



Judiciary clean-up on cards

CJ's recent remarks seen as an indication

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

The government is seriously considering options for restoring the image of the higher judiciary, which has been tarnished in the last five years through acute politicisation and appointments of judges with lack of qualifications or competence.

A competent Supreme Court source said yesterday that the government is now collecting background information about all controversial judges who were appointed or whose services were confirmed between 2001 and 2006.

"We believe that the move is an indication that the government is planning to do something to clean the judiciary and to restore its independence," he said.

Chief Justice Mohammad Ruhul Amin told a gathering of lawyers on

Sunday in Noakhali that the damage done to the judiciary in the recent years will take more than 20 years to remedy.

The Supreme Court source added that the chief justice's remark will help the authorities to concede to the widespread demand for freeing the judiciary from partisanship through reforms.

Senior lawyers of the Supreme Court yesterday welcomed the statement of the chief justice. But they said instead of waiting 20 years to cleanse the higher judiciary, the authorities could form a supreme judicial council or find other means to start reforming it immediately.

According to Supreme Court sources, there are 68 confirmed judges in the High Court Division and seven in the Appellate Division

including the chief justice.

Out of the 68, the appointments of 41 were confirmed during the regime of the immediate past BNP-led four-party alliance government which had appointed 45 additional high court judges during its regime. After the authorities appoint an additional judge and the person serves for two years, the chief justice makes a recommendation for confirming her or his appointment based on performance. As a norm, the government always accepts the chief justice's recommendations.

When a judge's appointment is confirmed, he or she cannot be removed unless the person voluntarily resigns or a supreme judicial council removes the person. And that is why the chief justice said it will take 20 years to cleanse the judiciary.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



PHOTO: STAR

Vehicles use only a part of the Titipara level crossing in the capital as the other part is worn-out due to lack of regular maintenance.

Dhaka keen to negotiate tri-nation gas pipeline

Bangladesh seeks Myanmar land on lease for farming

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh is willing to negotiate the much-talked-about tri-nation pipeline passing through the country's territory for transmission of gas from Myanmar to India.

"We are ready to negotiate for allowing the pipeline if Myanmar sells gas and India agrees to buy... We'll obtain best possible advantage through negotiations... we'll get revenue," Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury told reporters after return from Myanmar.

Iftekhar said the tri-nation pipeline issue came up during his meetings with Myanmar leaders, including Acting Prime Minister Lt

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Shamim Osman jailed for 3yrs in first-ever graft case verdict



A CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

In the first-ever verdict in a case filed by the reformed Anti-corruption Commission (ACC), a

Narayanganj court yesterday sentenced, in absentia, former Awami League (AL) lawmaker Shamim Osman to three years' imprisonment for not submitting wealth statements to the commission.

Included in the ACC's first list of suspected corrupt people, Osman was ordered in February by the commission to submit his, his wife's and wards' wealth statements.

Senior Special Judge Abdul Kuddus Mia of Narayanganj district court delivered the verdict yesterday in a packed courtroom and the entire area cordoned off by security personnel.

The verdict stated that Osman is

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

BUSHRA MURDER

Delay in getting SC stay order led to release of two convicts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unusual and mysterious delay in reaching a Supreme Court stay order on the release of two persons who were condemned to death by a lower court judge for killing Bushra led to the recent release of the two accused.

Meanwhile, Bushra's mother Laila yesterday told The Daily Star that the two released accused threatened her over telephone to kill if she does not leave her Hazipara residence.

The SC stayed until May 27 a High Court verdict issued on January 29 acquitting the two accused - Sheikh Shawkat Ahmed

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Khaleda's brother made BNP vice-president

She is to go for Umrah after lifting of ban on indoor politics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's younger brother Maj (tretl) Saeed Iskandar yesterday disclosed that he was made a vice-president of the party by the chief, amid widespread speculation that her stay abroad might be prolonged if she goes to Saudi Arabia for Umrah.

Nazrul Islam Khan, joint secretary general of BNP, told The Daily Star yesterday, "Iskandar was made a vice-president on January 10 but we could not disclose the matter formally as the government has a ban imposed on politics."

With Saeed Iskandar's induction, the number of vice-presidents in BNP now stands at 15, although

the party constitution limits the number within 12.

Other vice-presidents are -- Emran Ali Sarkar, Tariqul Islam, Justice TH Khan, LK Siddique, Nazmul Huda, Begum Sarwari Rahman, Rabeya Chowdhury, Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Shawkat Ali, MK Anwar, Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Shahjahan Siraj, Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, and Mohammad Nurul Huda.

A party source said Khaleda Zia decided to appoint her brother as a vice-president within the last few days during her meetings with party leaders at her cantonment residence as she is 'facing tremendous pressure' for leaving the country.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



Ruhul and his brother Sheikh Kabir Ahmed -- whom a trial court sentenced to death on June 30, 2003 in

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Constitutional basis of CG weak: Hasina
UNB, London

REJAUL KARIM BYRON
REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina has said the constitutional basis of the incumbent caretaker government is weak and called for a specific date for holding the stalled parliamentary election.

"Since the basis of the present caretaker government is weak, it can't stay in power for long," she told a meeting organised by the UK unit of the party in East London on Sunday.

Hasina said people fought for a free and fair election and they do not want any delay in holding the polls. She demanded early elections to maintain the democratic process.

The Awami League chief said she will fight lawfully the corruption and murder cases filed against her.

She thanked the people, particularly the expatriate Bangladeshis and British ministers and MPs, for raising their voice against the restriction on her return to Bangladesh.

2 secretaries quizzed over abandoned house sale
UNB, Dhaka

Two secretaries, facing a corruption case for selling 18 abandoned houses in the city at much lower prices, were interrogated by an anti-corruption taskforce yesterday.

Sources said the taskforce interrogated the two secretaries -- SM Zafnullah and Shahid Alam -- in the conference room of the works ministry for over two hours in the afternoon.

SM Zafnullah, former public works secretary, and Shahid Alam,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

ADP revised down 17pc
additional 10 percent allocation in the revised ADP. To this end, block allocation for city corporations, zila parishes, paurashavas, upazila and union parishes has been increased by Tk 210 crore to Tk 874 crore.

The original ADP allocation is Tk 26,000 crore comprising Tk 14,682 crore local resources and Tk 11,318 crore foreign resources.

Local resources have been cut down by 22 percent to Tk 11,480 crore while foreign resources have been slashed by 11 percent to Tk 10,120 crore, of which Tk 2,070 crore will be available from the World Bank's development support credit.

"Transport, power, rural development, health and education are the priorities in this ADP," Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam told reporters after the NEC meeting.

According to a planning ministry report at the meeting, rural development and institution sector was given an additional 10 percent allocation in the revised ADP. To this end, block allocation for city corporations, zila parishes, paurashavas, upazila and union parishes has been increased by Tk 210 crore to Tk 874 crore.

The revised ADP was approved by the National Economic Council (NEC) at a meeting yesterday, chaired by Chief Adviser Fakhrudin Ahmed.

The NEC also extended the tenure of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) by a year until June 2008.

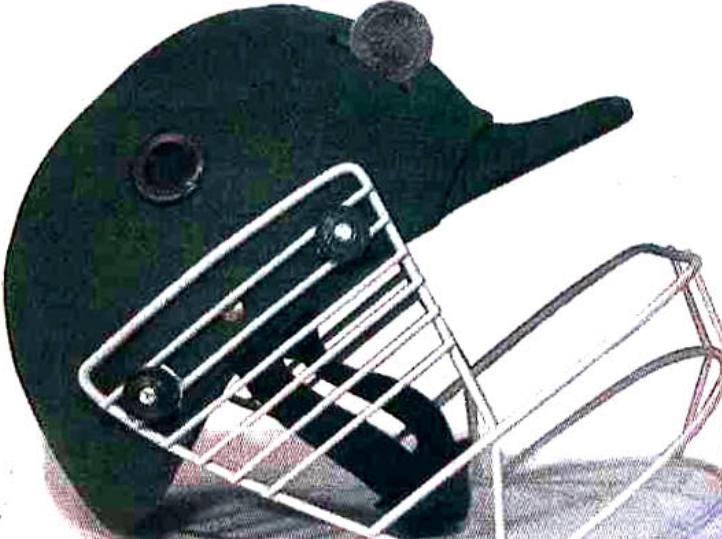
The biggest losers in the ADP cut are the communications sector with 33 percent of its allocation slashed, agriculture 30 percent, health five percent, education and religion sector 24 percent and transport sector losing 10 percent of allocation.

The rural development and institution sector was given an additional 10 percent allocation in the revised ADP. To this end, block allocation for city corporations, zila parishes, paurashavas, upazila and union parishes has been increased by Tk 210 crore to Tk 874 crore.

or September next year. The CEC and two other election commissioners earlier repeatedly claimed that it is not possible to complete the task in less than 18 months as it is the required minimum time.

Meanwhile the Election Commission (EC) yesterday at a meeting finalised a schedule to expedite the process of preparing the voter list, cancelling all holidays for the consultants and other

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4



Bangladesh Cricket Banks with us

We are proud to be
the Official Partner of Bangladesh Cricket Board

BCB Official Partner

