used for cooking at the canteen of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital in Dhaka yesterday.

Oil holds near record \$65

REUTERS, London

Oil stayed within striking distance of Thursday's \$65 record high after a top energy body said non-Opec output was falling short of expectations.

The International Energy Agency, adviser to 26 industrialised nations, also nudged up its world oil demand growth forecasts for this year and next, leaving already stretched Opec to fill the supply void.

The IEA report came on the heels of US stock data on Wednesday that showed another fall in gasoline inventories in the world's biggest consumer, and news of less oil from the North Sea Brent field in September.

"The extent to which (the IEA) felt compelled to cut its estimates of non-Opec production is a bullish factor," said Deborah White, senior energy analyst at SG Commodities.

The IEA cut non-OPEC supply growth this year by 205,000 barrels per day, with production problems in the U.S. Gulf, Mexico, Norway and Britain accounting for most of the shortfall. Russia is also pumping less than expected.

US light sweet crude was off 40

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PM LEAVES FOR CHINA AUG 17

Trade, energy to top tour agenda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia leaves for Beijing on August 17 on a five-day official visit when she will hold talks on bilateral issues, especially promoting trade and economic cooperation, and seek Chinese assistance for peaceful usage of nuclear energy, use of gas resources and water resources management.

Several Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) and a number of agreements covering tourism, energy, culture and education are expected to be signed between the two countries during Khaleda Zia's visit.

Khaleda Zia's return visit to China within four months of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's Dhaka visit in last April marks the 30th year of the establishment of China-Bangladesh diplomatic ties.

Bangladesh officially established diplomatic relations with China on October 4, 1975.

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Chevron Texaco says it completes merger

STAR REPORT

Four months after making a 17-billion dollar bid to takeover Unocal Corporation, the leading oil company Chevron Texaco yesterday announced that it has completed the merger.

Andrew L Fawthrop, president and managing director of Unocal Bangladesh, yesterday told The Daily Star, "The merger won't affect Unocal's operations in Bangladesh."

"There will be no change in Unocal's products or commitments and 99 percent of the Unocal staff will continue their services. The gas production will be the same," he said, adding, "We shall now appeal to the government for a change of the name. Once the name change is approved, we will start using Chevron's name."

Unocal Bangladesh produces around 300 million cubic feet (mcf) of gas a day and owns energy projects in Bangladesh valued over \$1 billion.

Currently, it is committed to investing \$230 million to develop the Bibiyana Gas Field, which is

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