

Hasina hopes for free, fair polls soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said she hopes that a free and fair election will be held soon to restore democratic and constitutional process.

"I hope a democratic process will return as early as possible. Free and fair polls will be held and the country will run following the constitutional dictates. Inshallah, darkness will fade away ushering in light," observed the AL chief.

She was speaking at a gathering of Bangladesh Mohila Awami League at the city's Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury presented the keynote speech at the discussion titled "Contribution of the Bangladeshi Women in the global context".

Hasina said a nation cannot thrive without democracy. She said the people have been with them all along in the efforts to steer the

SEE PAGE 19 COL 7

7 SMALL POWER PROJECTS

Purchase body scraps controversial bids

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The advisory council committee on purchase yesterday cancelled controversial tenders for seven small power projects and asked the Power Development Board (PDB) to invite fresh tenders.

It also cancelled a tender for filling up 22 land allotments under Rajuk's third phase Uttara residential area development. Excessive rate quoted for the job was the reason for cancellation of the tender.

The committee has asked the Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakha (Rajuk) to float fresh for the job. It however approved the work to fill up 25 other land allotments.

After a meeting of the committee yesterday, its Chairman and Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam

told the press that the tenders for power schemes were cancelled because the contractors were deviating from the original terms.

"Though the jobs had already been awarded, the government did not sign any agreement with the contractors. If they want to change the terms and conditions for setting up the plants then we'll have to consider changing the rate for purchase of power," he observed.

"And that's why we have asked the PDB to go for fresh tenders," Islam noted.

Meeting sources said the tenders for small power schemes were cancelled because of 'serious irregularities' in the process that is being scrutinised also by the joint forces.

Taking advantage of the impending power crisis, the small power

contractors were grossly deviating from original tenders. Of the seven schemes that amount to 260 megawatts in capacity, three were awarded to the Hosaf group, and one each to Ornate, GBB, Summit and United groups.

Hosaf group, a favourite of the immediate past alliance government, was seeking a major change in terms for its 50-megawatt Nowapara (Sikalbaba) power plant. As per the original tender, it was supposed to set up a barge-mount plant there. But later it wanted to build a land-based power plant.

Ornate Services, owned by a close relative of an immediate past former minister, sought similar favour for its 50-megawatt Fenchuganj plant.

Abarge-mount plant is movable

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

Bibiyana gas comes to national grid

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Experimental gas transmission from Bibiyana Gas Field (block 12) to the national grid began yesterday.

The US oil company Chevron has started experimental transmission to reach its goal to supply 200 million cubic feet of gas (mmcf) to the national grid from the gas field everyday.

Gas is being transmitted to the national grid through 43-kilometre-long pipeline installed

SEE PAGE 19 COL 3



PHOTO: STAR

A file photo (left) shows one of the 20 expensive metal park benches and light posts (not in the picture) that were installed along the sidewalk of Hair Road in the capital during beautification project by DCC. No such bench is found on the road now. Only a few light posts remain on the road without light holders (right).

73 expelled on first day of SSC exams

UNB, Dhaka

Seventy-three students were expelled for cheating in the English first paper examination yesterday, the first day of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) Examinations.

Of them, 39 were expelled in Rajshahi, 14 in Chittagong, seven in Dhaka, five in Barisal, four in Comilla, three in Jessor and one was expelled in Sylhet.

As many as 10,29,885 students are appearing in the SSC, Dakhil and SSC Vocational examinations under nine education boards.

Two fake examinees found at Ramu and Moheshkhali centres under Chittagong Education Board were handed over to the police.

In Pabna, police arrested a student of Edward College who was taking the examination as proxy for a student of Asrafuddin High School in Atgharia upazila.

Education Adviser Ayub Qadri yesterday visited six examination centres in the capital and Savar.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 4



PHOTO: STAR

Physically challenged women take part in a procession on Manik Mia Avenue in the capital on the occasion of International Women's Day.

Indo-Bangla dialogue ends with call to foster cultural cooperation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A three-day Indo-Bangladesh dialogue that concluded yesterday recommended stronger cooperation in the field of media and culture to remove suspicions and mistrust between the two neighbouring countries.

It also suggested formation of a number of joint organisations consisting of journalists and cultural activists in line with that of India-Bangladesh chambers of commerce and industry.

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Executive Director Debapriya Bhattacharya summed up the recommendations of the dialogue titled 'Indo-Bangladesh Dialogue on Media and Culture' organised by CPD in collaboration with India International Centre (IIC) at Brac

Centre Inn in the capital.

Joint media investigations can be carried out on border conflicts, water, migration and cross-border insurgency, Debapriya said, adding that eminent writers and scholars from both the countries can write columns on bilateral issues regularly in major newspapers of both the countries.

Newspapers and TV channels of the two countries can provide part-time job opportunities for young journalists to facilitate exchange of expertise and experience and have resident correspondents, he noted.

Journalists should write more about the visa restrictions that they often encounter, which can help them facilitate free flow of information and ensure their professional order in this regard will be issued in a couple of days.

These steps would help to check

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a bid to rein in the spiralling prices of essentials throughout the country, the government is launching open market sale (OMS) from March 18.

"We will sell one lakh metric ton rice and another one lakh metric ton wheat across the country through OMS," Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam told the reporters yesterday after a meeting of the purchase committee at the Secretariat.

The adviser also said that the government has decided to withdraw existing five percent import duty on rice and wheat to scale down the prices and necessary order in this regard will be issued in a couple of days.

Asked about the management of Food for Work programme when many local government representatives like Union Parishad (UP)

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

under the OMS programme, one person may get a maximum of five kilogram (kg) rice at Tk14.50 per kg.

Besides, the adviser also disclosed that the government is going to begin Food for Work programme from March 15. One lakh metric ton of wheat will be allocated for the programme and the purchase committee yesterday approved the proposal for import of the wheat, he added.

Asked about the management of Food for Work programme when many local government representatives like Union Parishad (UP)

SEE PAGE 19 COL 6

the skyrocketing price of the essentials, Azizul said.

Under this year's OMS programme, one person may get a maximum of five kilogram (kg) rice at Tk14.50 per kg.

Of the injured, three microbus passengers were rushed to Chandina Health Complex where two died soon after admission.

Three of the deceased were identified as Tofael Ahmed, 48, a security guard of Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority

SEE PAGE 19 COL 3

13 killed as bus hits microbus in Comilla

UNB, Comilla

Thirteen people died and five others were injured in a road accident on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Dola in Chandina upazila of the district yesterday.

Identity of the remaining ten could not be known.

"All the 13 deceased were passengers of the microbus while the injured were bus passengers," said a witness to the tragic accident.

Police with the help of local people recovered the bodies and sent them to the hospital for autopsy.

The driver and the helper of the bus fled the scene immediately after the accident, leaving behind their vehicle. Police seized the bus.

A heavy traffic jam was created on the busy highway for an hour following the accident.

SEE PAGE 19 COL 3

People happy over Mohiuddin's arrest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

People of the port city yesterday expressed mixed reactions to the news of arrest of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, among other 'corrupt' politicians.

Majority people hailed the caretaker government for such bold steps aimed at eradicating corruption from the country and bringing about order. They also urged the government to remain alert about harassment of innocent people.

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry Director Amirul Hoque said people heaved a sigh of relief at the arrest of Mohiuddin.

Describing the city mayor as the key person behind paralysing the country's premier seaport repeatedly, Amirul alleged that

SEE PAGE 19 COL 3

HC stays NBR order for Moudud's bank transaction record

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday stayed for a month the National Board of Revenue (NBR) directives to the banks concerned to furnish information about banking transactions by former law minister Moudud Ahmed, whose accounts have been frozen.

The court also issued a rule upon the NBR to explain why its directives to the banks to freeze the accounts of Moudud and to furnish

SEE PAGE 19 COL 8

Prayer Timing

March 9