

EU to continue its support to CG in holding credible polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The European Union (EU) yesterday said they have been reassured that holding the national election is still the primary goal of the caretaker government.

The EU will continue to support the government in its efforts to hold credible polls, German Ambassador Frank Meyke told reporters after a meeting between an EU troika and Foreign Affairs Adviser Itekar Ahmed Chowdhury at the foreign ministry yesterday.

Head of Delegation European Commission Stefan Frowein and Dutch Ambassador Kees Beemsterboer were the other

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Tk 1.31cr looted in bank heist

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

About Tk 1.31 crore has been stolen from Sherpur district branch of Janata Bank.

Police believe the incident might have occurred on Thursday night.

Bank Manager Sirajudoulla filed a case with Sherpur Police Station in this connection yesterday.

Sources said a total of Tk 2,86,38,000 was in the bank when officials shut the branch at around 7:00pm on Thursday.

Sultan Miah, one of the three night guards of the bank, found the vault broken at around 11:00pm on Saturday and informed the bank's Zonal Officer Nurul Islam immediately.

Bank officials found a shortage of Tk 1,30,96,000 while visiting the place.

Additional Superintendent of Police of Sherpur Mohammad Shamsudjjoaha and Assistant Superintendent of Police of Sherpur Sadar Circle Golam

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Prayer Timing		
March 19		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-00	5-35
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-14	6-18
Esha	7-45	8-15
Source: Islamic Foundation		

Move on to make BB more powerful

Finance to seek change in Anti-Money Laundering Act

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The Bangladesh Bank might be empowered to temporarily freeze suspicious accounts and confiscate illegal wealth without any court order, in a bid to step up efforts against financial crimes, according to a draft amendment to the Anti-Money Laundering Act (AMLA).

Currently the central bank cannot freeze accounts without a court order.

The finance ministry will seek the amendment to AMLA, which also proposes that failure to explain sources of wealth should be considered a violation of the act and a criminal offence.

The power of the central bank would be boosted by the amendment, as it would be able to seize assets suspected of having links with corruption for a month, and would also be able to freeze bank accounts for a month upon similar reasonable suspicion. The freeze can be extended for another month if required.

The council of advisers to the interim government will review the proposal to amend the 2002 act at a meeting today.

The ministry and the Bangladesh Bank believe that AMLA was formulated hurriedly under pressure from the USA and it was very weak in checking crimes related to money laundering.

"The main flaw of the act was that it did not specify what kind of crimes falls under its purview," said a central bank source adding, "It also did not specify who would investigate the cases filed under this act or which institutions are supposed to act as its watchdogs."

Fifteen financial crimes have been selected by the finance ministry as related to AMLA in the draft.

The listed crimes include corruption and bribery, banknote forgery, forgery of documents, extortion, deception, fraudulence, illegal arms trade, trade in illegal drugs and addictive substances, illegal trading in smuggled goods, abduction, kidnapping and hostage taking, murder and injurious assault, sexual abuse including paedophilia, theft and robbery, human trafficking, and illegal immigration.

Terrorist financing also figures prominently on the list. Definitions, investigations, trials of cases, and sentencing of the convicted in connection with terrorist financing would be carried out in line with the proposed Anti-terrorism Act 2007.

The draft amendment also proposes creation of a 'Confiscated Assets Fund' by the central bank with seized illegal assets. The fund would provide money for adjudication of cases against corrupt individuals.

Banks, courier services, financial institutions, insurance companies, micro-credit institutions, money exchange centres, money

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8



PHOTO: STAR

People gather to buy rice at a lower price under the government-sponsored open market sale programme that started throughout the country yesterday. The photo was taken from Laksmibazar in the capital.

8 US troops killed in Iraq attacks

AFP, Baghdad

Eight more US troops have died in Iraq, six of them in separate bomb attacks in and around Baghdad, the military said yesterday.

Almost exactly four years after the invasion of Iraq, American casualties are still mounting as US and Iraqi forces battle to quell the insurgent and sectarian violence gripping the country.

In other violence in the Iraqi capital, a city steeped in Sunni-Shia bloodletting, insurgents killed a policeman and two bystanders in separate incidents on Sunday, security officials said.

Four soldiers died and one was wounded when their unit was struck by a roadside bomb while on patrol in west Baghdad on Saturday, the military said in a statement.

Another soldier was wounded when the unit came under small arms fire after the blast.

In another incident on Saturday,

Govt agency to monitor prices

Open market sale of essentials starts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As part of its action to keep the prices of essential commodities within the purchasing power of the common people, the government is going to set up a separate enforcement agency.

To be formed in line with the proposed Consumer Protection Act, the agency will start operation within a month, Firoz Ahmed, secretary of commerce ministry, told The Daily Star. It would run with sustainable activities, which is needed to check the skyrocketing prices of essentials, he added.

Meanwhile, the government also started Open Market Sale (OMS) of rice at fair price countrywide yesterday.

Commerce ministry sources said that the agency will monitor the prices of essentials on a day-to-day basis. It will also examine the local and international prices of the commodities and will take necessary actions against businessmen if their selling price is abnormal comparing to international prices.

To check food adulteration, the agency will collect samples of items from the market to examine their quality and purity.

Earlier, the commerce ministry formed a Price Monitoring Cell headed by a deputy secretary to rein in the spiralling prices. The monitoring cell is to report to the finance ministry if it finds anything overpriced in the market.

Meanwhile, several leading importers and businessmen of Chittagong yesterday met Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam and promised to sale essentials at reasonable prices.

The businessmen also

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Amini gets bail in theft case

Salahuddin's bail rejected

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Former lawmaker Mufti Fazlul Haque Amini, chairman of a faction of Islami Oikyo Jote (IOJ), and five others yesterday obtained bail in connection with a theft case filed with Lalbagh Police Station.

Judge Momin Ullah of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka granted them bail upon a bond of Tk 50,000 each with two guarantors after they along with their lawyers surrendered to the court and sought bail.

Five others who got bail are Mufti Taiyab, Moulana Hedayetullah, Mufti Abul Khair, Mohammad Anis and Junayed.

Moving the bail petition, the lawyers argued that Amini and others had earlier surrendered before the High Court (HC) for anticipatory bail. But the court did not entertain the bail petition and

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7



PHOTO: STAR

Euphoric at Bangladesh team's victory against India in a World Cup Cricket match, a youth lights up a fire by spraying fuel out of his mouth. The photo was taken from the TSC premises at Dhaka University early yesterday.

CG accountable directly to people

CA also terms it a constitutional govt

UNB, Sylhet

Terming the present caretaker government a constitutional government directly accountable to the people, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday said people are evaluating the government's activities.

The chief adviser said the present government has assumed office taking the oath under the constitution. People's verdict towards the government's actions is being reflected through their opinions and the media.

"People are the source of all power of the state and protector of the constitution," the chief adviser said at a meeting with high civil and military officials of Sylhet division at the local Circuit House.

This was the fourth meeting of the chief adviser with government officials outside the capital after

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

RU PROF TAHER MURDER Charges pressed against Prof Mohiuddin, Shibir leader Salehi, 4 others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police yesterday submitted charge sheet in the Rajshahi University (RU) Prof S Taher Ahmed murder case accusing six persons including pro-BNP teacher Prof Mia Mohammad Mohiuddin and RU unit Islami Chhatra Shibir president Mahbul Alam Salehi.

The other accused are Abdus Salam, Jahangir Alam, Azimuddin Munshi and Nazmul Islam.

Sub inspectors Faruk Hossain of Motihar Police Station along with Achhanul Kabir and Golam Mahfuz of Detective Branch jointly submitted the charge sheet before the chief metropolitan magistrate's court.

Submission of the charge sheet was delayed due to political pressure although investigation of the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

VOTER ROLL EC moves again to include expats

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) has reinitiated a move to include expatriates having Bangladeshi passports in the voter list.

Directed by the EC, its senior officials have started examining the election laws to see if the significant number of Bangladeshi expatriates could be listed in the electoral rolls, sources said.

In 1998, the EC had made a similar move and the government

formed an experts committee to examine the legal aspects to ensure the expatriates' voting rights, but the move did not materialise.

In the face of repeated demands by the Bangladeshi expatriates, an EC meeting last week decided to move again with the issue.

Senior officials at the EC Secretariat, however, told The Daily Star that it is difficult to include the expatriates in the voter list because of legal complexities.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6