

EC Ali receives death threat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Commissioner AK Mohammad Ali yesterday received a threat on his life by an anonymous caller.

Soon after receiving the threat, Ali informed State Minister for Home Affairs Luttfuzzaman Babar and Inspector General of Police Abdul Quayum about it. They assured the election commissioner of ensuring his security and identifying the caller.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, Ali said the caller identifying himself as Helal said top criminal Kala Jahangir wanted to talk to him.

"Scared by the call, I cut off the line, but the phone kept on ringing and I did not receive it anymore," the election commissioner said.

The election commissioner also said a senior official of the Rapid Action Battalion assured him over telephone of security for his family.

CEC declines to comment on fresh voters' list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commission (CEC) MA Aziz yesterday declined to make any comment on whether a fresh voter list will be prepared or the existing one will be revised although preparatory works are going on in full swing to prepare a fresh voter list under his directive.

"No Comments.... I don't know whether a fresh voter list is being prepared or not," MA Aziz replied when a reporter raised the issue. "You will get the answer at the right time."

The CEC's refusal to make comment came at a time when he is locked in a tussle with other two commissioners over the issue who are opposed to a new list.

The EC commissioners also questioned the legality of the unilateral decision of the CEC on the list. They gave a note of dissent on every file regarding preparation of the voter list.

RMG units kept out of power rationing

Real estate decries similar plan

MONJUR MAHMUD

The power ministry yesterday backtracked on its decision to ration electricity to garment industry in the face of criticism.

The real estate sector also came down heavily on the ministry's toying with a plan not to supply power to apartment buildings during peak hours, leaving them to depend on own power generation.

The Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (Desa) has recently rationed electricity to all industrial units during peak hours

Power crisis peaks as Sangu halts on glitch

Mahmudur hopes production to resume today; utility services crippled in Ctg

STAR REPORT

The Sangu Gas Field was came to an abrupt halt yesterday, worsening the power situation in the port city, which along with the other parts of the country is already plagued by an acute shortage of electricity and gas.

The shutdown soon translated into snapping of gas supply to different destinations and thus forcing suspension of operations at different fertiliser factories and power plants in the port city.

According to sources, production of the gas field, operated by the Cairns Energy PLC under a production sharing contract for the Block 16 to generate 172 million cubic feet per day (mmcf), were suspended abruptly at 4:15pm.

Cairn Energy officials said produc-

tion was suspended due to some mechanical glitches. They said sands were wobbling out of the well, reports UNB.

Sources in different installations depending on Sangu for operation said that the gas from Sangu ceased to be available since 4:10pm.

Adviser to the Energy Ministry Mahmudur Rahman told the UNB that senior officials rushed to the spot to ensure early repair of the fault. He said he hopes production would resume sometime today.

But sources at the Sangu Gas Field and its onshore gas processing plant at Silimpur declined to predict when the gas production might start.

The non-availability forced the authorities to suspend operations at the Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Limited (CUFL), Karnaphuli Fertiliser

Company, Raozan and Shikolbaha Thermal Power plants and Karnaphuli Paper Mills (KPM), added the sources.

The 60mw Shikolbaha plant was totally shut down while production in the Raozan power plant came down to 160mw from 360mw.

The wheels at the CUFL came to a grinding halt last night shortly after Sangu cut off gas supply, factory sources told our Chittagong office.

"We stopped our operation at 5:20pm," said General Manager (operations) Mostafa Faruqi.

The latest gas crisis threatens to plunge entire Chittagong into deeper crisis with the power and water getting further scarce.

"It is now an emergency situation, which is going to cripple all

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Commentary

Voters' list is too important for one person to decide

Two commissioners' dissent is not supported by precedents

MAHFUZ ANAM

Is it believable that we should have a chief election commissioner (CEC), no less a person than a sitting judge of the highest court of the land till assuming this office, who does not talk to his two other election commissioners? Believe it or not, that is the truth. As if in a private childish quarrel the honourable judge is carrying out all functions of the Commission alone ignoring the two other members and not giving any importance to their dissenting views.

According to the Constitution, the Election Commission (EC) is formed with one chief and several other members. Although the CEC is the head, whether he alone constitutes the Commission and whether he can make decision on his sole authority without holding any formal meeting of the Commission is something that needs to be looked into. When the Election Commission is clearly constituted of one chief and several members (there were three members until Safiur Rahman retired, now there are only two) we want the Commission to function as a whole and not on the arbitrary wishes of one person.

The question we want to ask is: Why

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SAARC SUMMIT SECURITY

Curfew-like situation planned for certain areas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has planned an unprecedented security net for the capital during the November 12-13 Saarc summit, creating a "curfew-like situation" in certain areas.

More than 21,000 police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members will be deployed in the city to ensure maximum security to the South Asian leaders and other delegates.

"I will not say it will be a curfew, but some specific areas and roads in the city will be closed for vehicles and

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the public during the summit," Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan said at a discussion on the 13th Saarc summit organised by the Diplomatic Correspondents Association of Bangladesh (DCAB) at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Excepting the vehicles with Saarc stickers, security personnel and summit card holders, none will be allowed to move on the roads and in the areas where the leaders of the seven Saarc member states will be staying and going, the minister said.

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With Eid-ul-Fitr only a few days away, hundreds of people line up at the Kamalapur railway station in the capital yesterday to buy advance tickets of the inter-district trains.

PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka, Delhi talk security, trans-border crimes

Home secy-level meet begins

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Prevention of trans-border crimes, movement of criminals across the boundary and security issues dominated the proceedings on the opening day of the home-secretary level talks between India and Bangladesh in New Delhi yesterday.

India is understood to have raised the issues of northeastern Indian insurgents' alleged presence in Bangladesh as well as illegal migration from Bangladesh, although there was no official word on the discussion at the meeting.

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Morshed sceptical about Safta implementation on schedule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday expressed his doubt whether South Asian Free Trade Area (Safta) will be implemented from the scheduled date of January 1, 2006 as the Saarc summit was postponement twice leading to incomplete negotiations.

He said meetings of ministers, experts and other concerned to Safta were deferred several times and negotiations are incomplete.

"In view of the situation it is not possible for me to assure you that

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Govt halts recruitment for belt-tightening

Appointments under process to continue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The economic crisis, donors' pressure and the need to maintain macroeconomic stability ahead of the next general elections have made the government decide not to go for any further recruitment excepting those that are already approved and in the process.

A government handout yesterday said no new appointment will be made to any vacant post at the government agencies, except for those already under process and urgent recruitment for cadre services and development projects and to any other post deemed necessary by the authorities concerned.

The sudden decision sparked off grievances among many a ruling party leader and also raised the question as to how the ministries and departments are going to function smoothly without the needed manpower.

At present, some 60,000 posts are

lying vacant with different government ministries, directorates, autonomous bodies and local administration, said an official source. He said the October 26 circular of the establishment ministry on "a temporary suspension of appointments to all vacant posts excepting to the cadre services and any contractual recruitment of urgent manpower for development projects" generated much confusion in every quarter.

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JS limps into fifth year

BNP policymakers make its functioning difficult

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Unwillingness of the ruling alliance lawmakers to attend the sessions, frequent boycott by the main opposition and reluctance of the government to discuss important issues in the House have not let the 8th parliament that completes its four years today play an effective role.

Comparing with the scenes in the previous two parliaments, many say, the current parliament has taken a step backward instead of moving forward in making the parliamentary system of government healthy, proving the ruling alliance's slogan of making the parliament functional an empty one.

In addition to these, discriminatory attitude towards opposition parties, severe quorum crisis over the years, reining of the ruling party lawmakers in some aspects, and absence of any significant move to make the parliamentary committee system strengthened have worsened the situation.

In fact due to the prevailing non-conducive environment the parliament has not been able to ensure accountability of the government which is a clear contradiction of the parliamentary system of governance.

The effectiveness of a multi-party parliament rests largely on the relationship between the government and the opposition parties. But the relation

between the ruling alliance, mainly the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), and the main opposition is fraught with bitterness.

The main opposition Awami League (AL) that has been boycotting the House since last year however cannot avoid its responsibilities for rendering the parliament dysfunctional.

The ruling party in last four years failed to nominate a deputy leader of the House.

The BNP lawmakers in an unprecedented resolution of their

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