

Working women renew call for neutral CA, EC reconstitution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Peshajibi Nari Samaj, a platform of workingwomen, yesterday reiterated its demand for neutrality of the chief adviser (CA) to the caretaker government (CG) and reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC) for holding a free and fair election.

The organisation staged a sit-in demonstration in front of the National Museum protesting police assault and arrest of six of its activists on Thursday near the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat when they went there to submit a memorandum demanding removal of the chief election commissioner (CEC) and reconsti...

Interim govt looks into hefty bank borrowing

BB finds borrowing in last few months of alliance rule unusually high

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The caretaker government will find out reasons behind anomalous bank borrowing by the immediate past 4-party alliance government during the last few months of its 5-year tenure.

Bangladesh Bank (BB) statistics show that the government borrowed Tk 4,300 crore from banks during the first four months of the current fiscal year (FY) compared to Tk 1,737 crore during the same period of the last FY marking a 147 per cent rise.

Of the total, Tk 1,557 crore was borrowed from the Bangladesh Bank and the rest from different commercial banks, according to available data. The BB data also reveals that the past government borrowed Tk 3,386 crore in only the last two months.

"We will investigate the reasons behind the huge bank borrowing by the immediate past government," Finance and Planning Adviser Dr Akbar Ali Khan told The Daily Star Tuesday, adding that the caretaker government will suspend all the non-priority projects to reduce expenditure.

Khan is suspecting that the revenue collected during Eid might not have been deposited to the government exchequer, which may be another reason for increase in the government's borrowing.

Finance Ministry sources said the government's expenditure witnessed a sharp rise at the fag end of its tenure as it approved a number of non-priority projects

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Movement unto Aziz's resignation

Prominent personalities take oath

DU CORRESPONDENT

Noted personalities including university teachers and the doyens in cultural field yesterday took an oath to continue non-stop movement until Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz and other election commissioners are removed from their office.

National Professor Kabir Chowdhury conducted the swearing-in at a rally at the Central Shaheed Minar in the city. Several hundred people from all occupations took part in the oath taking.

Sammilita Sangskritik Jote, a platform of cultural organisations, organised the rally. A number of cultural, professional organisations and individuals joined the



A section of the proposed Trans-Asian Railway Network.

18 nations sign deal for Trans-Asian rly

BUSAN, South Korea

Eighteen Asian nations yesterday signed an agreement to integrate the continent into a single railway network, moving a step closer to realising a decades-old dream.

The inter-governmental agreement on establishing the Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) network aims to promote trade and balanced development in the world's fastest-growing continent.

The signing came on the first day of a two-day annual ministerial meeting on transport, organised by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).

"By signing today, you infuse life into the agreement," UNESCAP executive secretary Kim Hak-Su told them.

The 81,000-kilometer (50,200-mile) network, first mooted by the UN back in 1960, is also dubbed the "Iron Silk Road" after the ancient trade route. It would link capitals, ports and industrial hubs across 28

Asian countries all the way to Europe.

UN officials cited procedural matters rather than disagreement over the project as the reason why 10 of the 28 states did not sign. They have another two years to do so.

The railway network will ease international trade and create "the conditions for shared prosperity," Kim told the signatories.

He said earlier in the day the TAR would "link the hinterland areas in the deep interior of the Asian continent with Asia's bustling maritime cities and European markets."

Twelve of the world's 30 landlocked countries are in Asia.

"These linkages will provide seamless connectivity through transport arteries to Asian ports and European markets," Kim said.

Kim has said he expects the accord to come into force in the second half of next year after eight countries ratify it.

The ratification would encourage international lenders like the Asian Development Bank to seriously consider loan requests from TAR signatories, some of whom are in desperate need of finance, he said.

Wang Zhiguo, China's deputy railways minister, said his country ardently backs the project.

"The Chinese economy continues to grow through efforts to improve and maintain efficient transport and logistic systems," he told the forum.

"We're signing the agreement because we can fulfil many of our goals in transport with it."

Alexander Misharin, Russia's deputy transport minister, said Moscow was working hard to meet



PHOTO: STAR

Peshajibi Nari Samaj, a platform of female professionals, holds a rally in front of National Museum in the capital yesterday, protesting arrest of its six prominent activists during a march towards the Election Commission on Thursday to submit a memorandum.

'Swindler' killed in encounter with Rab

UNB, Pirojpur

An alleged swindler was killed in an encounter between his accomplices and the members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) at Debetro village in Mathbaria upazila of the district yesterday.

It was alleged that Siddique, 35, and his cohorts have long been swindling people. The gang used to sell gold to unsuspecting people and on receipt of payment, they used to snatch away the precious metal from the buyer at gunpoint.

According to Rab sources, a team of the elite force, led by Deputy Assistant Director of

Rab-8 Mohammad Ali, came to Debetro village in the afternoon in

32 die as fighting rages in Lanka

Tamil lawmaker killed in Colombo

AP, Colombo

A prominent Tamil politician was assassinated in the Sri Lankan capital yesterday following a naval attack on two Tamil Tiger boats that left six rebels dead.

Nadaraja Raviraj of the Tamil National Alliance was fatally shot as he left his house in Colombo, said K Sivajilingam, a fellow member of Parliament.

"We strongly blame the govern-

ment, the government must take full responsibility," another TNA lawmaker, Suresh Premachandran, told The Associated Press.

"We understand that a whole magazine has been emptied on them (Raviraj and his bodyguard) in broad daylight," Premachandran said.

President Mahinda Rajapakse condemned the killing calling it a "cowardly and heinous act" by

political pluralism in a democratic society."

Sri Lankan separatist rebels clashed with government navy and air forces Thursday off the northern Jaffna peninsula, with rebels claiming they killed 26 sailors and captured four others.

The fighting came as the United Nations denounced the Sri Lankan military's shelling of a school Wednesday in a rebel-controlled

Mosque attack in Kashmir kills 5

AFP, Srinagar

Five people were killed and at least 50 wounded yesterday, including women and children, when a grenade was hurled at worshippers in a crowded mosque in revolt-hit Indian Kashmir, police said.

"Two men and three women have died and at least 50 were wounded, some seriously," police officer Imtiaz Ahmed said in Srinagar, capital of Indian Kashmir, where an Islamic revolt has raged against New Delhi's rule since 1989.

The attack took place in southern Pulwama district's Tahab village, some 40km south of Srinagar.

Sea urchin's genome could unlock code for boosting immunity of humans

LIVESCIENCE.COM

Meet your new evolutionary cousin, the sea urchin. By analysing the newly sequenced genome of the spineless creature, an international team of scientists found just how much we have in common with them.

The research could lead to new drugs for human ills.

"The sea urchin is surprisingly similar to humans," said George Weinstock of Baylor College of Medicine, co-director of the sea urchin sequencing project. "Sea urchins don't look any more like humans than fruit flies, but about 70 per

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PHOTO: LIVESCIENCE.COM

The purple sea urchin is found along North America's west coast from Baja to Alaska. Scientists say about 70 percent of the sea urchin's genes have a human counterpart.

Tremor jolts Ctg, Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tremors jolted Chittagong and Sylhet region yesterday.

However, there was no report of casualty or damage to property.

In Chittagong, the quake measuring 4.6 on the Richter scale shook the port city and its adjoining areas at 7:21:36pm and lasted for 26 seconds, according to our correspondent.

The epicentre of the tremor was 242-km off the country's lone seismic observatory at city's Ambagan, sources in the centre said.

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Bomb kills 9 in Pakistan tribal area

AFP, Islamabad

A roadside bomb planted by suspected militants Friday killed a pro-government tribal elder and eight others in a remote Pakistani tribal area near the Afghan border, officials said.

They were travelling in a vehicle, which hit the roadside bomb near Shakai town in South Waziristan tribal district, a senior security official said, adding that four people were also injured in the explosion.

"Around 13 people were travelling in a vehicle which was targeted by miscreants, nine were killed and four others wounded," the official,

REUTERS, London

Some 30 major acts of terrorism are being planned in Britain and future threats could involve chemicals and nuclear devices, the head of the country's intelligence agency has said.

Eliza Manningham-Buller, director general of MI5, said young British Muslims were being groomed to become suicide bombers and that her agents were tracking some 1,600 suspects, most of whom were British-born and linked to al-Qaeda in Pakistan.

"We are aware of numerous plots to kill people and damage our econ-

omy. What do I mean by numerous? Five? Ten? No, nearer 30... that we know of," Manningham-Buller said in a speech in London on Thursday evening.

She said her warnings were not intended to alarm but to paint a frank picture of the al-Qaeda threat, which she described as sustained and growing.

Britain suffered its worst peacetime attack in July last year when four British Islamists blew themselves up on London's transport network, killing 52 commuters and wounding hundreds.

Anti-terrorist police have repeatedly warned that the terrorist threat

has increased significantly since the July 7 attacks and say they have thwarted at least five major plots since then.

In August, police said they had foiled a plot to blow up transatlantic airliners using liquid explosives.

Manningham-Buller, who rarely speaks in public, provided the most detailed account of how serious that threat was.

"My officers and the police are working to contend with some 200 groupings or networks, totalling over 1,600 identified individuals who are actively engaged in plotting or facilitating terrorist acts

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Table with Prayer Timing for November 11, including Azan, Fajr, Zohr, Asr, Maghrib, and Esha times.