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AL BACK TO JS AFTER 17 MONTHS

Hasina places reform proposals for fair polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On return after a prolonged boycott, Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday placed in parliament a set of proposals for reforms in the caretaker government and electoral systems, which the opposition says, are meant to make the election free and fair.

Sheikh Hasina, also president of the main opposition Awami League (AL), in her one-hour speech placed a five-point proposal for amending the formation and jurisdiction of the caretaker government, a 15-point proposal for making the Election Commission (EC) 'truly independent' and an 11-point proposal for reforms in the existing electoral



Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina along with her deputies enters the House after the Awami League Parliamentary Party meeting yesterday.

laws. Reading out the proposals, she said, "Now it is the property of the House and I urge the government to take steps to this end."

"We don't want to assume power by whatever means, rather we want to establish the people's right to vote so that they themselves can choose their rulers," she said, adding that the opposition proposals are absolutely imperative for the elections to be fair and free from the influence of black money and muscle power.

In response on behalf of the leader of the House, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said the government is ready to discuss the

Govt ready to accept any constructive suggestion

Bhuiyan tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a quick response to the main opposition party's reform proposals, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday said the government is ready to discuss ways to make the future elections more credible, free and fair.

"If they [main opposition] remain in the House and make any constructive proposal, we are ready to accept that," he told parliament immediately after Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina placed the reform proposals for the caretaker government system and the Election Commission (EC).

"We also believe in making elections free from the influence of black money and muscle power," Bhuiyan said making a brief

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Dozen power plants reel from oil shortage

SHARIEF KHAN

Over a dozen oil-fired power plants generating about 450 megawatt power in the north and southwestern regions are under threat due to a short supply of oil in the last two weeks, according to the Power Development Board (PDB).

Of these plants, two 20MW units in Saidpur and Rangpur are already 'rationing' their power generation. PDB sources said the plants are now producing power partially and if oil supply is not ensured soon, the production will have to be suspended.

"Two weeks ago, the PDB deposited Tk 5 crore to the three oil companies -- Padma, Meghna and Jamuna -- to purchase 10 million litres of oil. But they said they can't supply any oil now," quips a competent source in PDB.

An energy ministry official said there is a supply shortfall right now due to various reasons including hoarding by a section of petroleum dealers and smuggling of oil into India and Myanmar.

However, the biggest problem is that Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) could not ensure a timely import of oil from the international market due to a financial crisis.

Meanwhile, the supply crisis is threatening power generation, which may trigger a severe and widespread energy crisis.

The PDB needs a daily oil supply of Tk 1.5 crore to Tk 2 crore to run its oil-fired power plants in the northern and southwestern regions. These plants run on oil, as gas is not available in most places in these regions.

If the crisis continues a few more days, these plants will face

shut down. The plants are Khulna 110MW, 60MW and 56MW, Bheramara 60MW, Faridpur 20MW, Thakurgaon 4MW, and two 20MW and one 3MW plants in Barisal.

"The PDB had earlier suffered gas supply shortfall, but this is the first case of oil supply shortfall," a source pointed out.

Meanwhile, the power sector is undergoing regular load-shedding of 300MW to 400MW every day as 16 power units have remained shutdown either for maintenance or for technical glitch.

"Most of them will return online soon. But a 100MW unit in Baghabari remains shutdown for over a month due to a major technical problem. This plant needs a major part replacement and it will need time to do that," the source added.

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PINAKI ROY

The story of Bipul (not his real name), son of a rich businessman of the city, is not extraordinary in any way. Once a brilliant student, a sharp debater, a budding musician

Country sinking fast into HIV quicksand

7.1pc injecting drug users HIV positive; high time to act, prevent epidemic

and a creative graphic designer, Bipul has reduced himself to an empty shell, a shadow existence, at the age of just 26.

It was an irresistible addiction to drug abuse that day by day has sucked his vitality, his future, dry. He failed to complete his university course and dropped out, and then started working at a firm as a graphic designer mainly to fuel his addiction.

"At first I took drugs just out of

curiosity. I don't know exactly when I got hooked on the stuffs. After six years of nightmares, my family finally gave up on me, on trying to make me shake off drug addiction, and stopped supporting me. When my schoolmates saw the miseries I was in, abandoned by my family, they made me come here to quit drugs," Bipul said, sitting in the conference room of a drug rehabilitation centre in the city.

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PM reaches Islamabad

Talks with Pakistan from today

UNB, Islamabad

The hosts rolled out the red carpet to receive Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia as she flew in yesterday on a three-day official visit to Pakistan.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz and his wife greeted Khaleda after a VVIP flight of Biman Bangladesh Airlines landed at Chaklala Air Force Base at 4:00pm.

Nineteen gun-salutes heralded

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DIESEL, POWER CRISIS

Govt blames hoarders as boro wilts in fields

REAZ AHMAD

With rising diesel price and erratic power supply taking tolls on boro farmers, the government convenes a meeting of stakeholders this morning, denying fuel-supply shortage and putting the blame squarely on black marketing and hoarding.

Dispatches from the northern correspondents pouring in The Daily Star newsroom depict a

gloomy picture of the farmers being unable to irrigate young rice plants in the peak boro season due to an acute supply shortage and high price of diesel and most erratic power supply.

The country's farmers use over one lakh power-driven and some 10 lakh diesel-run irrigation pumps to water boro and other winter crops in this season.

Talking to The Daily Star last

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

A red-vented nightingale perching on a silk-cotton flower tries to sip honey from the blossoms that heralds the spring beginning today.

POWER CRISIS WB points at dubious tender process

UNB, Dhaka

The World Bank yesterday disclosed its diagnosis of Bangladesh's ailing power sector showing that the deepening crisis is stemming from unusual delays in tendering different projects for a lack of transparency.

To provide a remedy, the multi-lateral donor agency engaged its wing, International Finance Corporation (IFC), in the tender process of some proposed power projects.

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AUG 17 BLASTS Judge feels insecure in trying case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A sessions judge yesterday felt insecure to try the August 17 bomb blast case against Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) members.

Judge Mohammad Shamsul Alam Khan of the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka told the prosecution about insufficient security inside and outside the court when an assistant public prosecutor (APP) prayed for fixing an early date of a

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JS okays tele-tapping as AL walks out

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid strong protests from the opposition lawmakers and despite their walkout en masse, the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday passed a bill allowing intelligence and law enforcement agencies to tap telephone conversations.

Opposition members in a line opposed the bill and said the law is

unconstitutional and against the fundamental rights of citizens, as it will infringe on their right to privacy. They also apprehended abuse of the law by the officials who will tap telephone conversations.

The opposition lawmakers also initiated a motion for non-approval of the President's Ordinance promulgated in last

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Andhokarer Aloy Tumi

Script: Sumonto Aslam, Direction: Chayonika Chowdhury

14th February, 2006 at 9 pm on **ntv**

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