



HC RULE ON GOVT, EC

Why EC Secretariat under PMO won't be illegal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a rule on the government and the Election Commission (EC) asking them to explain why the functioning of EC Secretariat under the jurisdiction of Prime Minister's Office (PMO) will not be declared illegal.

The court also asked them explain in three weeks why government's formulation of rules for the EC will not be declared illegal and unconstitutional as the Constitution and the

Representation of the People Order 1972 empower the EC to formulate its rules.

The HC rule came after hearing of a writ petition filed by Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil challenging Election Commission (Officers and Staff) Rules 1979, its amendments and the provision that put the EC Secretariat under the PMO.

Barrister Amir-Ul Islam moved the petition in the court yesterday.

The respondents in the rule are the Election Commission, chief

election commissioner, election commissioners AK Mohammad Ali and M Munsef Ali, secretaries of the EC Secretariat and the Ministry of Establishment.

The court also heard two writ petitions filed by Abdul Jalil and Awami League lawmakers Rahmat Ali and Asaduzzaman Noor challenging the legality of the preparation of a fresh voter list. Both the petitions were filed on December 12.

After the hearing, the HC division bench fixed today for passing

order in this regard.

Yesterday's writ petition says the Election Commission is independent in the exercise of its functions and subject only to the Constitution and any other law, which is expressly mandated in Article 118(4) of the Constitution.

"... in order to discharge its functions properly, the commission has ample power to create offices and posts by itself and may give appointments through control and supervision."

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No plan yet to make EC independent

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The government has no plans to make the Election Commission (EC) secretariat independent and separate from the prime minister's office (PMO) while the chief election commissioner (CEC) has yet to put forth the reform proposals that he had announced to do.

The six-point reform proposal submitted by the former CEC to the president remains shelved for the last seven months. The proposals include the all-important one -- an independent secretariat for the commission.

The EC, which on numerous occasions had faced difficulties in conducting polls freely due to interference from the executive, drew up the reform proposals in last May.

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Inflation rate hits 8yr high in November

Higher flare-up in rural areas, food items hurts poor most

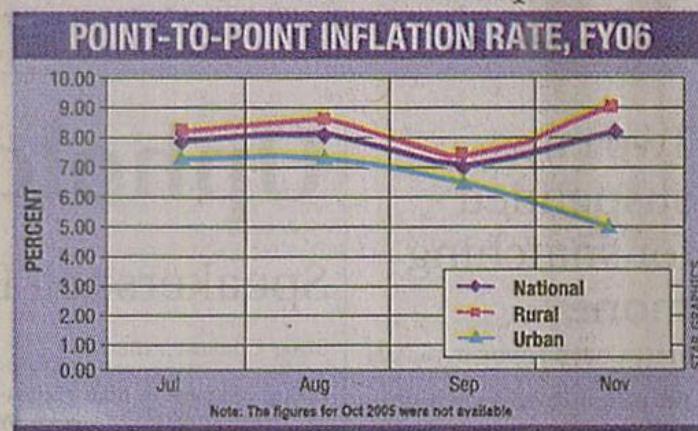
REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The point-to-point inflation rate hit a new 8-year high of 7.95 percent in November last, rising by 0.67 percentage points from October, due to a sudden leap in food prices.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), the rate was higher in rural areas than the urban ones, aggravating the continued miseries of the rural poor.

The inflation rate was 7.06 percent on a point-to-point basis in fiscal year (FY) 1998-99 caused

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CPB, JP sue each other

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) and Jatiya Party (JP) have filed cases yesterday in connection with the Sunday's incident accusing each other of attacking and looting.

Ahsan Habib Lablu, general secretary of Dhaka CPB unit, filed a theft case against former president HM Ershad, his wife Rowshan Ershad, presidium member Abu Hossain Babla and a large number of unknown JP activists on Sunday.

On the other hand, Rezaul Islam Bhuiyan, office secretary of JP, filed an attempt to murder case against CPB President Manzurul Ahsan Khan, his acting General Secretary Shah Alam and 16 others.

The case filed by CPB alleged

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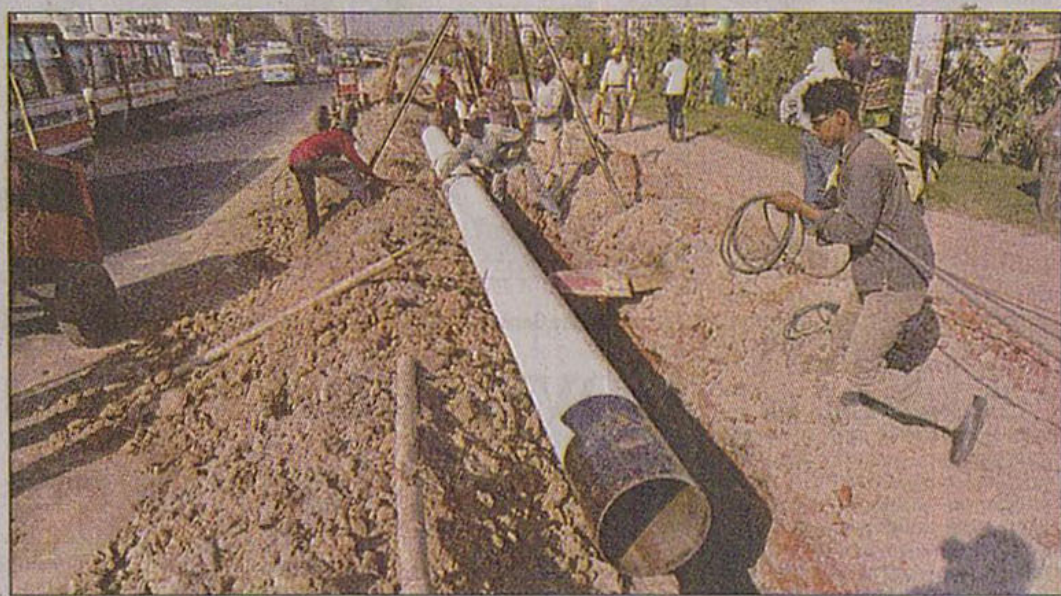


PHOTO: STAR

Workers install gas pipes digging up the Airport Road, which was asphalted only two months ago. The picture was taken yesterday.

Purchase of \$600m crude oil okayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet committee on purchase yesterday approved the purchase of 14 lakh tonnes of crude oil at a cost of \$600 million for the current year.

The cabinet committee meeting chaired by Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman decided that seven lakh tonnes of crude oil will be imported from Saudi Arabia and another seven lakh from the United Arab Emirates.

Islamic Development Bank (IDB) will partly finance the purchase and the government will provide the rest, Saifur told journalists.

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Cabinet body nods to disqualified bidder

Ignores Public Procurement Regulation, review body's decision about Chandpur power plant

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brushing aside the Public Procurement Regulation (PPR) 2003, the cabinet purchase committee yesterday approved a flawed bid of a disqualified Chinese bidder for the 150MW Chandpur power plant.

The committee rejected the decision of a government review panel formed under the PPR 2003 that had asked the Power

Development Board (PDB) to disqualify the flawed bid of Chinese company Harbin and negotiate with the two other bidders on the basis of their lowest price offers.

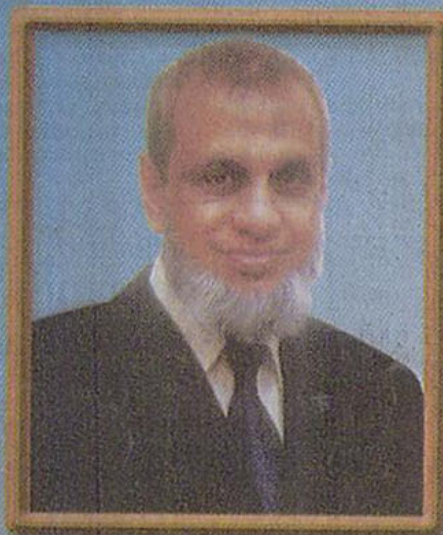
The PPR 2003 says that if a bidder has doubts about transparency in a tender process, it may make formal complaints to a government review panel. The decision of that panel will be final, the PPR says.

But the cabinet committee's decision ignored the PPR and upheld the power ministry's claim that the review panel's scrutiny is flawed and that the panel has no right to pass a judgement on a ministry's affairs. All the committee members yesterday shared the same view.

Emerging from the meeting yesterday, Chairman of the committee Finance Minister M Saifur

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim



We express our deep appreciation for unrelenting dedication of **Mr. M. Nezmul Karim** to **M/S. Karim International**, a reputed distributor of books and journals in Bangladesh. His able leadership has now taken the firm through its thirtieth year of operation.

We earnestly pray for continuous success of M/s. Karim International in providing publishers' representation and sincere services to our clients.

Wife, Son & Daughter

Hajj flight crisis over, claims govt

SHARIFUL ISLAM

The government last night claimed to have resolved the protracted hajj flight crisis, becoming enable to ferry 52,902 intending hajj pilgrims to Jeddah as Saudi civil aviation authorities confirmed 10 more air landing slots.

"All pilgrims will be able to perform the Hajj as we have got confirmation of the required landing slots from the Saudi authorities today," Md Mahmoodur Rahman, acting managing director of Biman, told The Daily Star last night.

Deputy General Manager (Public Relations) of Biman Syed Ahasan Hossain Kazi said 46,783 pilgrims have so far been carried to Jeddah, while 6,119 more will be

ferried by January 4.

He said the 6,119 pilgrims will get on nine DC-10 flights, two flights of a leased Air Bus, four flights of a chartered Yemenia aircraft and scheduled flights of Biman and international flights operating from Dhaka.

Ahasan said they have air landing slot for even January 5 and 6 for ferrying pilgrims.

"If requires, we'll send pilgrims even on January 5 and 6," he said, adding possibly they will not need it.

Biman cancelled its yesterday's scheduled flight to Rome to ferry pilgrims to Jeddah.

President of Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (Haab), federating body of 363 hajj agencies, Abdus Shakur told The Daily

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Boy gives up fight for life after 5 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A seven-month-old child succumbed to his injuries on Sunday night, five days after it got hurt when the landlady tried to hit the child's mother at Adabar in the capital.

Parul Begum, mother of the child Iqbal Hossain Ibrahim, locked into a quarrel over the house rent with her landlady Rahima Begum on December 27, police said.

At one stage Rahima tried to beat Parul with an iron rod that hit Ibrahim as his mother dodged the blow.

Parul took the child to a pharmacy and brought him back home after a doctor gave some stitches and medicine. As Ibrahim's condition deteriorated on Sunday

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Bangladesh Shines in Colors 374 Thanas of 61 Districts

NEW THANAS

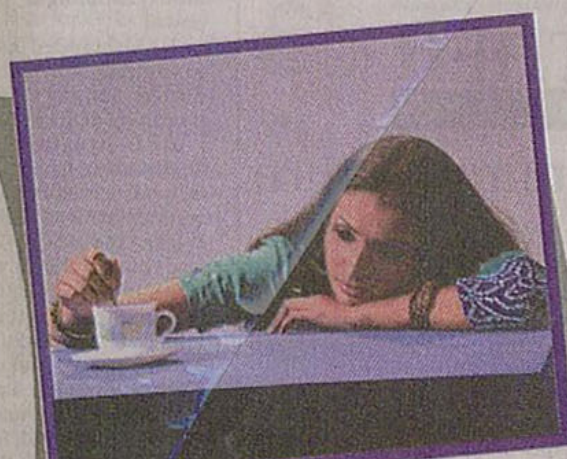
Araihazar, Narayanganj Kamrangirchar, Dhaka Rangunia, Chittagong Muktagacha, Mymensingh Purbodhala, Netrokona Tarail, Kishoregonj Trisal, Mymensingh Gouripur, Mymensingh



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