

EU reiterates support

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British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury said they support the caretaker government as long as they are "working towards holding free and fair elections and leaving behind an infrastructure and a set of reforms to ensure a sustainable democracy and high standard of elections in the future".

Meyke noted that though it is expected that political parties themselves should move towards democratising their party structures, political reform involves all democratic stakeholders as well.

French Ambassador Jacques Andre-Costilhe, Danish Ambassador Einar Jense, Netherlands Ambassador Kees Beemsterboer, Italian Ambassador Pietro Ballero and Swedish Ambassador Britt Faikman Hagstrom attended the press conference, alongside six other honorary consul-generals and consuls.

Regarding the human rights situation, Choudhury said, "When we look at the overall data, we can see a slight improvement." He added that it is evident in decreasing crossfire deaths.

He, however, said that "it (human rights situation) is still not a satisfactory situation" and that they are still closely monitoring individual incidents. He added that the EU is referring individual human rights cases to the caretaker government and they have been resolving the matter.

Asked to comment on the reported restrictions on BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's movement and the overturned ban on Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina's return, he said, "Though we have to bear in mind that there is a state of emergency it is unfortunate to have restrictions on movement and expression."

"We would not like to comment on an internal security matter of Bangladesh," he added.

The British high commissioner said that the government would have to make the day-to-day judgement on keeping a balance between maintaining security and safeguarding the individual rights to freedom of expression.

Replies to a query whether they still have confidence in the government's judgement after its U-turn on sending Hasina, Meyke

said they would rather not pass judgement on a host government's security policies, but added that an ability to shift positions shows they are flexible enough to learn from their mistakes and redress them immediately.

Asked to comment on the press freedom under the state of emergency, he said that phone calls by intelligence agencies to the media outlets would amount to sabotage against the government. "It is the wrong kind of press policy," he said.

Describing the chief adviser's meeting with the media leaders earlier this week as an "encouraging confidence building measure", Meyke said that a lot of it would be undone by trying to inhibit press freedom.

Anwar Choudhury said he does not agree with some observers' position that the country is being run by the military, saying that there is a civilian government in place which is being assisted by the military and supported by the people.

Regarding the election timeframe, he said that the EC announcement to hold elections sets the end of 2008 as the perimeter which means elections could be held at any point between January 2008 and the year end.

He also said that under the Fakhruddin-led government, conditions have improved for implementing development projects and a situation is in place for more efficient and effective investment and trade.

Frowein in his opening statement said that Brussels is mulling a revised and development-friendly Rules of Origin that govern the import of Bangladeshi goods to the EU, which stood at 5 billion euros in 2006.

He also touched on EU commitments to strike a fair deal for the least-developed countries such as Bangladesh at the WTO Doha Development.

Meyke in his introductory remarks as the envoy of Germany, which holds the current EU presidency, mentioned EU-Bangladesh cooperation in combating climate change, trade, in the UN and other multilateral organisations, and shared obligations to protect human rights and democracy.

Rejoinder

FROM PAGE 16
November 28, 2006 was successful and 64 candidates of November 12, 2006 viva board were offered job.

4) PSC authorities are surprised at The Daily Star allegation that as many as 64 successful candidates with roll numbers between 52001-54299 were selected under a "package deal".

5) The allegation that only nine out of 250 candidates were given pass marks on October 15, 2006 is also false.

6) It is false and fabricated that only two candidates were given pass marks on November 11 and given job in the foreign service because no viva was held on that day.

7) No candidate from Sathkira was selected for police service who appeared in viva voce on September 17, 2006.

OUR REPLY

Most leading newspapers including the Prothom Alo, Ittefaq, Jugantor, Shamak, Amar Desh, Janakantha and The Daily Star had published reports on the irregularities of PSC, especially about leakage of question papers, which were widely available at different university dormitories. In spite of widespread media reporting and claims by examinees, the PSC held the 27th BCS examination.

Because of allegations, an intelligence agency investigated and found irregularities. Finally, the caretaker government postponed the medical test (that started on April 7) of the BCS candidates on April 18, proving the existence of serious irregularities.

Our reply to the points made in the rejoinder is as follows:

1) To prevent irregularity, the rejoinder claims that marks of written exams are kept in the computer system in coded form. But the reality is that such codes cannot prevent irregularity when senior PSC officials themselves get involved in corruption.

2) In the viva voce examination, around 5,000 candidates—many with good scores in written tests—were given below 40, the pass mark in viva voce. This is a record. The rejoinder did not deny the allegation.

We agree that viva boards were formed according to the registration serial numbers but a vast number of

candidates allegedly bribed to change their viva boards and ensured their expected viva board by claiming to be sick and obtaining medical certificates to effect.

3) The Daily Star stands corrected about the following mistake. The report mentioned that not a single viva candidate on October 12, 2006 and November 28, 2006 was successful. Instead of "not a single viva candidate" it should read "not a single viva candidate in the general cadre".

4) The PSC sources confirmed that different "package deals" were responsible for the irregularities of the BCS. The 64 successful candidates of November 12, 2006 were allegedly one of such deals, which becomes evident when compared with other viva voce days.

5) The report mistakenly mentioned a viva voce date on November 11, 2006. The correct date is September 25, 2006 in which three candidates were offered jobs in the foreign service.

6) A total of nine engineering students, along with other successful candidates, passed on October 15, 2006. Were this error.

7) Our report mentioned four examples of bribery. The protests only silent about the other three. We have names of all the four candidates involved but did not publish their names to prevent their personal humiliation.

The Daily Star stands by its report in general, except for some errors in mentioning specific dates. We however agree that some words used in our report is very sweeping and give the impression that majority of the examinees adopted unfair means. This impression is not correct, and as such we regret that such sweeping words were used.

New dawn' in N Ireland

Former foes sworn in as new leaders

AFP, Belfast

Former Catholic and Protestant rivals were sworn in yesterday as Northern Ireland's new leaders, reviving self-rule here in what Britain called a historic "new dawn" in the long-troubled province.

Long time foes Protestant clergyman Ian Paisley and former Catholic politician Martin McGuinness both vowed to work for a common future as they arrived for the landmark ceremony at Belfast's Stormont parliament building.

Later, acting on a court order, the Hizbullah police investigated the incident and found Pintu guilty.

Later this year Pintu surrendered to the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) and sought bail, but the court rejected his bail prayer and sent him to jail.

LOTUS KAMAL ON REMAND
Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal alias Lotus Kamal, accused of graft charges, was placed on a two-day remand for interrogation.

Metropolitan Magistrate Syed Mojibul Haq passed the remand order after Gulshan police produced him before the court yesterday with a five-day remand prayer.

Joint forces arrested Kamal on February 4 from his Gulshan residence.

CPA urged to restore Bangladesh's membership

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar yesterday sent a letter to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Secretariat in London requesting it to restore Bangladesh's membership in the association.

Asked to comment on the press freedom under the state of emergency, he said that phone calls by intelligence agencies to the media outlets would amount to sabotage against the government. "It is the wrong kind of press policy," he said.

Describing the chief adviser's meeting with the media leaders earlier this week as an "encouraging confidence building measure", Meyke said that a lot of it would be undone by trying to inhibit press freedom.

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Regarding the election timeframe, he said that the EC announcement to hold elections sets the end of 2008 as the perimeter which means elections could be held at any point between January 2008 and the year end.

He also said that under the Fakhruddin-led government, conditions have improved for implementing development projects and a situation is in place for more efficient and effective investment and trade.

Frowein in his opening statement said that Brussels is mulling a revised and development-friendly Rules of Origin that govern the import of Bangladeshi goods to the EU, which stood at 5 billion euros in 2006.

He also touched on EU commitments to strike a fair deal for the least-developed countries such as Bangladesh at the WTO Doha Development.

Meyke in his introductory remarks as the envoy of Germany, which holds the current EU presidency, mentioned EU-Bangladesh cooperation in combating climate change, trade, in the UN and other multilateral organisations, and shared obligations to protect human rights and democracy.

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