

UPDATED VOTER LIST EC to ask for exemption from PPR to complete printing by Oct

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) Secretariat yesterday decided to request the cabinet purchase committee to exempt it from the public procurement regulations (PPR) 2003 to enable it to complete printing of the updated voter list by October.

It took the decision at an inter-ministerial meeting that discussed possible complexities arising out of compliance with the PPR.

Sources said the EC Secretariat is going to make such a request mainly due to time constraint caused by the loss of over six months in preparing a controversial fresh voter list. Now, it is not possible to complete printing of the updated voter list this year if the

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Natwar files notice against Manmohan

Parliament plunges
into chaos

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Former foreign minister Natwar Singh filed a breach of privilege notice against Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday for leakage of an inquiry commission report to the media before it could be placed in the House.

Natwar, indicted by an official commission for misconduct in an Iraqi oil-for-food swindle, filed the notice as the Indian parliament

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BB REPORT ON ORIENTAL BANK Orion, ntv siphoned off money

Ailing bank borrowed on call money market
at high interest to feed the favourites

STAR REPORT

Already facing an acute liquidity crisis, the Oriental Bank loaned nearly Tk 380 crore to different business enterprises in 17 months till May 2006 on orders from the bank's new owner and top management, documents show.

To arrange money for the borrowers, the bank borrowed from the call money market at the highest possible interest rate. By December 31, 2005, the high-interest loan it

took stood at a staggering Tk 213 crore.

The bank did not hesitate to be on the slippery slope to be able to lend Tk 380 crore, whereas it was unable to pay around Tk 200 crore to its large depositors like other banks and the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority whose term deposits had already matured.

Most of these loans over the last one and a half years were given in violation of the bank rules and

regulations. According to Oriental Bank's branch executives, the loans were granted on verbal instructions from the top management.

Besides, the documents also primarily show that Obaedul Karim's family, who took over the majority shares of the bank in 2005, has obtained loans illegally on the basis of mere "verbal instructions". Obaedul of Orion Group is very close to the BNP high-ups and he

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Israeli blitz kills dozens Lebanon pleads for immediate end to fighting

AFP, REUTERS, Beirut

Prime Minister Fuad Siniora made a tearful plea yesterday for an end to the near four-week-old Lebanon conflict as dozens of civilians were killed in a new blitz of Israeli air strikes across the country.

Lebanese prime minister said yesterday that only one person was killed when houses collapsed in Israeli air strikes in the southern village of Hula, after earlier saying 40 people had lost their lives.

"It turned out there was one person killed. They thought that the whole building smashed on the heads of 40 people. Thanks God

that they have been saved," he told reporters at a news conference at an Arab meeting.

"Those who really shoot to kill innocent people prove that they have the intentions to kill and the intention is quite enough criminal. Nevertheless they are not killed. They are safe."

Three Israeli soldiers were killed in the southern Lebanese town of Bint Jbeil, Al Arabiya television reported on Monday.

The Dubai-based television gave no further details.

Warplanes bombed houses, bridges and roads in southern and eastern Lebanon as Israeli military

commanders vowed to expand their massive offensive, with little sign of international agreement at the United Nations on a peace plan.

The deadly raids came as Washington urged the quick passage of a UN resolution calling for a full halt to fighting that has left more than 1,000 people dead in 27 days.

Top Israeli officials warned they would continue the offensive to cripple the fundamentalist Shia Muslim Hezbollah movement regardless of any ceasefire negotiated at the United Nations.

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M-16, bullets recovered in Fatikhhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) recovered two firearms including a sophisticated M-16 rifle and 373 bullets from a remote area in Fatikhhari upazila yesterday morning.

During a search at Charer Khil village of Narayanhat union in the upazila, a team of Rab-7 unearthed one M-16 rifle with three loaded magazines from an abandoned bungalow owned by one Foyez Ahmad at around 5:00am yesterday, sources said.

The members of the elite force then raided the house of Kafil Uddin in the same village and recovered one double-barrel gun and 373 bullets of M-16.

They launched the operation on the confessional statement of Nasirul Islam alias Shawkat and Jamal Mohammad Tuhin, two close

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Dengue spreads outside capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dengue has been spreading across the country with more people hitting the hospitals after it had infected a significant number of people in the capital.

Seventeen dengue-infected patients have been identified in Khulna, two in Rajshahi, one in Potuakhali and one in Jessore so far.

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) reported of identifying 1,053 dengue infected patients in different hospitals and clinics since June 28 while dengue control room of the Directorate General of Health Services reported of spotting 1,246 dengue patients in a survey since

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PHOTO: STAR

Women working on handlooms to produce export-quality rugs in Kurigram.

Rags bring riches in rugs

Ulipur Satranji makes inroads into
US, German markets

RAFIQUE SARKER from
Rangpur

The handloom rug of Ulipur in Kurigram is making its way into the world market, opening up great opportunities for hundreds of unemployed women in the locality.

About 25,000 rolls of rugs, locally known as Satranji, are being exported every month to Germany and America. What makes Ulipur rugs unique is that they are woven from materials

such as jute, garment waste, maize cane, and sugar cane.

Currently, some 300 women from the Monga-prone villages of Ulipur work at a factory of Tetutala to produce the handloom carpets.

A joint venture of Chhinnamukul Bangladesh, an NGO, and Karupanya Rangpur, a private enterprise, the factory was set up with a view to creating employment opportunities for the local women and exporting the rugs they would produce.

Shyamal Kumar Roy, executive director of Chhinnamukul, told The Daily Star that they are gradually increasing the volume of rugs for export.

"Hopefully, we will soon have more skilled workers to bump up the production of our business promotion unit," he observed.

He said, "We are faced with a number of obstacles to expanding our operation. Still we dream of a

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PHOTO: STAR

Children reappear in classes at a Dhanmondi school yesterday after non-government teachers called off their strike.

Success in democratic practices 'insignificant'

Observe civil
society leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent citizens of the country yesterday presented a vision for achieving a realistically defined goal to meet people's legitimate expectations by 2025 through a concerted effort, terming achievements in democratic practices in the last 15 years as 'insignificant'.

Identifying confrontational political culture, poor governance, deteriorating public services, politicisation of key public and democratic institutions, culture of impunity and lack of farsightedness of the policymakers as key hurdles, they called for working together to remove those and to ensure rule of law and effective functioning of an accountable government and an independent judiciary.

"The long captive democracy got its freedom in 1991. But our

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POWER PLANTS REHABILITATION Govt risks \$22m soft loan as power ministry sits idle

SHARIER KHAN

Due to inaction of the power ministry, the government by August 15 may lose 22 million dollars of conditional soft loan from the Czechoslovakian government for rehabilitation of two old power plants installed by the Czechs.

These plants - Khulna 60 megawatt and 110 megawatt - built in 1973 and 1984 respectively by a Czech government company Skodaexport, are now generating maximum of 50mw and 85mw respectively.

Both of these plants underwent overhauling in the past and they are scheduled for major rehabilitation in the next year. Sources said by installing new boilers, control systems, and by refurbishing turbines, etc, these plants will get a new lease on life along with full generation capacity.

Following the negotiations that began last year, the Economic Relations Division (ERD) on March 27 signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Czech government for this loan at a minimal 0.5 percent interest rate with 30 year repayment period and 15 years of grace period.

Acknowledging the Public Procurement Regulation (PPR) 2003 that encourages open tenders in Bangladesh, the Czech government however gave a condition that the rehabilitation will be carried out by Skodaexport, the same company that originally installed the plants.

Afterwards, the ERD, Power Development Board (PDB) and the power ministry carried out follow ups.

However, for the last two months, the power ministry has

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Garbage container left on road for three days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A wheeled garbage container of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) filled with garbage lay parked on a busy road for the last three days in the Farmgate area of the capital smelling horribly foul and causing severe traffic congestion.

The container has been sitting on the right side lane of the one-way road heading toward Farmgate from Khamarbari area.

The pile of around 5-7 tons of garbage rots in rainwater and has been emitting an unbearable stench polluting the environment.

"This area has become quite unlivable due to the bad odour coming out of the waste carrier," a local said.

Raju, a DCC sweeper in charge of the carrier trucks brushed aside the allegation and said the vehicle is moved every night after 1:00 am. "The locals do not realise that the garbage containers are changed every day as it is done after 1:00 am in the morning," Raju added.

DCC Preservation Officer Jahangir Alam of Karwan Bazar zone however admitted the allegation

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No chance of fair polls under politicised EC

Opposition tells donors at
LCG meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Local Consultative Group (LCG), a platform of donor agencies, yesterday held a high profile meeting with the leaders of different political parties including the ruling BNP and the main opposition Awami League (AL), focusing on four areas of election assistance.

The areas include domestic and international election monitoring, coordination in the Election Commission (EC), voter education and civic awareness.

The informational meeting for political parties on development partners' planned electoral assistance for the 2007 parliamentary polls process was held at a city hotel.

Opposition leaders attending the meeting raised questions over the role of the present Election Commission (EC).

The EC and the civil and police administration are totally politicised, and no free and fair election is

possible in such a situation, they said.

But leaders of the ruling BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami said the EC is a constitutional body that cannot be politicised and they have nothing to do with it.

On the LCG's proposed election monitoring, all the political parties agreed on foreign polls observer teams. But the opposition parties raised questions over the role of local observers and asked the LCG to provide details about the local NGOs, whom they have assigned to monitor the election.

The move from the donors came within a week following the visit of US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Richard Boucher.

Gene V George, charge d'affaires of the US Embassy and USAID mission director told journalists after the meeting that they discussed

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Remove politically appointed judges

Citizens' group demands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Appointments of judges in the country's judiciary system should be free from influence of partisan politics to ensure justice for the people, eminent citizens said yesterday at a discussion.

They said the absence of an independent and impartial judiciary, inordinate delay in adjudication of cases, high cost of litigation and a dearth of legal aid are hindering justice for the people.

The speakers also recommended removal of all judges who were appointed on political considerations in the last two years.

Detailing their own experiences, the speakers said respect for the constitution and rule of law is lamentably absent, increasing inefficiency and corruption in law enforcing agencies and resulting in deterioration of law and order.

They were speaking at a discussion on 'governance, reforms, law and security in Dhaka'. A citizens' group comprising retired justices, teachers, economists, politicians,

professionals from law enforcement agencies, and researchers organised the discussion as a sideline to their day-long discussion on Bangladesh First, Bangladesh 2025.

Rehman Sobhan, chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), and Justice Naimuddin Ahmed conducted the discussion, while Dr Kamal Hossain and representatives from different organisations took part in it.

Speaking at the discussion Dr Kamal Hossain said, "To get justice is a constitutional right of a citizen. But if the related institution acts in pursuance of politics, there is no way to ensure justice."

He said, "Everyone who is holding a constitutional post should think whether his or her decision violates the constitution."

He also stressed on ensuring the right to information so that the people can know how the decisions are being made by the higher level of the government.

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PHOTO: STAR

A mobile garbage disposal unit, broken and left on a street in front of Khamarbari for last three days adds to the misery of city residents creating long traffic jams.