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No more trade licence in residential areas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An inter-ministerial meeting yesterday decided that the government will not issue any new trade licences against addresses in Dhaka's residential areas.

The meeting also decided to remove all billboards that are hazardous to Dhaka city dwellers.

Another decision was to form a utility service commission, comprising all utility service providers in Dhaka, to provide one-stop service to city dwellers.

The inter-ministerial meeting at the ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) asked the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) to prepare an annual plan of city-street-digging. The service

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Axe to fall on a few BNP bigwigs

Khaleda waits for politics ban to go

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

Some members of the BNP Standing Committee and a few important leaders of the party's Dhaka city unit might be fired after withdrawal of ban on indoor politics, sources said.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has decided to bring changes in the party rank and file since she is unhappy with activities of senior leaders of the party, said a source who met her several times in the

last few weeks.

"She is ready to bring changes in the party constitution to ensure democracy within the party. But before that is done, some important leaders of the party might be fired as she thinks they are playing a mysterious role to serve their own interests," the source said.

Meanwhile, the persisting drama over Khaleda Zia's trip to Singapore, postponed once again on Wednesday due to filing of an extortion case against her younger

son Arafat Rahman Koko, has created confusion and frustration among party men. Many district level leaders contacted senior leaders of the party yesterday but failed to get satisfactory explanations on the matter, party insiders said.

Moreover, party leaders were surprised that the case against Koko was filed just a few hours before his scheduled departure for Singapore with his mother. The

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Polls as early as possible: CA

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday said the caretaker government is determined to hold election as early as possible and also to reform the electoral process.

The CA made the remarks when new South Korean Ambassador in Dhaka Park Suk-bum paid a courtesy call on him at his office.

Appreciating the caretaker government's performance, particularly on reforms and anti-crime and anti-corruption drives, the envoy said South Korea fully supports its reform activities.

Both the chief adviser and the

envoy stressed the need for exploring and utilising the untapped potentials of Bangladesh and Korea in various areas of cooperation for

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EC differs on army experts' timeline

Says voter list, ID card impossible to do in less than 18 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday strongly disagreed with the army assessment that simultaneous preparation of a voter list and national identity cards should not take more than six months.

It described the time frame as hypothetical.

A team of experts from the Bangladesh Army on Wednesday said the voter list with photographs and national ID cards could be prepared within up to six months since beginning of the task at the field level. It also gave journalists a

demonstration of how the job would be done.

"It's not possible to complete the task in less than 18 months. The six-month time frame is mere notional," Humayun Kabir, the secretary to the EC Secretariat, told a weekly press briefing yesterday.

According to the commission, at least six months are needed for preparation including readying the project proposal and purchasing necessary equipment while 12 months for the field level work.

The EC secretary however said they have been seriously considering

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Four die at RMCH without treatment

Interns enforce indefinite strike after clash with attendants of patients

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Four patients died without treatment at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) yesterday as interns refused to attend patients after they clashed with attendants of patients and beat one up severely over accusations of neglect.

The row between the interns and the attendants of patients started Wednesday afternoon at

around 5:00pm when an attendant and husband of a patient allegedly misbehaved with a female intern-- Dr Matuara Sharmin, said sources.

The patient, Sima, 22, was admitted in Ward 16 earlier in the morning on Wednesday with encephalitis and pneumonia complications and the doctors on duty had been neglectful in treating her, claimed her relatives and witnesses.

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Nation in suffocating situation: Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the nation is now in a 'suffocating situation' as people do not have the right to express their opinion, and political activities are banned.

"Politics is now banned. People are deprived of their political right and right to express their opinion," the AL chief said on the occasion of 26th anniversary of her homecoming.

Senior leaders of the AL and its front organisations, workers and other people went to her Sudha

Sadan residence to greet her on the occasion.

Hasina, eldest daughter of

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Kamal Siddiqui sued for looting, extortion

Khandaker Mosharraf, Rahim Varosha also sued

STAR REPORT

Kamal Siddiqui, principal secretary to former prime minister Khaleda Zia, has been sued for extortion, plundering and looting.

Shafiqul Islam, an official of the health and family welfare ministry, filed the case with a court in Chandpur yesterday against Kamal Siddiqui and his 11 associates, according to UNB.

Sources said Shafiqul Islam, son of late Gafur Pathary of Chhoto

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8 MOST ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES 5 importers' cartel controls prices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A cartel of five importers, who control eight most essential commodities, have the ability to control the retail prices of these commodities, said a study conducted by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

As the essential commodities have relatively inelastic demand, such cartels may get away with this restrictive business practice and make supernormal profit, it said.

Up to March of the current fiscal year (FY), the top five importers'

share of importing raw sugar is 96 per cent, refined sugar 46 per cent, crude soya bean oil 67 per cent, crude palm oil 60 per cent, wheat 49 per cent, rice 37 per cent, lentil 31 per cent, and onion 31 per cent, the study revealed.

The existence of a higher degree of concentration in importing essential commodities gives rise to the possibility of syndication at importer's level, said the study.

The CPD recently conducted the study based on National Board

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Bangladesh, India first Test from today

BISHWAJIT ROY From Chittagong

All-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is all set to make his Test debut when Bangladesh resume their five-day campaign after a thirteen-month long break as they take on India in the first game of the two-match series at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium today.

The 20-year-old left-handed middle-order batsman who also bowls decent left-arm spin has already made his presence felt in the shorter version of the game in

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