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ELECTRONICS

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SURVEY

85pc wants reforms in political parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political parties need reforms for the betterment of the country's democratic process, speakers yesterday said at a seminar on the outcome of a survey in which over 85 percent participants supported all proposed electoral reforms.

Bangladesh Manobhikar Samonnoy Parishad (BMSP) organised the seminar on its public opinion survey on electoral reforms proposed by the Election Commission (EC).

"Election is not the end in itself but a means to the end. We have witnessed how parliaments failed in the past to play their role and

remained dysfunctional after free and fair elections," former adviser to the caretaker government M Hafizuddin Khan said at the seminar.

He said Bangladesh has always had backward movement in its way to democracy rather than forward movement. Once elected, lawmakers remain outside parliament and instead start getting involved in all sorts of facilities work like wheat distribution.

Of the reform proposals, Hafizuddin opposed the provision for raising the election expenditure because "the lawmakers try to realise the money they spend for election purposes".

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CRP founder Valerie sidelined by board

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The board of trustees for the Centre for Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP) yesterday "arbitrarily" removed the organisation's founder and main promoter Valerie Taylor from her position as coordinator.

She would remain in the CRP as an adviser.

In a letter issued by the board chairman, they also removed Taylor's name as coordinator from all parts of the organogram, citing her engagement in activities that are "prejudicial and detrimental to the interest of the CRP".

Sources, however, said the board removed Taylor as coordinator of the Savar-based CRP over a two-and-a-half-year disagreement between her and a section of the board who decided to raise the fee for the patients.

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PHOTO COURTESY GRAMEEN BANK

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez shakes hands with Nobel Peace Prize winner Prof Muhammad Yunus during a meeting at the presidential palace in Caracas.

Wolfowitz readies his defence

White house backs him

AFP, Washington

Embattled World Bank president Paul Wolfowitz is expected to fight to keep his job yesterday after an investigation found he put his "personal interests" above bank rules and jeopardized the very mission of the development lender.

The former US deputy defense secretary is accused of personally arranging a lucrative pay-and-promotion package and transfer to the State Department for his companion and fellow bank employee, Shaha Riza.

He was due to appear before the bank's 24 executive directors at 5:00 pm (2100 GMT) to explain his actions.

"Again we support him, but we also know, and he has said, that he

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7.5pc GDP growth can see Bangladesh in middle-income group

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh can become a middle-income country by 2016 if it raises its GDP growth a little more to a sustained 7.5 percent a year, the World Bank (WB) country director said yesterday.

At the current pace of growth, Bangladesh will become a middle-income country by 2023, Xian Zhu further said.

He was speaking at the monthly luncheon meeting of American Chamber of Commerce in Bangladesh (AmCham) in Dhaka.

Bangladesh will need to employ its labour and capital much more productively and increase the

investment rate by more than 5 percentage point relying on higher domestic savings," Zhu said referring to a WB analysis on how Bangladesh can raise its growth rate.

Achieving a 7.5 percent growth per year could be challenging but not impossible, Zhu said. "GDP growth in China has averaged over 9 percent since 1975, while Korea and Thailand each attained 8 percent growth for two decades and India is now close to joining this group of high growth performance."

On the recent growth performance of Bangladesh, he said resilience of its economy was demonstrated once again in fiscal year 2006-07, a year in which the country is going through a very difficult period of political transitions.

On the projected growth, the WB country director said.

Bangladesh appears to be achieving over 6.5 percent GDP growth in FY07 compared with 6.7 percent in FY06 and 6 percent in FY05. "This is a creditable performance by any standard and particularly considering the internal disturbances the economy had to weather in the first half of FY07.

He identified three challenges—diversification of export basket; resilience of its economy was

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Kamal vows to rally for RMG woman workers without umbrella

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Renowned lawyer and politician Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said he will stage sit-in demonstrations in front of garment factories if he sees woman garment workers coming out of any factory without umbrella during rain.

Speaking at a roundtable

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Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakha is recovering a part of the capital's Gulshan Lake which illegal occupiers had filled up with earth.

Ex-PM Khaleda's assignment officer sued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Dr Firoz Hasan Mahmud, assignment officer of former prime minister Khaleda Zia, was sued for extortion.

Abdul Hamid, a resident of Chhoygoria in Bogra, filed the case with Shibganj Police Station against Firoz and two others on Monday night. The other accused in the case are Fazlulbari and his wife Mafela Begum of Asangari village under Shibganj upazila.

In the case, the complainant

alleged that Firoz took Tk 2 lakh from him on September 16, 2005, promising to give him a job as fireman in the Fire Service Department.

"Firoz did not keep his promise and later demanded another Tk 50,000 from me," said the complainant.

He further alleged that Firoz, also a friend of BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, took the money in the name of giving it to "Hawa Bhaban".

Suicide bomber kills 25 in Peshawar hotel

APP, Peshawar

A suicide bomber blew himself up at hotel in the northwestern Pakistani city of Peshawar yesterday killing at least 25 people, mainly Afghan refugees, and injuring dozens more, officials said.

The powerful blast partly demolished the three-storey Marhaba Hotel in the centre of the strife-torn city near the Afghan border, an AFP reporter at the scene said.

Body parts littered the road outside the hotel, opposite the historic Mahabat mosque, and television footage showed frantic passers-by wheeling badly mutilated bodies into local hospitals on wooden carts.

Interior Ministry spokesman Brigadier Javed Cheema told AFP that 25 people were killed, most of them Afghans.

"It is now confirmed that it was a suicide attack," said Malik Zafar Azam, the law minister for North West Frontier Province, of which

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Two gunned down in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two people were gunned down by a gang at Sayedabad in the city last night.

The victims were identified as Muhammad Badol, 30, a grocer, and Babu Miah, 25, a bus driver.

The gang comprising around five elements fired indiscriminately at Koratiola near Sayedabad bus terminal at about 10:30pm.

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Prayer Timing

May 16		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-36	6-40
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

Gujarat bus fire kills 29

APP, New Delhi

The death toll from a head-on smash between a passenger bus running on compressed natural gas and a chemical tanker rose to 29 yesterday, the Press Trust of India said.

Police told the news agency they had recovered 29 bodies and that another 14 people were injured in the accident, which occurred when the bus tried to overtake another

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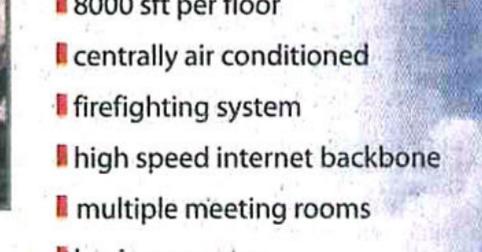
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