

EC taking steps to free its sectt from PMO Says Sakhawati

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) has taken initiatives to separate its secretariat from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), now the office of the chief adviser.

"The Election Commission will soon send a proposal in this regard to the caretaker government," Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawati Hossain yesterday told the BBC Bangla Service.

He disclosed the EC initiative a day after civil society leaders and other professionals stressed the need for separating the EC Secretariat from the PMO at a dialogue on draft proposals for electoral reforms.

The EC is considering execution of the EC Secretariat's separation

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Tk 270cr laundered money recovered

7 businessmen involved in the illegal transfer; govt hopes to retrieve Tk 3,000cr more

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON

For the first time in the country's history, the government has retrieved Tk 270 crore of illegal money from seven businessmen and is expecting to recover around Tk 3,000 crore more soon.

In the face of the government's anti-corruption drive conducted by the joint forces, these businessmen have paid the amount through several pay orders in local currency, banking sources said.

Sources said this is also the first time the government exchequer

has collected money recovered after being pilfered from the public coffers. The central bank will consider the recovered money as "non-tax revenue".

Bangladesh Bank (BB) yesterday informed the finance ministry that the money has been deposited in the government account.

Meanwhile, the recovered money directly contributed to the improvement of the government's borrowing status, bringing it down to Tk 4,300 crore on Monday from Tk 4,700 crore in the first week of this month, according to BB

sources.

Of the seven businessmen who deposited the amount through pay-orders, the names of three could be learnt. They are Anis Ahmed Gorki of MGH Group—business partner of former prime minister Khaleda Zia's son and BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, Nader Khan whose identity details were not available, and Salman Ispahani of the Ispahani Group. But, talking to The Daily Star, Salman Ispahani refuted the BB report, claiming that

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Road link, other issues discussed with Yangon

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday had a meeting with Acting Prime Minister of Myanmar Lt Gen Thein Sein at his office in Nay Pyi Taw.

They discussed the bilateral issues including road link between two countries, repatriation of Rohingya refugees, border trade, contract farming, demarcation of maritime boundary, simplification of visa regime and establishment of joint commission.

Both the leaders stressed the need for establishing close cooperation between the two neighbouring countries, a press release of the foreign ministry said last night.

Myanmar Foreign Minister Nyan Win, Planning and Economic Development Minister U Suu Than and Manpower and Immigration Minister Suang Mong were present

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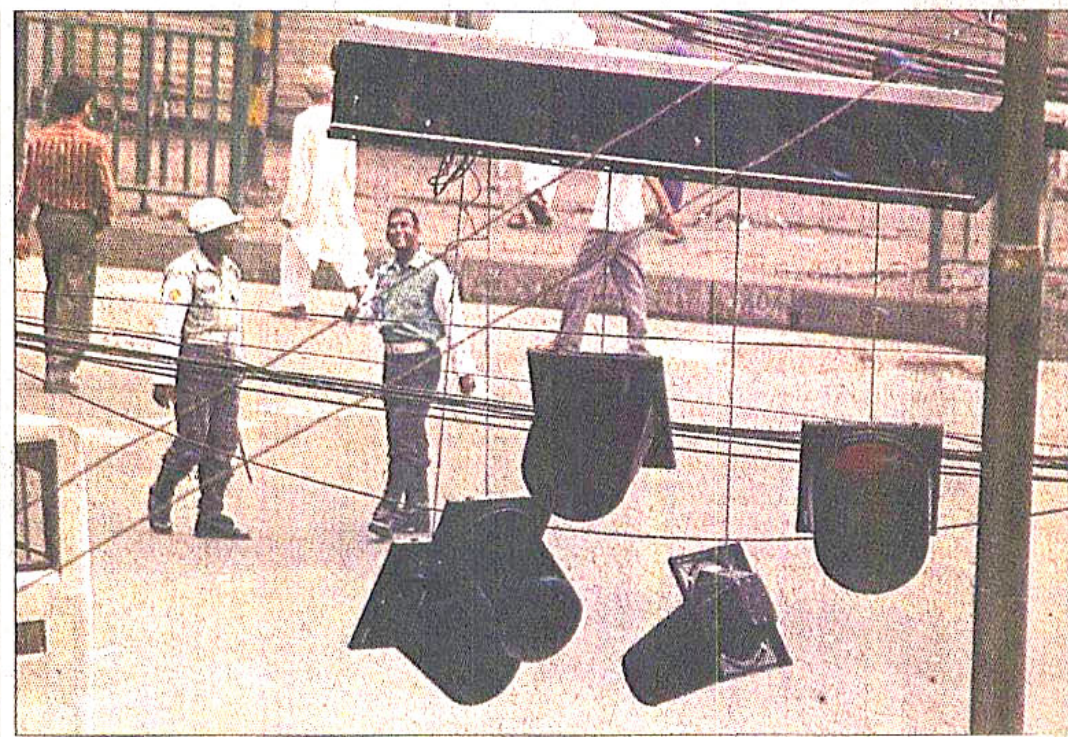


PHOTO: STAR

Displaced during Thursday nights nor'wester, traffic signal lights dangle while policemen look on. The photo was taken from Purana Pallan intersection in the capital yesterday.

No BNP reforms in Khaleda's absence

Party leaders, workers say

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

The BNP will not initiate any reforms in the party as long as its Chairperson Khaleda Zia is kept isolated from the leaders and workers.

The leaders and workers alike think that implementation of reforms is simply not possible in absence of the former premier. They said without her the party should not think of joining the dialogue on electoral reforms as well, said party insiders.

However, other sources say senior leaders are divided over the

reforms issue as some stress that the top leadership should be changed immediately to have the party back on track while others say that ensuring a democratic system within the party should take precedence over the leadership issue. Besides, the damage control should also kick in.

Khaleda Zia, who is likely to visit Saudi Arabia next week to perform Umrah, will take decision regarding the reforms through discussion once the ban on indoor politics is lifted, said a party insider.

BNP Secretary General Abdul

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AL men divided over reform issues

HASAN JAHD TUSHER

Awami League (AL) will start working towards reforms aiming to ensure intra-party democracy and transparency immediately after withdrawal of the ban on indoor politics.

"Reforms will be carried out to keep pace with changing times and discussions on the matter will begin shortly as soon as the ban on indoor politics goes," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil told The Daily Star yesterday.

However, the party appears somewhat divided over if the reforms should be carried out with or without its President Sheikh Hasina around.

A faction of senior leaders want the task to begin immediately after lifting of the ban. Whether the party chief is present or not does not matter as it is only about doing the job, they argue.

In recent times, political leaders, members of the civil society, Election Commission (EC) and some advisers to the interim government have stressed the need for reforming the political parties so that intra-party democracy and transparency are ensured.

Talking to The Daily Star, a number of AL leaders said membership, adherence to the party constitution, and holding of councils in time are the key areas that

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Tragic death of two brothers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Two brothers died as a truck hit a pickup carrying the dead body of their father near Ashukati Proshika office on Barisal-Dhaka highway yesterday afternoon.

Severely injured three other passengers of the pickup were admitted to hospital.

Barek Mridha, 55, died of asthma in Dhaka on Thursday night and family members started on a pickup at 10:00am yesterday from Demra for Vashinga of Baufal upazila under Patuakhali district for his burial at the family graveyard, said the victims' relatives and police.

At about 3:30pm, a loaded truck ran into the pickup near Ashukati

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Bhuiyan holds one-to-one meeting with Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan met his party chairperson and former prime minister Khaleda Zia yesterday at her cantonment residence in the capital.

But security personnel did not allow BNP Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan, and former lawmakers Shirin Sultana, Rehana Akhtar Ranu and Bilkis Jahan Shirin to visit their party chief's residence, according to a party

Adviser to the BNP Chairperson Maj Gen (retd) ZA Khan also met the former prime minister separately yesterday.

Mannan Bhuiyan entered Khaleda Zia's residence around 7:00pm. Various issues came up in the discussion during their 45-minute one-to-one meeting.

That was Mannan Bhuiyan's first meeting with Khaleda Zia since the military backed interim government through a press note denied the authenticity of media reports that it had put restrictions

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

MORNING IN ROOM-162... No less than 32 students are crammed into a room for four at Dhaka University Sir Salimullah Hall. Students in the room say they have been urging the authorities concerned for a solution to their problems since 2000 with little success. Seeking the vice-chancellor's intervention, they said students have come and gone over the years but living conditions in the room have not improved.

Australia-Sri Lanka final at Kensington Oval today

SPORTS REPORTER

Australia will have a World Cup treble in their sights when they meet Sri Lanka in today's final at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados.

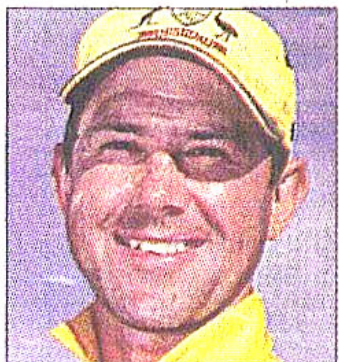
Bangladesh Television and SET Max will telecast the match live from Bridgetown from 7:30pm BST.

The 1999 and 2003 winners are in the kind of form which carried them to a crushing 125-run victory over India in the final four years ago.

And they want to provide a fitting farewell for Glenn McGrath, who will be playing his final international game.

But Sri Lanka have a talented all-round side and a repeat of their win in the 1996 final is not out of the question.

The new ball is likely to be crucial to the outcome of the match -- Sri Lanka must avoid losing early wickets as South Africa did against Australia in their semifinal and then look to knock one or two

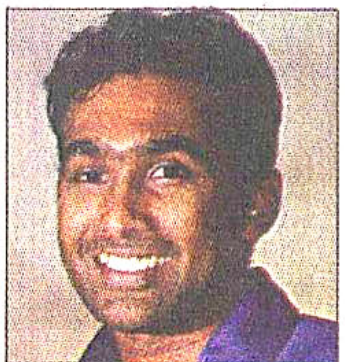


Ricky Ponting

Australian batsmen over early when it is their turn in the field.

The pitch for the final is the same one which was used for the Super Eights game between England and Bangladesh, a surface which provided early assistance for the seamers but became slower as the game wore on, making it difficult for the batsmen to time the ball.

The outcome of the toss there-



Mahela Jayawardene

fore will be doubly important. Australia have simply steamrollered the opposition thus far in extending their World Cup winning sequence to 22 matches and Sri Lanka must find a way to sew some seeds of doubt in their minds, a feat which no other team has managed.

If they can do so by removing the likes of Matthew Hayden and

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Comp ainant jailed false case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A person has been awarded two years' rigorous imprisonment for filing a false case with a Khulna court in 2003.

The case was later transferred to the Speedy Trial Tribunal that punished the complainant, Akbar Molla, with a fine of Tk 4,000, in default he is to suffer for another six months in jail.

First Class Magistrate SM Masudul Haq of Khulna Speedy Trial Tribunal delivered the judgement Thursday afternoon, acquitting all the 13 accused in the case, as charges brought against them could not be proved.

The tribunal also asked the

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Correction

In the report headlined "Govt unwilling to free EC sectt from PMO" published in The Daily Star yesterday, Debapriya Bhattacharya's speech delivered during a dialogue at the Election

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