

BB declines L/C

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various points in the ground was reported by locals more than three years back -- this also gives the BGFLC some time to rethink whether the remedial task should cover more work than just fixing well-3.

The GSM deal only focussed on well-3 that was leaking huge gas since late 2003. The Bapex undertook a remedial action on April 13 this year, and after a couple of days' operation, it did not proceed further fearing explosion. But eventually the unfinished intervention improved the well's condition with gas production from that well shooting up to 32 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) from 15 mmcf previously. The well is still leaking more than 1 mmcf of gas.

Experts of the BGFLC and Bapex say the problem with well-3 is far from over. "The well head gas pressure is around 1,000 pressure per inch (PSI) whereas that at other wells is 1,800 PSI," said a top official. "In other words, source of the well-3 problem is still there, though externally it looks better than before."

He went on, "Again nobody can say it for sure that well-3 alone is the source of gas leakage in Titas area. You must remember gas is leaking through the ground at places that are two to four kilometres from well-3. Our experts as well as those of Chevron and PTTEP believe that there might also be some other sources of the problem."

Another official said, "We are

living with fire, and we must immediately reduce the level of risk with well-3."

Against this backdrop, prior to a remedial action there should be a proper assessment of Titas field's problems. Some of the field's 16 wells have developed troubles and these need to be addressed as well.

"The BGFLC has struck a deal with the Bapex to conduct a 3 dimensional seismic survey, which will reveal the health and actual reserve condition of the field and help us understand the problem. But that is very time consuming. We need to do something fast," the official added.

Sparse gas leakage through various points in the ground in Brahmanbaria had been noticed for the last three to five years. But since the last dry season, the situation has become alarming. Local villagers and farmers had told The Daily Star in February that gas was leaking from more than 3,000 big holes-- including some 30-foot diameter holes-- in IRRI paddy fields, water bodies and the Titas river. Gas emitted through some of the holes are burning with high flames.

Titas field produces 400 mmcf of gas as against the country's total gas demand of 1500 mmcf. Discovered in the early sixties by Shell oil, Titas was estimated to have a gas reserve of 5.12 trillion cubic feet (after four decades it now has 2.78 tcf).

Prothom Alo

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three main aims--legal reforms, preparing a credible and proper voter list, and creating an environment conducive to elections, he added.

Huda said a draft prepared by the EC for electoral reform has already been proposed but the EC cannot finalise the draft without discussing the matter with the political parties.

Former caretaker government adviser Manzur Elahi said while it is good to hold dialogues with the civil society and the press, the major challenge ahead for the EC is to convince the political parties about the effectiveness of the EC reforms.

Both Elahi and legal expert Asif Nazrul said a ban on indoor politics does not preclude the EC from having a dialogue with the political parties as it will be a "constructive discussion" on reforms rather than a "political activity". They stressed the need for accelerating these decisions to quicken steps towards elections.

The CEC stated that the second goal of the EC is to create a fair and proper voters registration system that will leave behind a "widely criticised" voter list.

He referred to several studies suggesting that 18.3 percent voters on the previous voter list are fake. Creating a new database would be less time-consuming than correcting the old one, he said.

A few speakers at the discussion, however, differed in this regard and came down hard on Huda for the EC decision to prepare photo ID and ask people to come to registration camps rather than EC officials visiting door-to-door.

Former attorney general Hasan Arif said the EC will not only have to go to the Supreme Court (SC) for a reference but also pass amendments to avoid door-to-door visit.

He was referring to an SC decision last year which said election officials will have to go door-to-door to prepare a voter list.

Former adviser Maj Gen (ret) Mainul Hossain Chowdhury said the CEC not to conflate voter list and voter ID cards as they will have to face legal tangles in future.

AL, BNP hail

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chief's remarks relating to assisting the present caretaker government from behind the scenes is the reflection of everybody's desire.

Jalil termed baseless the law adviser's apprehension that there will be a reappearance of the previous situation if the ban on indoor politics is lifted.

To a query on party reforms by force, he said, "Awami League is not used to acting on instructions of others. We do politics from our obligation to the country and people. If required, we will bring intra-party reforms but not on anybody's dictat."

He said his party chief Sheikh Hasina is now exchanging views on the intra-party reform issue with the central leaders and has requested them to come up with their individual views, ideas and opinions on reforms.

About his proposition on reforms in the political parties, government and parliament, Jalil said it complies with the 31-point reform proposals of the 14-party combine.

He reiterated that his party would surely take action against any leaders of the party if convicted for corruption in a court of law.

For ensuring transparency and accountability of a new political party, the AL leader suggested formulation of guidelines so that

Election Commissioner Sakhawath Hossain said if they were to go door-to-door to prepare the voter list with photographs, they will need 36 months instead of 18 to complete the task.

Another Election Commissioner Sahul Hossain said the EC is not bound by the SC decision for door-to-door visits due to the unusual political context and the different mode of making the electoral register.

Asif Nazrul said a presidential ordinance will be sufficient in this regard.

The CEC also emphasised the EC's aim to create an environment conducive to elections whereby the opportunities for exuberant spending on elections and the use of muscle in elections would be eliminated or reduced for a fairer political platform for candidates.

Hasan Arif also endorsed the view that instead of limiting expenditure, the EC should be looking to restrict the opportunities given to candidates to splash money for their advantage.

Former adviser Mainul asked the EC if it wants to hold elections under the state of emergency. "Withdraw the emergency and then you can see who still participate in the election and who boycott it," he said.

Transparency International, Bangladesh (TI) trustee board Chairman Prof Muzaffer Ahmed said the people are as important as politicians in the election process. He called for a total ban on candidates who have been tainted as corrupt and rallies and processions for election campaigning.

Former adviser Rokia Afzal Rahman said the electoral reform should have greater attention from the authorities to ensure greater representation of women in the elections.

Others present at the discussion were Badiul Alam Mazumdar of Citizens for Good Governance, Nagarkir Committee member M Syeduzzaman and Prothom Alo Joint Editor Abdul Quayum.

Prothom Alo Editor Matur Rahman moderated the session.

no political parties without defining their aims and objectives and working among the people for three to five years are allowed to participate in elections.

Referring to the Election Commission's decision on distribution of voters' forms door to door, he said, "The commission is trying to come to a final decision in consultation with all including the political parties."

Asked whether the AL will go to the EC individually or along with the 14-party combine for consultation on the issue, he said, "We can choose either of the options as our ideas and opinions as well as aims and objectives regarding electoral reforms are similar to that of the 14-party combine."

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan in a statement said, "The brave armed forces have saved the country from a conflicting and uncertain situation by assisting the present caretaker government."

Bhuiyan said Moeen's speech has paved the way of holding a free and fair election, carrying out reforms in necessary cases and freeing the country from corruption and terrorism.

The patriotic armed forces have upheld their image, he said.

He urged them to continue to do so in future.

EC plans

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referring to the EC's original plan to form 8,000 teams to prepare the voter list with photographs.

The secretary, however, repeatedly said the progress of the task would largely be depended on voters' turn out for registering their names in the new voter list.

He said the enumerators would make door-to-door visits and distribute voters' registration forms to collect particulars of voters. They will also help the eligible voters to fill in the forms, he added.

One will have to come to the voters' registration centres to have one's photographs and fingerprints taken for the voter list and national identity cards.

The secretary said the pilot project, which will begin on June 10 in Sripur municipality of Gazipur district, would help the EC finalise the methodology of preparing the voter list.

The secretary said the EC has sought Tk 350 crore from the government for conducting electoral activities.

Rab captures

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Acting on a tip-off, Rab held Nawab from Karwan Bazar on

Tuesday after Shabbagh Police Station sent a copy of the general diary filed by the press club authorities to the director of Rab-3, the press release added.

Following information extracted from him, the Rab members arrested Ibrahim from Hizla in Barisal on Wednesday. The Rab also recovered the cellphone with SIM from his possession through which some callers identifying themselves as "Jadid al Qaeda" members threatened to bomb the Jatiya Press Club.

On May 8, the press club authorities received a letter from the militant outfit that read "the press club will be blown up within 10 days." Besides, the threat was issued over cellphone several times.

Shahin Choudhury, convenor of the security sub-committee of the press club, filed a general diary with the Shabbagh police the following day.

Ctg mayor

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with Chittagong Kotwali Police Station yesterday. Abu Mohammad Arif Siddiqi, ACC director of Chittagong zone, filed the case.

Yesterday, Chamber Judge of the Supreme Court, M Hassan Ameen passed the stay order following an application moved by the government seeking leave-to-appeal against the High Court order.

The judge also referred the application to the SC full bench for hearing.

On May 17, the High Court upon a petition had granted the detained mayor bail for three months in a graft case on health grounds. But, he could not come out of jail as the detention order against him was in force.

Mohiuddin was rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital from Bandarban jail on May 14 following a heart attack. Later, he was shifted to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University in the capital as his condition deteriorated.

Barrister M Amir-UI Islam appeared for petitioner Hasina Mohiuddin, wife of the mayor, while Attorney General Fida M Kamal stood for the state.

In Chittagong, the mayor along with four others has been sued on charge of incurring a loss of Tk 83.05 lakh in purchase of six trucks in 2006-07.

Four others accused in the case are CCC Chief Engineer Moktar Alam and Engineer Abul Hasanat and truck dealers Sajjad Hossain and Alamgir Hossain.

In the case, the ACC director alleged that the mayor in connivance with the CCC engineers and truck dealers has purchased six old trucks showings new.

CCC Engineer Abul Hasanat, arrested by the joint forces last month on charge of pilferage of fuel oil, is now in jail.

Ex-BNP MP

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were, however, surrendered to the police later on February 14.

Abul Hossain initially avoided appearing before the court but surrendered in the middle of trial of the case on May 20.

No procession

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President Iajuddin Ahmed, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed and chiefs of three services will pay tribute by placing wreath at the grave of late president Ziaur Rahman on May 30.

Earlier on March 17, the chief adviser visited Bangabandhu complex at Tungipara to pay tribute to the Father of the Nation on his birth anniversary.

"Since BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has special security cover, 12 to 20 leaders of BNP will be allowed to accompany her to offer fataha at the grave of Ziaur Rahman," Law Adviser Mainul Hossain yesterday told the reporters after a law and order advisory committee meeting at law ministry.

"Other leaders and activists can also go to the mazar by maintaining discipline. But nobody would be allowed to carry posters or festoons," he said.

Earlier, BNP sought permission from the authorities concerned for holding a discussion meeting and bringing procession to mark the death anniversary of its founder.

Khaleda Zia was scheduled to attend the discussion.

Global corruption

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GCR 2007 simultaneously from Dhaka, London and Berlin. Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) released the report at a roundtable discussion held at Biam Multipurpose Auditorium with its senior trustee Prof Khan Sarwar Murshid in the chair.

TIB treasurer M Hafizuddin Khan moderated the session while Executive Director Dr Iftekharuzzaman presented the GCR 2007.

Among others, Justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury, Justice KM Sobhan, Prof Moniruzzaman Mian, Justice Abdur Rouf, Justice Golam Rabbani, Awami League Presidium Member Suranjit Sengupta, Col (ret) Shawkat Ali, Dr Enamul Haque and Taleya Rehman spoke.

"Two thirds of the people who used a court in 2004 paid bribes, with the typical bribe amounting to 25 percent of average annual income," the report says, adding that judicial reform is underway but unfolding slowly and sometimes with limited effect.

It also said, "77 Supreme Court justices and 750 other judges cover a population of nearly 150 million and the salary structure for the judges in the countryside is insufficient, and discourages capable people from joining the judiciary."

According to the report, "Judicial corruption erodes the foundation of the society as it allows criminals to go unpunished, destroying effective governance and democratic participation. It diminishes trade and economic growth also."

"Ordinary people suffer from judicial corruption as demanding bribes for a speedy trial erodes the rule of law and undermines confidence in the justice system," the report says, adding that an impartial judiciary must be based on transparency.

"Judicial and prosecutorial appointments and removals must be transparent, independent of the executive and legislative branches and based on experience and performance," the TI report says.

The TI recommended that journalists must be able to monitor and comment on legal proceedings freely, bringing reliable information on laws, propose changes in the legislations, court procedures and judgements to the public.

"The prosecution must conduct judicial proceedings in public and publish reasons for decisions," the TI suggested.

Suggesting the set up of "elders council" that would be composed of three former chief justices to appoint justices, former chief justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury said corruption has taken a turn into "blood cancer" and it would not be eradicated if nepotism, favouritism are not stopped.

He also said, "The chief justice should be provided with more power so that he can take actions against the corrupt people in judiciary," adding that judges should be given the opportunity to work independently.

"The chief justice should also be strong in keeping the district judges corruption free," the former chief justice observed rejecting any links between corruption and the provision to make former chief justices the chief of caretaker government.

Emphasising the need for "human quality" improvement of the judges, Prof Khan Sarwar Murshid said judges should be provided proper training.

He also said the judiciary should be a self-regulating body and a responsible press might act as the guardian.

"No institution can sustain ignoring the society but many things were done in last 20 years keeping the people in the dark," he said.

Calling on finding out ways to remove the inefficient justices, Justice KM Sobhan said systematic changes are necessary in the judiciary and the Bar Council should get more power and salaries of the judges should be increased.

At this point Suranjit Sengupta

said, "I hope the chief justice will write for forming Supreme Judicial Council without making any delay."

"Elders Council might be formed if there was no legal complexity or the decision might come from the people," he said regarding the removal procedure of a judge. He said everyone should work together to make the society corruption-free.

Prof Moniruzzaman Mian also asked for bringing changes in the system and said judges' appointment system is the root of all evils so it should be changed.

Justice Abdur Rouf stressed "human quality" of all involved in the judicial process to eradicate corruption and also developing the judicial system.

Justice Golam Rabbani stressed the need for strengthening local government institutions to eliminate corruption from all levels of society.

Recommendations of TI: The TI in its recommendations to strengthen judicial independence and fight judicial corruption said an independent judicial appointment body should be at the heart of the judicial selection process and judicial appointments should be merit based, with clear and well-publicised election criteria and candidates should have competence and integrity. The civil society should be consulted on the merit of candidates.

"Judicial salaries should reflect experience, performance and professional development, protection to safeguard salaries and working conditions and judicial transfer should be based on objective criteria," the report said.

According to the report, judges should receive limited immunity for actions relating to judicial duties, an independent body should rigorously investigate allegations against judges and the removal process should be transparent and fair.

BB seeks

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through personal accounts, joint accounts and accounts of concerned business enterprises, beginning from the opening of the accounts till date.

Earlier the National Taskforce on Combating Corruption and Crime declared names of 50 corruption suspects officially and other 50 unofficially. As it is undertaking more investigation, new names other than these, would be included in its list, sources said.

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) sources said that it will file cases against the suspects only if it can collect adequate proofs supporting the allegations against them.

"Asking the account details of the corruption suspects is part of this process," an ACC official said requesting anonymity.

Muggers shoot

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money from the Satmasjid Road branch of NCC Bank.

As the three came out of the bank at about 11:30am and was approaching their car parked in front of the bank, two muggers in a motorbike arrived the scene and tried to grab the briefcase containing the money from Rusho, witnesses said. Two more youths in another motorbike were guarding the criminals from a distance, they added.

As Rusho tried to resist the muggers, they shot him in the head point blank and made off with the briefcase.

He was rushed to Bangladesh Medical College and Hospital in Dhanmondi where the doctors declared him dead.

"None at home knew that Rusho went there as he left home in the morning saying that he was going to Uttara," said Shahid Hasan Ratan, a relative of the dead, over phone.

Joynal Abedin, who fell ill following the incident, filed a murder case with Dhanmondi Police Station accusing four unknown criminals.

AL starts

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As part of its move, the AL yesterday sought information from the US, UK, Australia and the EU about funding of political parties and elections in those countries.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil yesterday sent separate letters to diplomatic missions of those countries in Dhaka seeking that information. He also made telephone calls to the missions and received positive response in this regard, sources said.

"Politics cannot be transparent without transparent funding. We will seek funds for election-related expenditures from the Election Commission and funds from the government for the party's operation," a close aide to the AL chief said.

The AL high command is also working on how to make a database comprising all workers of the party. The party will prepare a list of all its leaders and members with their photographs and they will be given identity cards.

Meanwhile, the AL president and former prime minister has already instructed senior party leaders and members of its advisory council also to prepare separate draft proposals for party reforms.

Party chief Sheikh Hasina has requested the central leaders to come up with their individual ideas and opinions on party reforms in black and white. We will analyse those at the party central working committee meeting following lifting of ban on indoor politics," Jalil told reporters yesterday.

Sources close to Hasina told this correspondent that she is sincerely trying to reform her party by strengthening internal democracy, bringing transparency in party funding and modernising the system of induction of members into the party.

In recent times, political leaders, members of the civil society, the EC and some advisers to the caretaker government have stressed reforming political parties to institutionalise internal democracy and transparency in their functioning.

Hasina is regularly consulting party leaders and others concerned on taking collective decisions, holding party councils in time, establishing accountability at all levels and taking actions against corrupt and criminal party members.

"She has instructed us to give in writing our suggestions and views on reforms," said a senior AL leader who met her a couple of days ago.

Changes will be made in the party constitution if considered necessary in the present context. The party is ready to get registered with the EC, he added.

Taking to The Daily Star, some district leaders of the AL said they also have suggested the party chief to bring reforms in the party to meet the demand of time. And she asked them to be united to face any challenge, they said.

Two bombs

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recovered at a bus stop shed near the main gate.

A police bomb expert team led by Sub-inspector (SI) Alamgir Hossain defused the bombs.

The four-line message inscribed on the aluminium plate mentioned that there were six bombs in total in the area, sources said.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and Special Branch of police cordoned the entire RUET campus off. They searched the area until 2:00pm but could not find any other devices, which were claimed to be present in the message.

"All the three bombs are similar and locally made, these were sufficient to cause large number of casualties," SI Alamgir told The Daily Star.

The same electric circuit, four pieces of IC (integrated circuits), four batteries, electric switches and explosives of Tuesday's bomb were used to make the bombs, described the bomb expert. More than 200 bicycle bearing balls, parts of barbed wire, pieces of glass were used as splinters in one bomb, he added.

2nd Test

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staging five one-day internationals so far.

The Tigers think-tank are looking forward to fielding three seamers and drop left-arm spinner Enamul Haque in favour of left-arm pacesman Syed Raseel. Bangladesh added an additional seamer in the squad when they drafted in Mohammad Sharif as cover for fast bowler Shahadat Hossain, who has been suffering from cold.

The team management, however, was hopeful that the lanky pacer, who along with his senior new ball partner Mashrafe Bin Mortaza put the much-vaunted Indian batting under pressure, will be available for the match.

The match also gives veteran left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique the opportunity to achieve a double. He needs just nine more runs to reach 1,000 runs in the five-day game. He also needs nine more wickets to become the first Bangladesh bowler to claim 100 Test victims.

On the other hand, buoyed by Anil Kumble's return to training, India made their intentions clear by sticking to fielding five bowlers.

Right-arm pacer VVR Singh was left out along with Yuvraj Singh and VVS Laxman as uncapped pacer Ishant Sharma was included in the 12-man team.

Depending on the state of the pitch on the morning of the Test, India will decide if the fifth bowler would be a spinner or a pacer.

INDIA (from): Wasim Jaffer, Dinesh Karthik, Rahul Dravid, Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly, Mahendra Dhoni, Anil Kumble, Rajesh Pwari, Zaheer Khan, Pr Singh, Ishant Sharma and Ramesh Powar.

BANGLADESH (from): Javed Omar, Shahriar Nafees, Habibul Bashar, Mohammad Ashraful, Rajin Saleh, Shakib Al Hasan, Khaled Mashud, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Mohammad Rafique, Shahadat Hossain, Enamul Haque, Syed Raseel, Fushar Imran, Mehrob Hossain and Mohammad Sharif.

Board conflict leads

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CRP (FCRP).

The new board and the then CEO--former foreign secretary CM Shafi Sami (he resigned in July 2006)--made a radical change to the organisational structure and procedures, seeking to leave Taylor on the sidelines as they believed "she was ignorant of management techniques and how to administer a large organisation."

Though both acting CEO Albert Mollah and Managing Trustee CM Shafi Sami maintain that there is "no effort to sideline Valerie," Mollah admits, "She (Taylor) no longer has any executive power in the organisation."

In the CRP organogram drawn up after Sami's arrival, the role of the coordinator/adviser is described as one who would work in tandem with the CEO, but would not supersede it. The organogram also mentions that an adviser must remember that the CEO is not bound to pay attention to his/her recommendations.

A trustee member, however, told The Daily Star, "If she is so incompetent then how come she built up such a large organisation that has received global recognition."

From a tiny organisation that started out in an abandoned warehouse behind Dhaka's Suhrawardy Hospital in 1979, the CRP now employs 462 people at its Savar centre and has an annual budget of Tk 10-12 crore.

Founded by Taylor, a British physiotherapist, it has grown under her stewardship for 27 years. Through mobilising funds from overseas, she has expanded the organisation's capacity from providing medical care to rehabilitating and reintegrating the disabled people into the mainstream society.

The current stand-off that has resulted from the two sides swapping accusations with Taylor stuck in between has seriously jeopardised fundraising for the centre which is the one of its kind in Bangladesh and provides services for over 600 patients a day.

"I am concerned about the organisation. I'm very concerned for the poor people who have to sacrifice so much just to come to the CRP," said Taylor who draws a monthly salary of Tk 7,500 for her work at the CRP.

A CRP staff preferring anonymity said, "I believe the organisation can suffer if this situation is not handled properly. I hope we can get to resolve this as soon as possible for the sake of the patients themselves."

START OF DIFFERENCES Although the differences did not emerge until the middle of 2005, the seeds were sown at the end of 2004.