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No procession, discussion on Zia's death anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The military-backed interim government yesterday decided not to allow BNP leaders, activists and workers to bring out processions and hold discussions in observance of the death anniversary of late president Ziaur Rahman, founder of the party.

However, former prime minister and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia along with a few of her colleagues will be allowed to visit the grave of her husband Ziaur Rahman to offer fataha. Later BNP leaders and workers can also offer fataha there in a disciplined manner but they will not be allowed to make any gathering.

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Bail in criminal cases stopped for 2 weeks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) will not grant bail in any criminal case filed under the emergency power rules for the next two weeks.

In response to a government petition, a four-member bench of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court (SC) yesterday stayed the HC's April 22 ruling that allowed itself the jurisdiction to dispose of the bail petitions by those charged with criminal offences under the emergency rules.

Headed by Chief Justice Mohammad Ruhul Amin, the apex court also asked the attorney general

to file a regular appeal within two weeks.

Attorney General Fida M Kamal moved for the state.

Earlier on March 21, the government promulgated an amendment to the rules under Emergency Powers Ordinance 2007, revoking the right to bail of the ones being rounded up in the countrywide drive against crime and corruption.

The HC on March 29 invited a legal debate over the amended rules and sought opinions of senior lawyers on the issue.

According to the amendment that was given retrospective effect since February 13, the accused also cannot

seek redress from any higher courts against any order until a case is resolved in trial court.

The caretaker government brought further amendment to the emergency powers rules on April 8 to provide for bail in some cases under the penal code. It says the government shall decide which of the cases filed during the state of emergency should be made bailable and which not. This meant there would be no blanket curbs on bail petitions.

However, persons facing trial for offences specified in the rules will not be entitled to seek bail at any stage from first information report (FIR) to the verdict.

AL, BNP hail Gen Moeen's statement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Both the Awami League (AL) and BNP yesterday hailed Wednesday's statement of Army chief General Moeen U Ahmed and expressed hope that it will help to strengthen democracy in the country by holding free and fair elections.

"The Army deserves thanks from the nation for his statement. We also thank him for his conviction and trust in democracy. We hope that the armed forces will play an invaluable role in strengthening of democracy in the country," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil told newsmen at his Mercantile Bank office in the capital.

The AL leader said the army

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AL starts work on party reforms

Analysing funding system, constitutions of parties in US, UK, Australia, India

HASAN JAHI TUSHER

The Awami League (AL) high command is preparing comprehensive proposals for reforms in the party as well as in the electoral system which will be finalised within three weeks.

The draft proposals being worked out by the party high-ups will be placed before the AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC) immediately after lifting of ban on indoor politics, well placed sources

in the party told The Daily Star last night.

A team of eight to ten top AL leaders headed by party President Sheikh Hasina is analysing party constitutions and funding as well as electoral systems and funding in different countries including the US, UK, Australia and India aiming to make necessary reforms in the AL.

Transparency in AL's funding and accounts, party constitution and electoral system will get prefer-

ence in the comprehensive proposals, the sources said.

Proposals relating to party constitution, if accepted by the ALCWC, will be placed before the AL national committee. If approved by the national committee, those would be incorporated in the party constitution.

But proposals concerning electoral system and funding will be placed to the Election Commission (EC) and the government.

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Rain threatens 2nd Test too

SPORTS REPORTER

Heavy rainstorm in the capital last night threatened the start of the second and final Test between Bangladesh and India today at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The first Test of the two-match series in Chittagong ended in a draw following half of the days were spoiled due to rain but the good news is that the Mirpur venue has a much better drainage system than the port city stadium.

The match is scheduled to start at 10am with state-run Bangladesh Television and NEO Sport beaming live coverage.

Both teams will finalise their playing eleven this morning after having a last look at the pitch at Mirpur, the sixth venue of the country to make Test debut after

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Clouds cover Dhaka sky yesterday evening before heavy rain that cooled down the atmosphere after soaring heat.

PHOTO: SHAFIQ ALAM

Ex-BNP MP Abul Hossain jailed for 7 yrs

UNB, Barisal

Former BNP lawmaker Abul Hossain Khan was yesterday sentenced to seven years imprisonment for possessing ammunition illegally.

Divisional and Special Sessions Judge ATM Musa handed down the verdict in a crowded court.

Abul Hossain, also the vice-president of Juba Dal central committee, said he would challenge the judgment in the higher court.

According to the prosecution, Abul Hossain surrendered his licensed pistol to the police on February 2 in response to the government circular. But he kept with him 90 bullets illegally.

His counsel had contended that the bullets left at home by mistake

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Military top brass upgraded

Moeen made general, Ziaur air marshal, Sarwar vice-admiral

UNB, Dhaka

Army Chief Lt Gen Moeen U Ahmed has been made a four-star general in a major elevation in the military services, an ISPR release said yesterday.

Air Chief Vice-Marshal S M Ziaur Rahman has been promoted to air marshal while Navy Chief Rear Admiral Sarwar Zahan Nizam to vice-admiral.

Besides, three major generals have been promoted to lieutenant general, while three brigadier generals to major general.

Principal Staff Officer (PSO)

Major General Mohammad Zahangir Alam Chowdhury has been elevated to lieutenant general with a new posting. He has been made Quarter Master General (QMG).

Commandant of the National Defence College (NDC) Major General Abu Tayeb Mohammad Zahurul Alam has been promoted to lieutenant general.

Chief of the 9th Division Major general Masud Uddin Chowdhury has been promoted to lieutenant general with new posting as PSO of the Armed Forces Division.

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Rab captures 2 militants who threatened to blow up Jatiya Press Club

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday claimed to have captured two members of the militant outfit 'Jadid al Qaeda Bangladesh,' who allegedly threatened to blow up the Jatiya Press Club earlier this month.

One of them, Mohammad Ibrahim, was also a close accomplice of listed criminal Pichchi Hannan, who was killed in 'crossfire' by Rab on August 6, 2004, says a Rab press release.

The other arrestee was identified as Nawab Ali.

They were being interrogated under the custody of Rab-3.

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TITAS GAS WELL LEAKAGE BB declines L/C for unsolicited deal

SHARIER KHAN

Bangladesh Bank (BB) has declined opening of a Letter of Credit (LC) for Bangladesh Gas Field Company Ltd (BGFCL) to award an unsolicited contract to US company GSM for remedial action on a troubled well at Titas gas field in Brahmanbaria.

According to a well placed source in the energy ministry,

reviewing the BGFL's proposal for hiring GSM, the BB noted that the troubled well-3 was now more or less stable, and so there was no hurry for an unsolicited deal.

The BGFL should go for an open tender in compliance with the government policy, the BB advised.

As a result, the BGFL's \$3.5 million deal with GSM to kill well-3 using a snubbing unit has fallen

flat. The BGFL has verbally conveyed the decision to GSM, the source pointed out.

"We thought we have made a good low-cost deal with GSM. I don't know if we would be able to get a better deal through a tender now," notes an official.

Though the BB decision stops an immediate remedial action at Titas -- where gas leakage through

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Board conflict leads to CRP crisis

STAR REPORT

The future of the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP) seems to be in jeopardy as its founder Valerie A Taylor has been gradually 'sidelined' for a conflict of views on management and policies including the organisation's focus on services for the poor.

Last week a letter issued by the CRP board of trustees informed Taylor that she is no longer coordinator of the organisation but she would remain in the largely

ceremonial post of an adviser.

The decision follows a long-standing dispute between a number of trustees, a former CEO and a section of CRP staff and supporters of Taylor over her approach to running CRP, which had been striving to ensure services to the ultra-poor.

Differences started to emerge since the board of trustees was reconstituted in January 2005 and a new CEO was appointed on the advice of the centre's major donor--the British chapter of the Friend of the

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Muggers shoot youth dead, loot money

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unidentified criminals shot dead a youth in Dhanmondi in the capital yesterday morning and snatched Tk 4.45 lakh from him.

The dead is identified as AHM Arefin Alam Rusho, a fresh BBA graduate from North South University and son of Lt Col AHM Shafikul Alam and Dr Ambory Begum of Mainul Hossain road in Dhaka Cantonment.

Accompanied by his would-be wife and father-in-law Joynal Abedin, Rusho withdrew the

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VOTER LIST WITH PHOTO EC plans to complete data entry by June

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Secretary to the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat yesterday said the EC made plans to complete the task of data entry regarding the preparation of the voter list with photographs by June next year.

"Once the task of data entry is complete, there will be some other tasks like publication of the draft electoral rolls and its corrections. It will require another few months to

do the rest of the tasks," Humayun Kabin, the EC secretary, said in a weekly press briefing.

"The election commission is preparing to finish the voter list with photographs within the minimum possible time. The election commission is still looking at options to do the task flawlessly," the secretary said.

"We have increased the numbers of teams from 8,000 to 12,000, only to save time," Humayun said

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