

ACC to ask 21

FROM PAGE 1
BNP's MAH Selim alias Silver Selim-and-ward commissioner and film star Monwar Hossain Dipol will be served with the notice.

Of the public servants and professionals AFM Monjurul Islam, ex-chief engineer of Public Works Department, Munshi Anwarul Islam, former chief forest conservator, Shahidullah Khan, additional inspector general of police, Prof Mahfuzur Rahman, member of Public Service Commission, and Dr AZM Zahid Hossain, general secretary of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) and a leader of pro-BNP doctors association.

Three businessmen—Obaidul Karim of Orion Group, AK Azad of Hamim Group and Editor and Publisher of the Daily Janakantha Atiquzzaman Khan Masud—too will be asked to turn in wealth statements.

Shamim Iskandar used to be a technical officer at Bangladesh Biman. He had immigrated to Canada with his family in January. Later, he returned to Dhaka to submit his resignation but could not yet leave.

After a meeting at the ACC yesterday, its Chairman Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury told the press, "The notices will be served as soon as possible. We have completed all formalities to that end. The recipients will be given seven days to produce wealth statement."

Without disclosing the names, he said, "The ACC believes the source of wealth of these people is not honest. If they can prove otherwise, there will be no action against them. But we will sue them if we have enough proof that they are dishonest."

The ACC sources said that the list was prepared on the basis of a preliminary investigation that gave the commission reasons to believe that they have amassed quite a fortune through illegal means.

Various taskforces under the national coordination committee to combat corruption and crime submitted findings of their inquiries to the ACC on April 20.

The 21 will have to submit their statements to ACC Secretary Delwar Hossain. Unlike the last time, the ACC will not require them to hand in the statements in person. "The ACC rules do not oblige one to do so," said a source.

Earlier on February 18, the anti-graft body asked 50 graft suspects to give in their wealth statements to it within 72 hours. The names came from 420 people listed as graft suspects in February.

Citing the ACC as a source, different national dailies published a second list of 50 corruption suspects on March 8. The latest 21 names derive from there.

Hasan Mashhud yesterday observed, "The list will expand further. Don't think this is the end."

The commission has filed at least two dozens of cases against the first 50 graft suspects. "They will submit charge sheets in six to seven cases within May 31."

Paltan killings

FROM PAGE 16
the matter following a petition by the investigation officer (IO).

The court had also directed the IO to probe the matter and fixed today for submission of the report.

On April 11, Criminal Investigation Department pressed charges against Hasina, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil, Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haque Inu and 42 others for killing five Jamaat-e-Islami activists and injuring several others.

BNP reforms

FROM PAGE 1

The Awami League has already started working for preparing comprehensive proposals for reforms in the party as well as the electoral system. A team of eight top AL leaders headed by their President Sheikh Hasina is analysing the party constitution, funding and electoral systems and funding of parties in countries like the USA, the UK, Australia and India.

But the BNP policymakers are waiting for formal discussion in the party forum after the withdrawal of the restriction on indoor politics.

"So far as I know, no formal move was initiated for reforms in the party. I believe, all of us will sit together to discuss reforms once the ban on indoor politics is lifted," BNP Standing Committee Member Lt Gen (retd) Mahbubur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said it is the right time for reforming the party to practise democracy within it.

He described the BNP chairperson's remarks as very positive. Khaleda had said, "We will begin working towards [bringing reforms in the party] once the ban on indoor politics is withdrawn."

A number of senior BNP leaders have already demanded amendment to the party constitution for the kidnap and murder of dozens of police.

Thousands of US troop reinforcements have flooded into Diyalal as part of the broader so-called "surge strategy" to quell fighting in the Baghdad region.

TV channels

FROM PAGE 16

The cases set to see charge sheets include the ones against former BNP minister Nazmul Huda, ex-BNP lawmaker Wadud Bhuiyan, Awami League leader Pankaj Debnath, and trade union leader Firoze Mia, said sources.

The ACC has finalised a plan to appoint 31 senior lawyers to represent it at the court in the long term. "If they agree, the commission will soon finalize their appointments. If any of them stand against the ACC on any case, his or her name will be dropped from our panel," Mashhud said.

The commission has so far won three cases against Harris Chowdhury, Shamim Osman and Joyal Hazari. The three were tried in absentia.

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Israel pledges more strikes on Hamas

AP, Jerusalem

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert yesterday pledged more attacks on Hamas after a rocket from Gaza killed an Israeli, and brushed aside efforts by Egypt and Palestinian moderates to negotiate a new truce. "No one is immune," Olmert said of Hamas.

The 11-day campaign of Israeli airstrikes aimed at halting rocket attacks from Gaza killed 49 Palestinians, most of them militants. But the rocket fire has continued, and Hamas said its attacks would continue as long as the Israeli airstrikes persist.

Another rocket slammed into the southern Israeli town of Sderot early Sunday, killing a 36-year-old computer technician as he was driving. It was the second fatal rocket attack in less than a week.

Olmert told the weekly meeting of his Cabinet Sunday that he had instructed the army to do whatever it takes to halt the rocket fire. "There will be no limit in acting against the terror groups and against those who are responsible for the terror. No one is immune," Olmert said.

In the private segment of the Cabinet meeting, Olmert also seemed cool to efforts by Egypt and moderate Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to negotiate a new cease-fire, according to a participant, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the meeting was closed.

Olmert acknowledged that there is no quick military solution to halting the crude Qassam rockets, which have baffled Israel's high-tech army for years. He told his ministers to be prepared for a long-term conflict. "We don't want to create unrealistic expectations that it's possible to stop the Qassams totally," Olmert said.

The participant in the Cabinet meeting said the ministers did not discuss targeting Hamas' political leaders or launching a large-scale ground operation in Gaza.

Dayaganj building

FROM PAGE 16

front, was one of the syndicated contractors of the DCC that used to control all tenders of the city corporation.

Khoka, the city father, said the contractor might have political affiliation but he is not a prominent leader.

The two-part building was designed for 60 families. The northern part of the building was meant for 30 families. The construction work of the building was completed recently and was supposed to have the first families move in on June 3.

US troops free

FROM PAGE 16

mistrreatment ranging from broken bones and bruises to heat injuries caused by being held with insufficient water, he said.

Some of the prisoners had been held for several months.

"It was evident that they were extremely overjoyed to see us," Donnelly said, adding that the camp had been found after a local tip, something he saw as a good sign in an area traditionally suspicious of the Americans.

"It is a growing trend that we hope will be sustained, particularly in that part of Diyalal, which for us is a very focused effort to secure the population and bring some security to the people in Baquba," he said.

Baquba is the capital of the lawless province of Diyalal and part of a belt of violent towns around Baghdad where Sunni insurgents, Shi'ite militias and security forces are locked in a vicious three-way battle.

al-Qaeda is particularly strong in the area, and has been accused of a number of brutal attacks on local civilians, while it has itself claimed responsibility for the kidnap and murder of dozens of police.

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Voter list

FROM PAGE 1

from them the rights they are supposed to have where freedom of access to information is concerned.

No one raised any question when a few channels were barred from downlink and transmitting over questions of morality, said several viewers.

The government decision also drew sharp reactions from rural areas as cable operators there do not have the ability to transmit pay channels.

Foreign citizens working in the capital, including those from Korea, Pakistan, and Germany, also expressed their dissatisfaction over the government's decision.

Viewers could watch only 30-35 channels instead of 70-80 channels after the government decision to take legal actions against downlink and transmission of unapproved TV channels in the country.

Enumerators will distribute voter registration forms to collect particulars about prospective voters by going from door to door. But prospective voters will have to visit the voter registration centres to have their photographs taken, the CEC said.

"One's name can be on the voter list without an accompanying photograph, but he or she will not get a national identity card until his or her photograph is submitted," he said adding, "We will also try to collect their photographs for the voter list."

The CEC categorically said there will be only one voter list prepared containing the names of voters whose photographs will be attached and also of those whose photographs will not be.

The existing laws do not allow a separate list, the CEC said.

Election Commissioner Sahul Hossain said they hope that the number of people, who might express reluctance to have their photographs taken, will be very small. "Besides, we will keep convincing them to visit the voter registration centres to have their photographs taken for the voter list," he told The Daily Star last night.

The CEC termed the 18-month timeframe for preparing simultaneously the voter list with photographs and national identity cards as broad timeframe.

"We will be able to give a clear picture about the timeframe required for preparing the voter list after the completion of the pilot project by June," the CEC said.

In the EC's original plan, six months were allocated for taking preparations and according to that plan, the field level task of preparing the voter list was supposed to begin from November. But the EC later readjusted that the field level work will start in August in a bid to save time. The EC also decided to increase the number of field level teams from 8,000 to 12,000, who will carry out the task across the country in phases.

Asked whether the budget for the project will be increased as the

number of teams already has, the CEC said the cost will not go up as a lesser amount of time will be required due to the deployment of additional teams.

"Perhaps, it would have taken 10 months if we had deployed 8,000 teams. Now it might require 8 months if 12,000 teams are deployed to do the job," CEC Huda said.

BAN ON INDOOR POLITICS

The CEC said they will not ask the government again to lift the ban on indoor politics. "We have already asked the government," said Huda, who on April 4 at a meeting with the law adviser asked the government to lift the ban on indoor politics to allow the EC to hold talks with political parties on electoral reforms.

Asked about his meeting with the chief adviser, Huda said, "I have already talked to him about the issue.

"I don't want to say anything about it. My two colleagues and I have already talked about it," he quipped.

Asked whether he discussed the issue with the CA during their Saturday's meeting, he said, "I have already talked to him about the issue.

UPAZILA ELECTION OFFICERS

Asked about 303 controversial upazila election officers who took an exam on May 18 to prove their merit, the CEC said results of the test have yet to be ready for publication. "It's not true," the CEC said when his attention was drawn to news published in some national dailies that most of the examinees flunked the test.

In the case, the complainant alleged that Mamun had extorted Tk 4.89 crore from him on different dates in cash and cheque from 2004 to 2006.

He said the EC will consider the humanitarian aspects in deciding the fate of the controversial election officers.

Judicial body

FROM PAGE 1

importance with the separation of the judiciary from the executive control.

The president called upon them to discharge their duties with "maximum sincerity and honesty" in appointing eligible and meritorious assistant judges to the judiciary.

He also laid emphasis on imparting training to the newly appointed judges.

Judge Ruhul Amin stressed the need for constructing permanent infrastructure for the commission and sought the president's cooperation in its activities.

The president assured them of extending overall support.

Commission members Justice Sayed Rafat Ahmed, Justice M Emdadul Huq, Barrister Fida M Kamal, Justice Sirajul Islam, Ali Ashraf Khan Lody, Professor Dr Begum Asma Siddiqua and AKM Ishaq Hussain were present during the meeting.

Military Secretary to the president Maj Gen M Aminul Karim, President's Secretary M Sirajul Islam and BJSC Secretary M Ataur Rahman were also present.

Dhaka-Kolkata

FROM PAGE 1

distance between Shialdaha and the Bangladeshi border is 120 kilometres while the length of the rail track in Bangladesh territory is 418 kilometres.

A 10-coach train with the capacity of carrying a total of 760 passengers will commence everyday. The train will start at 7:45am from Bangladesh towards India and at 7:00am from Shialdaha to Bangladesh.

"If immigration checks are conducted at the station then it will take eight hours to reach Kolkata. But if the check is conducted at the border, then it will take no less than 11 hours," said Shafiqul Alam Khan.

"But decisions are not finalised yet. If both governments agree then the decisions will be finalised at a joint meeting," Shafiqul said.

Bangladesh crews on board a train will ride up to the border and will come back on board the train coming from India, while the Indian crews will come to the border and go back with the passengers going to India.

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