

EU envoys for CG

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and German Ambassador Frank Meyke said the chief of the EU Election Observation Mission will be in Dhaka in the middle of next month to examine the latest situation.

"The reconstitution of the Election Commission must be the first step and we're confident that this caretaker government can do what needs to be done for free and fair elections," he said.

Asked about the necessity of voter ID card for fair elections, he said it will be the experts who will examine whether the ID cards are not really 100 percent needed or needed after reviewing the overall situation.

He said the European Union wants free, fair and credible elections "as soon as possible". It means the conditions must be right and there must be a level playing field in the eyes of the people of Bangladesh and, if necessary, the Election Observation Mission—the voice of the European Union.

Meyke said they are very much impressed by some steps taken by the present caretaker government to improve the governance, action against corruption and move for separation of the judiciary in the last few days.

Asked about the reported deaths in army custody and large-scale arrest of political workers, the German ambassador said in the interest of the caretaker government, it "must ensure that human rights are respected and emergency powers are used with sensitivity".

He said the European Union and the international community are closely monitoring the situation, and the Advisors of the caretaker government will take care of it.

Briefing the reporters on his meeting with the foreign diplomats, the foreign affairs adviser said the International community appreciated the steps so far taken as positive and extended full support to holding the election within the shortest possible time to hand over power to an elected government.

Asked if the western diplomats asked to know a precise timetable for the election, Chowdhury said he has been able to present the complexity of the situation that is prevailing and they also perceived it. "These issues will have to be solved by us," he said.

The adviser once again reiterated that the caretaker government would do whatever necessary to hold a fair and credible election and hand over power to elected government as per mandate.

In reply to a question, he said the diplomats mentioned the issue of custodial deaths and he assured them that this would be examined.

MEETING WITHAL

Our staff correspondent reported that the EU delegation yesterday met the Awami League (AL) leaders and said they will continue their focus on Bangladesh in order to ensure the holding of a free and fair election.

During the meeting at the residence of AL President Sheikh Hasina's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury at Paribagh in the city, the AL leaders urged the EU delegation to resume their election observing mission in the country.

Talking to The Daily Star after the meeting, Saber said, "We have emphasised which matters should be addressed first for a free and fair poll."

"We also stressed the need for reconstituting the Election Commission in this regard," he said.

The AL leaders included Faruk Chowdhury, HT Imam and Dr Hasan Mahmud.

MEETING WITH EC SECY

The delegation also called on the Election Commission Secretary Abdur Rashid Sarkar at his office and discussed the present situation of Bangladesh after cancellation of the January 22 election and how to continue its support to Bangladesh.

"We exchanged views with the

EC secretary on how to continue our support to Bangladesh, Helen Campbell, head of the South Asian Department at the EU Headquarters in Brussels, told the press emerging from the meeting.

Jt forces

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arrived. The law enforcers arrested the warehouse manager Khorshed Alam and sent him to jail the same night, added the police sources.

Monsur Alam, district agriculture extension officer (AEO), filed a complaint with Thakurgaon Police Station accusing the warehouse owner Osman Gani and its manager Khorshed Alam of hoarding fertiliser.

When contacted, AEO of Thakurgaon Monsur Alam said there should not be any fertiliser crisis in the district as adequate fertilisers had been shipped out to the dealers in the district against their demand. But the dealers are creating an artificial crisis by hoarding the fertiliser.

In separate raids in Ranishankail and Purgan upazilas in Thakurgaon, the joint forces recovered 700 sacks of fertiliser yesterday, according to police sources.

In Khulna, joint forces seized 532 bags of urea fertiliser from two different warehouses in the district and arrested 2 people—the owners of the warehouses, reports our Khulna correspondent.

Four Nobel

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Dr Ebadi criticised the US for spending 8 billion US dollars on the invasion of Iraq. "Real peace comes about when peace is redefined as human security and not national security," she asserted.

"Our intention is to fight for peace and justice since we can have more impact on these two issues," Ebadi said.

Nobel Laureate Desmond Tutu said freedom and justice can prevail only if there is a new world social order. The theologian said the call for the fight against social injustice is necessary because each human being is special to God.

Prof Wangari Maathai, the winner of Nobel peace prize in 2004, said global super powers should ensure that there is equitable distribution of resources in the world.

"Until we see equitable distribution of resources in the world we will never know world peace," Wangari, also a Kenyan environmentalist, said. She said she would plant over a billion trees in ten years to thwart major climate change.

The climate change has been so drastic and so fast that if nothing is done this planet will be unable to sustain life," she said.

The Nobel laureate also urged creditor countries to write off the debts of developing countries to provide opportunities for them to reduce poverty. "The debt crisis remains one of the major obstacles in the fight against poverty in Africa, Asia and Latin America," Prof Wangari asserted.

Prof Jody Williams, an American winner of the peace prize in 1997 for her work on the campaign against landmines, said, "It's shameful that the South African government could use their first vote at the Security Council to stifle democracy in Burma that is under military rule, where people are suffering and being degraded the way they went through the apartheid era."

MEET ENDS TODAY

Curtain falls today on the WSF meet that began on January 20 and lasted a few days with activities like workshops, seminars, singing, dancing, and processions. All the activities were aimed at putting the spotlight on the world disorder, and protesting all kinds of repression and injustice worldwide.

Ex-energy adviser

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commands any reputation of being financially capable or highly professional," noted a source.

A few days before Iajuddin Ahmed's caretaker government stepped down, the energy adviser had formed a committee to award Hosaf the Khalaspir coal zone where the same company was secretly awarded an exploration licence three years back.

Based on drilling just three test holes (Hosaf claimed the number to be 14) in the region, and conducting seismic survey, Hosaf and its Chinese partners came to the conclusion that the zone has recoverable 143 million tonnes of high quality bituminous coal in eight underground layers in 2.5 sqkm area of Khalaspir in Purgan upazila. The GSB, which discovered the zone in 1962 and confirmed it in 1988, says there should be 685 million tonnes of recoverable coal in 25 sqkm area.

Despite its poorly done work and previous negative records involving the Barapukuria mine, Hosaf's proposal to award it the coal zone was being considered by the previous Khaleda Zia government merely on the basis of political proximity.

"The then energy adviser

Chowdhury was trying to finish what the previous government could not," one source pointed out.

Talking to The Daily Star,

Hawa Bhaban

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during the period, said a home ministry news release.

DHAKA

The army-led joint forces picked up Jahangir Sattar Tinku from his Maghbazar triplex residence yesterday at 1:45am.

An hour later, the forces arrested Abdur Razzak, who was an elected member of Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU) in 1989, from his residence at Dhanmondi Road No 5.

But they were yet to be handed over to police until filing of this report at 9:00pm yesterday.

Sources said Tinku, a non-practising doctor, is close to Hawa Bhaban and made an enormous amount of money during the last BNP regime.

A builder by profession, Tinku made the money by manipulating tender process of several departments of different ministries including Wapda, Roads and Highways and LGED using political influence.

Tinku, who once used to live in a rented house in the 1990s, now owns more than 10 apartments in the capital including a triplex on a 5-katha land, a pharmaceutical company and a local agency of a foreign medicine company, said the sources.

He is also a member of Bangladesh Medical Association, and executive member of Chharaman Samity and a number of other organisations.

The former student leader was one of the negotiators for Hawa Bhaban for different business deals and even ran a syndicate with businessmen and most wanted criminals, the sources added.

Meanwhile, Rab arrested DCC Ward Commissioner of Ward No 46 Abu Sayeed Bepari from his East Jafrahdab residence early yesterday and sent him to detention for a month.

He was accused in four cases including two for murders, and allegedly had involvement in an incident of arson in Mohammadpur on Monday night that left a person killed.

The joint forces also arrested Keraniganj Jatiyatabadi Chhatra JCD (JCD) General Secretary Delawar Hossain Masum yesterday and handed him over to police.

CHITTAGONG

The joint forces arrested 13 persons yesterday from the district and three CHT (Chittagong Hill Tracts) districts, including a Jatiya Party (JP) leader, for their alleged involvement with criminal activities.

They also recovered two locally made guns, abandoned at a place close to the village home of former BNP lawmaker Mostafa Kamal Pasha in Sandwip.

The joint forces interrogated Pasha after recovering the guns. The former lawmaker however denied having any knowledge of how the guns got there.

Sitkakunda Municipality JP General Secretary Rafiqul Islam is also among the arrestees. Sources said he is a listed criminal.

An activist of Awami League (AL), Izzal alias Nayan, was arrested in Sitkakunda.

Eight including a freedom fighter and three BNP men were arrested by the joint forces during raids in different upazilas in the district.

A team of Rab-8 arrested Afzal Hossain, a freedom fighter of Kalapara upazila, from his house.

Police said the army arrested JCD leaders Shahin alias Madhab Shahin, 22, and Mizanur Rahman, 20, from Gorostan Road area in the district town.

They also held AL leader Anisur Rahman, 30, and a businessman Babul, 28, from Boga Bazar area.

Rab arrested Mohabbat Ali, 30, a BNP leader of Char Montaz, a remote shor in Galachipa upazila. Galachipa police arrested Shahjahan, 50, and Abdul Khaled, 48, both of whom had been sentenced to six months in prison in connection with a case filed by the Forest Department in 1996.

The army along with police arrested two activists of BNP yesterday from Beltai in the hill district of Khagrachhari. The arrestees are Mohammad Abdus Salam and Idris Ali.

NETRAKONA

Police and the army arrested 14 persons including a JCD leader from different places of the district.

One of the arrestees is General Secretary of Madan Upazila JCD Ziaul Haque Toton, 25, while the others are listed criminals.

The seized items include computers, 228 SIM cards of different cellphone operators, 42 teller devices and loads of Internet cables' coils.

A Dhaka court yesterday placed four people, arrested in connection with the unauthorised business, on a three-day remand for interrogation.

Earlier the Rab men produced owner of the office Mainul Islam Khan and his staff--Abdul Kuddus, Mosharraf Hossain, and Shohag Sikder -- before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court seeking a 10-day remand.

Reliable sources said a number of luxury cars came to the factory owned by Mamun on January 12 giving rise to a suspicion that he might have been hiding there.

Iran vows

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Last month, the UN Security Council passed a resolution imposing sanctions on Iran banning transfer of material and technology to its nuclear and missile programmes over its refusal to suspend uranium enrichment.

The West fears Iran's nuclear drive could be diverted to build atomic weapons, a charge vehemently denied by Iran.

Innings begins

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entirely new in Bangladesh. It was introduced for the first in 1982, but it never really took off due to a lack of initiatives," said Hamida Begum, assistant director of National Sports Council (NSC).

"Earlier, the BCB and the NSC hardly realised that women could prove themselves but now they have a bright future," said Putul.

Attorney general

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The Attorney General's Office was also found hyperactive on November 30 when it put three writ petitions to rest that challenged Prof Iajuddin Ahmed's becoming the caretaker government chief.

There have also been demands for resignation of other law officers at the Attorney General's Office since they were appointed on political consideration.

1,500 shanties

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Brahmanbaria and Gafargaon in Mymensingh yesterday, the railway sources said.

In Baridhara, the Rajuk authorities removed several shanties from nearby United States (US) embassy. Some illegal structures at the Progati Sarani were also knocked down.

The Rajuk team cleaned up an open space in front of a garments factory at Badda, magistrate of the Rajuk ASM Emdadul Dastagir said.

Meanwhile, Khuila City Corporation (KCC) authorities with the help of the joint forces demolished over 500 illegal establishments in the city on Tuesday as part of the ongoing eviction drive, BSS reports.

Around 1000 hawkers were evicted from the footpaths at Bara Bazar, Dak Bungalow, Clay road, Station road and Kali Bari area, KCC sources said.

The KCC bulldozed the illegal structures at different areas in Fultala, Dhigalia, Rupsha, Dumuria and Paikgachha during the drive.

Meanwhile, the Power Development Board (PDB) yesterday disconnected over 100 illegal power connections in the city with the help of the joint forces.

19 directors still

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action. Three of them—AYM Kamal, director of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dr Ezaz Hossain, professor of Buet, and Md Manirul Islam, personal secretary of prime minister—are still working there.

In Bangladesh Gas Fields Ltd, the alliance government appointed two directors—other than Nazrul Islam—out of seven under political consideration. Dr M Tamim, professor of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), and Md Abdul Aziz Khan, director general of Petrobangla, Dhaka, are still working there.

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Reazul Islam, vice president of Institute of Engineers Bangladesh, was appointed in Western Gas Co Ltd under political consideration and is still continuing in the post.

Another illegal VoIP

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wireless terminals, 28 wireless local loop, 25 quantum gateway equipment, 88 FWT and one voice finder.

Rab sources said one of Mohammad Selim alias Dulodul used to run the unauthorised phone services business. He is absconding.

A case was lodged against him with Lalbagh Police Station in this connection.

FOUR CRIMINALS REMANDED

Yesterday's operation came about 26 hours after a similar seizure from an office at Purana Paltan where the Rab men confiscated VoIP equipment worth about Tk 10 lakh.

Meanwhile, the army and Rab yesterday jointly carried out raids to arrest Giasuddin Ali Mamun and Dipol, two close associates of BNP leader Tarique Rahman, but they could not arrest any of them, Chowdhury added.

Sources said Chowdhury also tried to revive the Myanmar-Bangladesh-India pipeline project that was shelved early last year. Back in 19