

Govt plans to pass

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coalition's main election pledges, sources said many top leaders of the BNP are against its implementation. "So, they favour passing the rest of the tenure of this government by dilly-dallying on this issue," said one source.

"The judiciary cannot be separated overnight; it is a long process. The coalition government is taking the process on," said a government source.

Since the SC, after rejecting the time petition, fixed February 1 for hearing the contempt of court charges, the government thinks it has got further time in a way, the source mentioned.

The government may file a review petition on the day of the hearing of the contempt charges, showing the progress made towards the separation of the judiciary.

Although the government claims it is working as per the 12-point SC directives, it has so far complied with only one -- formation of the judicial service commission. But there are allegations that the commission has not been formed in accordance with the court directives.

The SC directed formation of the commission with majority members from the judiciary but the government has appointed only two from the judiciary and the rest from the executive.

So, it is clearly contempt of court, several senior lawyers pointed out.

Other rules regarding formation of Bangladesh Judicial Service Pay Commission, Bangladesh Judicial Service (posting, promotion, leave) and Bangladesh Judicial Service (appointment, suspension, removal) and a draft bill for the amendment to

2 JP men killed

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Witnesses said unidentified assailants hurled two bombs at the JP activists in front of Aklariar Club soon after the Ifar.

Tariqul Islam, Nazrul's brother, told reporters their enemies might have hired criminals to kill them over previous feud.

He said the attackers also shot at his brother to confirm his death.

Sources said locals gathered in the scene and tried to demonstrate with the bodies soon after the incident. Police however rushed to the spot and took the bodies to the district police headquarters.

Contacted, the superintendent of police said, "I have sent force to the spot." He however could not give details immediately.

A tense situation is prevailing in the area.

Indo-Bangla

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and activities of Indian insurgent groups in Bangladesh which is a major security threat to India and the safety, security and stability of Bangladesh itself," an official spokesman of India said yesterday.

The spokesman said India would also suggest the need for convening a meeting of the Joint Boundary Working Group to address the pending issues relating to demarcation of land boundary, adverse possessions and enclaves.

Other issues likely to be raised during the meeting are the cross-border illegal migration, proper implementation and understanding of the 1975 border guidelines to allow border fencing and developmental works to be undertaken without any hindrance.

India will also push for accords on extradition, mutual legal assistance, ways to combat drug trafficking and consular access during the talks.

The Bangladesh delegation, which arrived in the Indian capital yesterday evening, will meet Indian Home Minister Shivraj Patil and External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh during its stay.

The last round of home secretary-level talks between the two countries was held in Dhaka in September last year.

Arms smuggling and steps to carry out joint patrolling to check trans-border crimes will also figure prominently during the parleys.

Maulana Masud

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Magistrate Mir Ali Reza allowed Hannan to make his submission without raising political matters.

Hannan told the court he is sick and prayed for treatment in a hospital. The court, however, told him the police will provide him treatment, if need be, during his remand.

Earlier, Hannan was placed on a 10-day remand in the Farmgate blast case and five-day and seven-day remands in the SC blast case.

MOULANA FARIDUDDIN MASUD
The former Islamic Foundation director, detained for his alleged links to the August 17 blasts, was shown arrested in a money laundering case and remanded for two days.

Detectives took Masud, arrested on August 22, and produced him before the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka seeking a five-day remand.

Detective Branch (DB) of police Inspector Sirajul Islam told the court Masud used to run an NGO, Islahul Muslemim Parishad Bangladesh, in Rampura in the capital.

Masud spent Tk 73.77 lakh earned from different sources legally and illegally and kept it secret. He needs to be quizzed to find out the sources of the money, the DB man said in the forward report.

Metropolitan Magistrate Nani Gopal Biswas rejected Masud's bail petition and granted the remand.

DB Inspector Mohammad Fazul Haq filed the case against Masud with

the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) are lying with the Prime Minister's Office for her approval. These will be finalised after the president approves those.

The last caretaker government of 2001 prepared the rules during its tenure, the ruling coalition made changes to those after coming to power through the October 1, 2001 parliamentary election and spent a long time in the process.

When the government submitted those to the SC, it gave detailed guidelines on these and asked the government to prepare the rules in line with its guidelines.

But the government is yet to implement those. Nine bureaucrats now face contempt charges for distortion of the SC guidelines.

Senior lawyer Mahmudul Islam, who was attorney general when the SC made the guidelines, said rejection of the time petition means the government has to implement the SC directives immediately. "It is a must now," he said.

"One contempt charge the court (SC) will hear on February 1 is for the government's past failure to implement its directives. If it fails to comply with those while the court has rejected its time petition, it will be another contempt," the former attorney general told The Daily Star last night.

AF Hassan Arif, the immediate past attorney general, said, "I get an indication in the Supreme Court's last decision that the government will have to face a contempt hearing if it does not complete separation of the judiciary by February 1. It has got time till that date for implementation."

ILLEGAL ENTRY
KL won't give transit visa to Bangladeshis
BDNEWS, Dhaka

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The Malaysian government has stopped issuing transit visa to Bangladeshis to check entry of illegal workers into that country, causing trouble to the businessmen and other travellers from Dhaka.

An official order from the Malaysian government issued on October 11, prohibiting Bangladeshi passport holders to arrive in Malaysia and take transit visas that usually allow them to stay for five days.

The visa rules for other countries, including India, remain unchanged, according to a source.

Many businessmen from Bangladesh on their way to other countries via Kuala Lumpur take the opportunity to make a brief stopover in Malaysia for a night or two, but the new measure caused trouble to them.

"It is a government to government matter. I am not going to answer this question as it is a decision of the Malaysian government," Tan Sook King, immigration attaché in the Malaysian High Commission in Dhaka told the news agency when asked about the new measure.

Earlier this week, the authorities in Dubai stopped issuing visit visas to the citizens of Bangladesh as well as Somalia, Uzbekistan, Niger, Iraq and Nigeria.

Family visas for the people of the six nations will be issued only after the approval of the director general or the deputy director of the Dubai Naturalisation and Residency Department (DNRD).

However, the Malaysian government is now positively thinking of recruiting Bangladeshi workers as the demands are coming from employers.

The Malaysian home ministry is now carrying out a study on the necessity to recruit Bangladeshi workers following requests from employers, particularly from the manufacturing, services and textile industries, according to a report.

Recruitment of Bangladeshi workers was stopped in 2000 due to several factors, including social problems. The decision was taken following an advice of the police department.

IOJ LEADER KILLING Amini demands arrest of Jamaat leader Rahim

UNB, Cg

Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) Chairman Maulana Fazlul Haque Amini yesterday accused police of trying to protect the Jamaat-e-Islami leaders involved in the murder of former Chittagong IOJ president Iqbal bin Yaquub.

He also demanded withdrawal of CMP Assistant Commissioner Mizan Safiur Rahman within 48 hours and to bring Jamaat leader Abdur Rahim under further police remand to unearth the mystery behind the killing of Yaquub.

Amini was addressing a condolence meeting on the slain IOJ leader at the party office in the port city.

The IOJ chief has also threatened to go for a tougher movement if the authorities fail to ensure impartial inquiry into the killing and holding proper trial of the killers.

Jhenidah outlaw

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abducted from Govindapur village by an armed gang around 12:30am yesterday. Later, he was shot dead in nearby Baluhar area, our Magura correspondent reports.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital for autopsy. They suspect his party rivals due to strife within the party might have killed him.

In Kushtia, Afaz Uddin, 36, a farmer of Adabaria village in Daulatpur upazila, was slaughtered at his house allegedly by the members of Janajuddha early yesterday, reports our Kushtia correspondent.

Family members following the *Sehri* found Afaz's slaughtered body in his room.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Kushtia General Hospital for autopsy.

The victims' son Alamgir Hossain filed a case with Daulatpur Police Station accusing unnamed operatives of the Janajuddha.

Flu strain

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A second set of dead swans had been found near to those infected with the virus, but were not being tested as it was thought they came from the same flock, Savigad added.

Europe is on maximum alert for the further spread of the H5N1 strain, which has already also been detected in Romania, Russia and Turkey, a westward sweep health experts believe is caused by birds migrating ahead of the winter.

Asia has borne the brunt of the virus, with China rushing through an emergency response on Wednesday after the country's third confirmed outbreak of the virulent strain inside a week.

Chinese officials mobilised roadside sterilisation stations and inspected markets after 545 chickens and ducks fell ill and died from the H5N1 strain in the central province of Hunan, the Ministry of Agriculture said in a report filed to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

2 lakh govt

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will get the increased salaries in two phases -- from October 24 and from July 1, 2006 -- and no arrears will be given.

The extra amount required to implement the pay hike has to be arranged from the existing revenue allotment of the project, keeping the capital allotment untouched. But adjustments can be made, if need be, in other revenue subheads to meet the deficiencies.

The development project employees have been grouped in three categories in line with their workplaces with separate gross salaries.

The employees of the same grade of all three areas will get the same pay scale until June 30. But they will get different salaries as they get separate house rents from July 1, 2006 according to their workplaces.

The gross salary of the employees of the first grade in Dhaka Metropolitan City has been fixed at Tk 35,000 and for the lowest (20th grade) Tk 4,590.

The first grade employees in Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Barisal metropolitan cities and Narayanganj and Tongi municipalities will get Tk 32,700 and the lowest grade Tk 4,320.

Apart from these areas, the first grade employees will get a gross salary of Tk 31,550 and the lowest grade employees Tk 4,250.

A finance ministry official said the new pay scales are not usually made effective for employees under development projects along with those under the revenue budget.

A separate circular is issued for these employees and the new scale is made effective from the day the circular is issued.

Explaining the reason behind the delay in awarding the new scale for under the development project, the official said the ministries took time in sending information relating to their manpower under different projects.

Power disaster due

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from the Prime Minister's Office to the energy ministry says, is that the Power Development Board (PDB) is 'not supposed to' implement private power projects, and it is the job of the power cell. The PDB has implemented the Meghnaghat AES project and the Power Cell the AES Haripur project.

After cancellation of the Summit bid, the government again floated tender for the project and cancelled it recently. Now it is floating tender for the third time reportedly to award the contract to a business house close to the ruling BNP.

Meanwhile, as load shedding emerged as a major problem with occasional power shortfalls exceeding 1,000 mw, the government in recent months has resorted to some unrealistic and even murky measures.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO), overriding the power ministry, first asked the PDB in June to prepare tender documents to set up before the next elections 11 smaller power plants in different parts of the country, with a total production capacity of around 410 mw.

These government-funded plants would need at least a Tk 1,200 crore investment while the finance ministry had earmarked only Tk 300 crore for the power sector for fiscal 2005-06. By August, the government abandoned this plan.

At the same time, under pressure from ruling BNP lawmakers and ministers to design a power sector 'business' for them, the PMO spearheaded yet another scheme -- small power projects.

Bangladesh had a private power generation policy from the period of the previous AL government. But that policy demands transparency and bidding process. To ensure business for party men, this government amended

the policy allowing any one to build small power plants of up to 50mw capacity.

The government in August-September identified more than 45 places in the country where small entrepreneurs can set up power plants. It asked the power utilities to sign a power purchase contract through a simple process with the small power entrepreneurs, who are none other than BNP lawmakers and several ministers. But under a threat from the WB, the government recently stopped this process.

As these bids took the government nowhere, the power ministry has now asked the WB to give it a loan of \$150 million to set up barge-mounted power plants before the next election.

Even if the WB agrees, it takes the WB at least one year to process such a loan, industry insiders say.

Again, even if the WB gives this loan next week, the country is unlikely to have these barge-mounted plants before the next election. Because, first the government must find such plants abroad ready to be mobilised to Bangladesh, settle the price and then move them to certain locations from where power can be supplied to the national grid.

There is no record of any kind of power plant coming into operation in Bangladesh in less than 18 months.

According to the Power System Master Plan (PSMP), the guidebook of the government's planning for electrification, the country will have a peak demand of 4,500 mw to 5,000 mw next year. This means even if the existing power projects -- Mymensingh 70 mw phase 3 and 250 mw coal-fired Barapukuria plants -- come into operation before the next election, there will be a minimum shortfall of more than 700 mw of power.

JS body blasts govt

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decided to ask the ministries of agriculture, LGRD and cooperatives, commerce, home, industries and food and disaster management, to take coordinated steps to root out Monga.

"We will ask the ministries to initiate steps in this regard," Committee Chairman Abdul Mannan told reporters after the meeting held at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban. "I'm not satisfied with the steps taken by the agriculture ministry."

Mannan pointed out that there is a lack of coordination among the ministries to eliminate the Monga situation that occurs in the northwestern region during September-October every year due to the absence of jobs for the poor.

The parliamentary body has been urging the government for the last couple of years to initiate effective measures to combat Monga.

The government has allocated Tk 50 crore in this year's national budget but the money is not being used in the absence of proper policy, said a member of the committee.

"People [in the Monga-hit region] are starving. If the situation remains unchanged, the poor will die from hunger," committee member Motahar Hossain, an Awami League lawmaker from northern Lalmonirhat district, told the meeting.

He demanded increased food supply to the affected people.

Senior officials of the agriculture ministry at the meeting suggested undertaking more crop diversification programmes in the region to fight Monga.

The BNP members of the committee expressed similar views, but Jatiya Party lawmaker and committee member GM Quader said crop diversification programmes will not benefit the farmers unless fair prices of agri-products are ensured.

"Rampant extortion in transports by the ruling party men, workers' associations and police has made the agri-products costly, but farmers are not getting fair prices," the Jatiya Party lawmaker from Rangpur told the meeting.

The Awami League lawmakers supported his comment. The committee then decided to ask the home minis-

Monga spills over

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monga-afflicted people, he said, adding that 45,000 tonnes of food items have been distributed among the people in greater Rangpur in the last month.

Dr Zaid Bakht, research director of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), said monga occurs due to seasonal unemployment and since the government had already sanctioned a block allocation for monga in the budget, it should have started working on it much earlier.

A finance ministry source said the ministries concerned can also spend from the Tk 75-crore risk reduction fund, created to offset damages caused by natural calamities, for monga.

Sources said a delay in deciding which ministries will spend the Tk 50-crore fund for fighting monga ultimately deferred the release of the fund.

A source in the Relief and Rehabilitation Directorate said it has already sent a proposal for releasing Tk 15 crore from the fund for distribution among the monga-stricken people in 12 districts and also worked out a policy regarding how to spend the money.

The finance ministry is expected to release the sum by next week, and if it does, the directorate will then distribute it following the policy, the source added.

According to the policy, a financial

JCD men threaten RU hall provost with death for not paying toll

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A group of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists yesterday demanded toll from a hall provost of Rajshahi University (RU) and threatened him with death if he does not pay the toll within three days.

Prof Chand Mostafa, the provost of Bangabandhu Hall, complained that the group led by RU JCD Joint Convener Masudur Rahman Rana and Shaifin Ahmed had demanded Tk 10,000 from him for "celebrating Eid".

The JCD men brandishing firearms asked him to pay the toll in three days or face death, the provost said in a complaint filed to Rajshahi University Teachers' Association (Ruta).

Later, Ruta at an emergency meeting expressed deep concern over the incident. It demanded stern action against the JCD extortionists and the security of students and teachers on the campus.

However, Rana denied the allegation of extortion and told reporters that they went to the provost to discuss problems of the hall.

10 Bangladeshis seek asylum in Kosovo

AFP, Pristina

Thirteen people from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan are seeking asylum in the UN protectorate of Kosovo, the UN refugee agency said yesterday.

"Ten people from Bangladesh, two from India and one from Pakistan arrived on a flight from Istanbul on Monday. They have sought asylum in Kosovo," said Shpend Halili, a spokesman for the UNHCR in Kosovo.

"It is an unusual case and a new experience for Kosovo," which has no system for dealing with such cases, Halili told AFP.

The United Nations and NATO have run Kosovo since a conflict between Serbian forces and ethnic Albanian separatists was brought to an end by NATO in June 1999. Legally, the province remains a part of Serbia.

"If we define them as refugees according to our mandate, the UN mission (UNMIK) and the government would have to take the case over because it is their responsibility to look after people who come to Kosovo seeking sanctuary," said Halili.

On Monday the UN Security Council approved talks on resolving Kosovo's future status.

Ethnic Albanians, who outnumber Serbs and other minorities in the province by more than nine to one, are seeking nothing short of independence from Serbia, which Belgrade firmly opposes.

No extension

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income tax return will be extended again. The NBR, which already had extended the deadline once, from September 30 to October 31, has been receiving frequent enquiries in this regard, he added.

Though the board earlier expressed the hope that the number of income tax returns in the current fiscal year would cross 10 lakh, the frequency of tax return submission so far has been poorer than the last fiscal year. Some 3 lakh taxpayers had submitted tax returns until September 30, forcing the NBR to go to the deadline deferral.

In FY2004-05 over 8.5 lakh out of around 17 lakh people having taxpayer's identification number (TIN) submitted income tax returns.

A revenue expert said some newly introduced conditions, such as attaching photographs and statements on lifestyle, liabilities and wealth with the return, are probably discouraging many a taxpayer from handing in tax returns in time.

But a number of NBR officials rejected the speculation and said people typically wait until the eleventh hour before coming up with their tax returns.

The income tax payment system for the government employees has also been changed from this fiscal year, requiring them to pay tax like everybody else.

The NBR last fiscal year increased the initial penalty for failure to submit income tax return in time from Tk 500 to Tk 2,500. In case of continued default, a fine of Tk 250 will be added to that amount for every day after the deadline.

Final anti-govt

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The ruling alliance has completely failed to govern the country, Dr Kamal said, adding, "Before the last general election, BNP and Jamaat-led alliance had pledged to root out corruption, but after coming to power, they got involved in corruption and are doing it in a free-style manner."

The activities of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), which was formed to fight against corruption, have come to a standstill, he said.

Those who are responsible for Bangladesh's topping in corruption for five consecutive years will have to be accountable, he added.

Referring to the recent appointments of BNP and Jamaat's student wings' leaders as election officials, Dr Kamal said it was a clear attempt to manipulate the next polls.

Saarc Summit

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of all programmes have started from yesterday, while the dozen sub-committees continued holding regular coordination meetings in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Home, Information and also the Prime Minister's Office.

Talking to diplomatic corps, a high official of the Foreign Ministry yesterday said the authorities concerned in consultation with the SAARC Secretariat, current Chairperson of SAARC Pakistan and all other member states finalised almost all the programmes with a view to making the event a grand success.

The secretariat and current chairperson of the SAARC Pakistan are in touch with host Bangladesh. Matters relating to the twice-postponed 13th summit are being given final touches and member states are looking forward to productive deliberations during the summit.

The summit, which is scheduled for November 12-13, will be preceded by the programming committee meeting comprising the senior officials of SAARC nations on November 8-9, the standing committee comprised by the SAARC foreign secretaries due to meet on November 9-10, and finally the foreign ministers level council of ministers on November 11.

On the inaugural day of the summit on November 12, the seven heads of state and government of the SAARC countries will first lay a floral wreath at the National Mausoleum at Savar to pay respect to the Liberation War martyrs.

After visiting Savar, the SAARC leaders will proceed to Mazar Ziaur Rahman at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar and place a floral wreath to pay their respect to the late President, who took the initiative of the regional association in the early 1980s.

The leaders of the seven South Asian nations will then jointly unveil the place of replica of letters sent by Ziaur Rahman to the six heads of state and government proposing to float a regional body for cooperation.

Initially the replica structure will be set up at the mazar premises and later be installed permanently at the Zia Museum being constructed at the mazar side.

The mazar programmes over, the SAARC leaders will move forward to the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre (BCFCC) to attend the inaugural session of the 13th summit.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, who is currently rotating the SAARC Chair, will formally inaugurate the summit at BCFCC. The programme will start with the playing of the national anthem of Bangladesh and recitation from the Holy Quran.

Then the SAARC leaders will adopt a condolence motion in memory of the deaths of the January tsunami and October 8 earthquake in India and Pakistan. They will observe a one-minute silence seeking the divine blessing of the departed souls.

The summit will then distribute the SAARC Award 2004, which goes to late President Ziaur Rahman. The late President of Bangladesh has been

Saarc experts hope

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that the accord can be enforced from the stipulated date," a high official of the foreign ministry told diplomatic correspondents yesterday.

He said the CoE is likely to resolve these issues within a month and finalise them at the 12th meeting with clearance from the member states.

The decision to hold the 12th meeting of the CoE on November 29-30 in Dhaka has recently been taken by the Saarc Secretariat in Kathmandu.

The entire Safta accord will be implemented in phases as sorted out by the experts, so that the Saarc members would be able to begin its implementation on schedule, the official said.

He said the Saarc officials have so far finalised two draft agreements concerning customs management and avoidance of double taxation, while negotiations are underway on two more deals expected to be signed at the meeting of the Saarc foreign ministers on November 10.

The foreign ministry official also expressed his optimism that the agreements on protection and promotion of investment and Saarc Arbitration Centre will be finalised during the meet.

Sources said the 11th meeting of the CoE held on October 18-19 had narrowed down differences on two issues -- rules of origin and technical assistance to LDCs.

However, it is still to make a significant headway on the other two issues -- sensitive lists and revenue compensation mechanism for the LDCs in the Saarc domain -- Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and the Maldives.

The developing members of Saarc -- India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka -- have agreed on the areas where they will pledge technical assistance to the LDC partners for their capacity building. They, however, have not fully endorsed the lists of products on which LDCs have sought special derogation, maintaining the value addition criteria for them at 20 percent.

The LDC members have urged that the revenue compensation should be made effective from the third year of Safta enforcement till the final year of tariff liberalisation programme. However, the developing partners, India in particular, have argued that it be limited for three years only.

The officials said the seven South Asian countries are now determined to enforce the Safta as per schedule as several previous attempts to enhance trade in the region had failed.