

Parties call for lifting ban on indoor politics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criticising the present army-backed caretaker government for certain activities, leaders of BNP, Workers Party, Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) and Jukto Front yesterday urged lifting the ban on indoor political activities and arranging national election soon.

In a meeting to commemorate late BNP leader KM Obaidur Rahman at the Institute of Diploma Engineers Bangladesh at Kakrail in the capital, the political leaders

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France braces for right-left poll showdown

APP, Paris

France held its breath yesterday, with just hours to go till the final decision in its most hard-fought presidential election in years.

The two candidates -- right-winger Nicolas Sarkozy and Socialist Segolene Royal -- closed their campaigns Friday at midnight in accordance with election rules, and began steeling themselves for Sunday's vote.

Opinion polls were banned on the eve of the election, but all

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Prayer Timing

May 6		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-34	6-38
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Inflation to continue hurting economy

Says BB report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Bank (BB) has projected continuous inflation in the domestic economy due to constant external pressure on prices and demand side.

The central bank in a study published in its October-December quarterly also assumed that Indian inflation would appear to have a more direct effect on the Bangladeshi food price induced inflation than price developments in other food-exporting countries.

"The moderation of inflation in the quarter under review is mainly attributed to seasonal factors. Both the external pressure on prices and

demand side inflationary expectations in the domestic economy, however, appear to persist," the study said.

However in a rapidly globalising world, it would be important for the policy makers to monitor future development of food prices in India and in other potential trading partners, it said.

The net impact of recent fuel price is unlikely to be significant but would have effect on poor people, whose livelihood depends on the use of kerosene and diesel.

The toll is likely to be significant unless alleviated through targeted means of transfers, preferably in cash, it said.

The BB study said the gradual easing of consumer price index (CPI) inflation, which had started in the first quarter of the current fiscal year (FY) also continued in the second quarter. The December inflation figures came well within the central bank's target of up to 7 percent set for the first half of the current FY.

In order to catch up with the cost of imported oil, domestic prices have just been announced to go up immediately, which will result in a one-shot increase in CPI followed by a round of gradual adjustment, it said.

The uncertain political environment and the accompanying

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5 more GIs killed in Iraq

10 army aspirants, 7 cops die in suicide blast

APP, AP, Baghdad

Ten army recruits were killed and 13 wounded on Saturday when a suicide bomber detonated his explosive vest at their recruitment centre west of Baghdad, a security official said.

The recruits were from the largely rural tribal area not far from Abu Ghraib, and part of an effort to get Sunni tribesmen into the secu-

rity forces to combat Iraq's insurgency, a Fallujah police officer told AFP.

Insurgents frequently target recruiting centres for Iraq's fledgling police and army.

Five more US soldiers have been killed in attacks in Baghdad and the restive western province of Anbar, the US military reported on Friday.

One soldier was killed and two

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CAMEL JOCKEYS

UAE to give compensation to victims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The governments of Bangladesh and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on April 25, under which the UAE government has agreed to compensate all children including the injured ones who were used as camel jockeys in the UAE, says a press release.

The MoU was signed by Bangladesh Secretary for Home Mohammad Abdul Karim and his counterpart from the UAE government.

Under the agreement, the UAE government has agreed to pay a minimum of \$1,000 to all the Bangladeshi children who had worked as camel jockeys since January 1, 1993. The amount could

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Drug policy lacks control over price

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Experts have urged scrapping the drug policy formulated in 2005 as the policy lacking 'specific price control mechanism' has led to the retail price hike of drugs, much to the suffering of the patients.

The policy formulated in 1982 had clearly said that the government would control the retail price of drugs and publish it in a gazette form to prevent selling of drugs at additional prices but the obligation to control the retail price of drugs was withdrawn in the policy of 2005.

Taking the advantage of new drug policy, different pharmaceutical companies are selling the same drug at different prices, under the same brand names, said

experts said.

Although a top source of Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries (BAPI), who was also a member of Drug Policy Committee 2005, said retail price of 500 mg Ciprofloxacin is Tk 10.00, the correspondent found consumers buying it for Tk 14.00. Production cost of this antibiotic is only Tk 1.70.

A drug policy is supposed to direct how the prices of drugs would be fixed on the basis of raw materials and packaging materials.

But except in case of some 117 commonly used essential drugs, there is no control over price whereas around 200 companies are manufacturing drugs of more than 14,000 brand names, said

Sayedur Rahman Khosru, an associate professor of the Department of Pharmacology, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

"The drug policy formulated in 2005 does not respond to the people's interest and it is not a policy at all," said Dr Zafnullah Chowdhury, Projects Coordinator of Gonoshasthaya Kendra, who was also a member of Drug Policy Committee 2005.

The faulty policy creates anarchy in drug market that has been flooded with unnecessary and harmful drugs, he said, adding that while the increased price of drugs leads to smuggling of drugs worth Tk 700 to 1,000 crore every year only from India, the average yearly

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Judicial body to probe death of indigenous leader

UNB, Dhaka

A one-member judicial commission has been formed to investigate the death of indigenous community leader Chalesh Ritchil reportedly in the custody of the army-led joint forces on March 18.

The commission, headed by retired District and Sessions judge Md Rafiuddin, will submit its report as early as possible, said a home ministry spokesman.

Police claimed Chalesh was critically injured during a chase by the joint forces near Kakrai of Madhupur under Tangail district in the evening of March 18. He was taken to Madhupur upazila health

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Process, timing of Iskandar's selection as BNP VP not right

Says Osman Farruk

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former education minister Dr M Osman Farruk yesterday categorically said the 'process and timing' of making BNP chairperson's brother Sayeed Iskandar a vice-president of the party were not appropriate.

He also said it is not acceptable if anyone in politics is promoted dynamically without taking into

consideration the person's qualifications and merits.

"The party chairperson [Khaleda Zia] can take decisions anytime according to our constitution. But the decision in this context was not right. It should have been discussed in the proper party forum," Farruk said on BBC Bangladesh Sanglap recorded in Bangladesh-China Friendship

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Kenyan plane crashes with 114 on board

APP, Nairobi

A Kenya Airways passenger plane with 114 people on board crashed yesterday after taking off from Douala airport in Cameroon on a flight to Nairobi, officials said.

An airline official said rescue teams were trying to find the site of the crash, and there was no immediate word on any casualties.

"We are trying to get to the area of the crash, but the weather is really bad. We are getting help from the army," a Kenya Airways official told AFP in Cameroon.

Air traffic controllers picked up a distress signal from the missing airliner just after it took off from Douala during a violent storm, a

source linked to the Agency for the Safety of Aerial Navigation in Africa said.

Two Cameroonian army helicopters began searching a wide area south of the line between Douala and the capital Yaounde, 250 kilometres (180 miles) to the east, to try to locate the aircraft.

"The plane has crashed," an official with the Kenyan Civil Aviation Authority, who asked not to be named, told AFP.

However, the chief executive officer for Kenya Airways, Titus Naikuni, said he could not confirm the crash.

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