

# EC reforms a must for acceptable polls

Nagorik Committee consultation session told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Democracy within the political parties, transparency in their financing and accountability at all stages of their activities need to be ensured to establish a participatory democracy in the country, said speakers at an expert group consultation yesterday.

A free and fair election is not possible under the present chief election commissioner (CEC), they said stressing that reforms in the Election Commission (EC) should be carried out immediately so that the next polls are acceptable to all.

Nagorik Committee 2006 organised the discussion on 'Vision 2021 for Bangladesh: Goal 1: To Become a Participatory Democracy' at Cirdap auditorium in Dhaka.

Professor Rehman Sobhan, convener of the committee and also

chairman of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), chaired the meeting.

Awami League (AL) lawmaker Abdur Razzak said it is true that there are some weaknesses in practising democracy within the parties and there are scopes to further strengthen it.

"But as far as my party is concerned, it's not entirely true that there is no intra-party democracy at all," he said citing examples of elections at thana and district levels to choose party leadership.

It is not desirable that a person who has money now wants to be a lawmaker no matter if he is qualified for it or not, he observed.

A lawmaker has very little to contribute under the present parliamentary system and parliament will not be effective without strengthening the local governments, added

the opposition lawmaker.

It is very unfortunate that despite being a sitting judge, the present CEC had cheated people by feigning sick to avert meeting the visitors.

Zahiruddin Swapan, a ruling party lawmaker, underscored the need for institutionalising the electoral process with a vision so that elections are free from any influence.

He suggested introducing identity cards for the citizens that, he thinks, will help to bring greater accountability in the election systems.

Saying that science and information technologies have brought about a significant change in everyday life in the last 15 years, he urged the Nagorik Committee to

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## Compath fined for using date-expired products

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court yesterday found serious irregularities and an unhygienic environment at Compath Limited, a notable diagnostic centre in the city, and fined the centre Tk 50,000.

The mobile court, led by Magistrate Narayan Chandra Devnath, raided the Compath Limited on Elephant Road and found date-expired reagents, which are used for laboratory tests. The court also found date-expired surgical pipes.

"We found that the lab technicians did not have any diploma on conducting the experiments and the director general of the health office did not certify them either," said a member of the mobile court.

He also said the diagnostics centre did not have permission from the Atomic Energy Commission.

Later the court raided Manin Chinese Restaurant and fined it Tk 10,000 for unhygienic condition.



PHOTO: STAR

A mobile court makes a list of confiscated date-expired reagents used for lab tests at Compath Ltd, a diagnostic centre, on Elephant Road in Dhaka yesterday.

## Shibir men beat up RU exam controller

RU CORRESPONDENT

Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) thugs physically assaulted the Rajshahi University (RU) controller of examinations and his associates yesterday as he refused to hand over a certificate to the ICS men in absence of the certificate owner.

Monirul Islam, president of Madar Bux Hall unit of ICS, went to the certificate issuing section of the university administrative building at around 1:00pm along with a group of goons to collect the provisional certificate on behalf of organising secretary Delwar Hossain Saidy of RUICS.

The gang of ICS men were enraged and attacked the certificate issuing officer Abdul Matin as he refused to hand over Saidy's certificate to them after explaining the regulation of issuing certificates only to the certificate holder, campus sources said.

The Controller of Examinations Dr Anwar Hossain also came under ICS physical attack as he arrived at the scene with a contingent of police and asked the ICS men to leave the office.

Later, more than one hundred infuriated ISC activists led by its General Secretary Nur Muhammad Mandal threatened Dr Anwar with dire consequences while Proctor Enamul Haque, Sher-e-Bangla Hall Provost Aslam Hossain, three assistant proctors and other officials were present.

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## BSF kills 1

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) gunned down a Bangladeshi youth in Baliadangi upazila of Thakurgaon district yesterday morning.

The victim was identified as Mohammad Golam Mostafa, 30, son of Mufizul Islam of village Nundulamala under the upazila.

According to BDR and local sources, the Indian border guards of Shonamati camp opened fire on Mostafa while he was working on his cropland near the border pillar no 388/S/1 at around 6:30am. Mostafa died instantly.

Immediately after the killing, the BSF personnel took away the body. When contacted, Lt Colonel Rafique of 20 Rifles Battalion confirmed the incident.

BDR sent a letter to its Indian counterpart demanding return of the body.

## Correction

In a report headlined 'Dhaka to lead LDCs in WTO again' published in The Daily Star on August 2, Gambia was inadvertently mentioned as the previous coordinator of LDCs. In fact Zambia was the coordinator. We regret the error.

Prayer Timing		
August 4		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-47	6-50
Esha	8-15	8-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		

# Lanka offers talks as battle peaks

21 more killed in violence

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka yesterday offered to talk to Tamil Tigers about their bitter water dispute as fighting that has already claimed some 156 lives threatened to spiral into all-out war.

"The window is open," said government spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella. "If the Tigers are ready, we are ready too to start talks immediately. All we wanted to do was to ensure that the people get water. We do not want to go back to war."

The conciliatory move came as peace broker Norway tried to salvage what was left of a 2002 truce made virtually irrelevant by air, ground and sea battles that have

marked the bloodiest eight days since the ceasefire.

Rambukwella said fighting raged Thursday in the Muslim-majority town of Muttur in northeastern Trincomalee district as Tigers who infiltrated the area during shelling on Wednesday continued to offer resistance.

"There are a few pockets of resistance but we are in total control over Muttur," Rambukwella said. He added that residents in the area had been asked to move to public buildings to allow troops to search for Tigers.

Seventeen civilians and four police were killed in artillery attacks in Sri Lanka's northeastern Muslim town of Muttur on Thursday, military

officials said.

The civilians were killed when shells hit three schools where they were sheltering after security forces asked them to move to public buildings while troops mopped up Tamil Tiger rebel resistance, officials said.

Military spokesman Upali Rajapakse said the bloodiest attack was against Arabic College in Muttur where 10 people were killed and at least 50 were wounded.

He said two other Muslim schools at Thoppur, a suburb of Muttur, were also hit by shells leaving five dead and 10 wounded at Al Noori College and two killed at

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PHOTO: AFP

Israeli soldiers march as they wait for orders to enter southern Lebanon along the northern Israeli border on Wednesday.

# Move to catch GSP document forgers

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

The government has initiated a move to identify people involved in forgery of GSP (generalised system of preference) certificates after several European buyers of readymade garments complained about it.

The commerce ministry has formed a five-member committee headed by its Deputy Secretary Fazlur Rahman to find out the persons or groups involved in such forgery.

The committee comprising representatives from customs, Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) and Tariff Commission has been asked to submit its report to the commerce ministry by August 15, ministry sources said.

The Bangladesh mission in Brussels in the last couple of months repeatedly requested the government to probe the allegation of tampering with the GSP certificates.

Moreover, buyers from several European countries have sent back

some 16 consignments of garments exported from Bangladesh this year using fake GSP certificates.

"A group of people are involved in such anti-state activities," EPB Vice-chairman Mir Sahabuddin Mohammad told The Daily Star yesterday. He said the forgery is damaging Bangladesh's reputation in the buyers' community.

Bangladeshi readymade garment products enjoy duty-free access to European markets under

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## SEDITION CASE Charge-framing not held, order to produce JMB accused Aug 31

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court could not frame charges in the first sedition case against eight JMB leaders and activists of Dhamrai, as the lone arrested accused Rafiqul Islam alias Sentu was not produced before it yesterday.

Judge Mohammad Golam Hossain of the Additional District Judge and Bankruptcy Court fixed August 31 for the next hearing and directed the jail authorities to produce Sentu on that day.

The accused are Sentu, M Wahab, Yaqub Ali, Anwar Hossain, Faruq Hossain alias Kosai Faruq, M Wahiduzzaman Pintu, Abdus Salam and Nurul Islam. Of them, Sentu is in jail while the others are absconding.

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## SAIFUR'S WASHINGTON VISIT

# Release of WB, IMF funds main agenda

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman leaves tomorrow for Washington to lobby the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for releasing \$280 million loans as budget support within the present government's term.

During the visit the finance minister will meet the WB president, the IMF managing director and other high officials and explain the difficulties of the government to carry out reforms in its final year in office, sources said.

The IMF recently deferred the \$80 million sixth tranche of the Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF) loan scheduled to be

released in July as Bangladesh failed to fulfil its conditions regarding reforms in energy, revenue and banking sectors.

Besides, the release of \$200 million in the fourth tranche of the World Bank's budget support loans has also been delayed due to slow progress in reforms.

"The finance minister will try to persuade the donors in releasing the funds with a pledge to complete the unfinished reforms after taking office for another term through the next election," a high official of the finance ministry said.

He said government borrowing from banking sector will increase further if the World Bank and IMF loans were not released immediately.

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# Malaysia to take more Bangladeshi workers

Badawi tells Khaleda

BSS, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday assured Prime Minister Khaleda Zia that his country would recruit more workers from Bangladesh.

The assurances came when the prime minister met her Malaysian counterpart at Hotel Marriot Putrajaya on the sidelines of the emergency OIC summit.

Khaleda thanked the Malaysian prime minister for lifting restrictions on recruitment of Bangladeshi workers and requested him to take more skilled, semi-skilled and non-skilled workers from Bangladesh.

Badawi expressed gratitude to Khaleda Zia for attending the OIC summit and said her participation will have a special impact on the Muslim countries.

The prime minister thanked Badawi for successful holding of the summit and said his initiatives are very positive and necessary in resolving the crisis in Lebanon and Middle East.

Various bilateral issues of common interest were also discussed

during the meeting.

The prime minister also held bilateral talks with her Pakistani counterpart Shaukat Aziz on the sidelines of the OIC summit.

During the talks, they expressed their identical views to further strengthen bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

They also agreed to work together under the umbrella of the Saarc for socio-economic development of the region.

Lauding the leadership of Khaleda for strengthening Saarc as its chairperson, Shaukat Aziz expressed the hope that the regional forum would be able to achieve its avowed goals under her leadership.

He said Pakistan greatly values its relations and friendship with Bangladesh and expressed the hope that the existing ties will be strengthened in the years to come.

Lebanese Foreign Minister Fawzi Salloukh made a courtesy call on Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at Putrajaya Marriot Hotel.

## UP chairman hurt in Jhenidah bomb attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Three people including a Union Parishad (UP) chairman were injured in a bomb attack on Paglakanai road yesterday morning.

UP Chairman Sharafat Hossain, also the vice president of Ganna upazila BNP, is in a critical condition and has been sent to Dhaka for treatment.

The other two injured, Shaheen and Rana, are from the same area and received first aid.

Two criminals riding on a motorbike targeted Sharafat Hossain near Motlabur Rahman Secondary High School by Paglakanai road and hurled two bombs at him, said the police and locals.

## SC Bar leaders boycott HC judge's bench

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) leaders and anti-government lawyers yesterday boycotted a High Court (HC) division bench of Justice Joyrul Abedin in protest at issuing the contempt

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NOTICE

জাতীয় দিবার ২০০৭

জবাবদিয়তার উত্তর প্রদেয়

সুশীল সমাজের উদ্যোগ

Channel i will telecast a special programme today at 5:30pm on "Regional Dialogue on National Election 2007: Civil Society Initiative for Accountable Development" organised by Centre for Policy Dialogue, The Daily Star, Prothom Alo and Channel i in Khulna on July 22.