

AL runs on subscription, not extortion
Says Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said Awami League is a people-oriented political party, not a business organisation, which runs on subscriptions of party's leaders, workers and sympathisers.

"We don't do business but do politics for the welfare of the people. So, the donation and assistance that we receive from our

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ACC to probe graft allegations against its staff

UNB, Dhaka

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has decided to constitute an internal committee to investigate allegations of corruption against its own staff.

"An important decision was taken today... As per the ACC Rules 2007, we should have an internal

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EC moves to free its secretariat from PMO

Sends proposal to CA in couple of days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) is to send a proposal to the chief adviser within a couple of days to promulgate an ordinance in order to free the EC Secretariat from the control of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), an election commissioner said.

"A draft proposal is being prepared for this and will be sent to the chief adviser within a couple of days," Election Commissioner Sahul Hossain disclosed the EC's new move to reporters at his office yesterday.

"The constitution cannot be amended since no parliament exists now. So, it will have to be done through promulgating an ordinance," he said when asked whether any amendments to the constitution were required for this.

However, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda on April 26 said the government does not want to separate the EC Secretariat from the PMO, now

the Chief Adviser's Office, as it requires amendment to the constitution. Since then, there has been a debate whether an amendment to the constitution is actually required.

Amid growing debate on the issue, the EC wanted to seek the opinions of legal experts but later decided to go ahead with the ordinance promulgation proposal.

"We will also examine whether the secretariat can be separated from the PMO through promulgating an ordinance or amending the rules of business," Sahul said. "The government wants the Election Commission Secretariat to be separated," Sahul added.

The EC is an independent constitutional body but its secretariat is under the control of the PMO. There has been a demand for its separation from the PMO in the wake of widespread allegations of political interference in the EC Secretariat's job.

When asked how the EC would hold talks with political parties on

electoral reforms if the embargo on indoor politics was not withdrawn, the election commissioner said they are optimistic about holding talks with political parties.

"Wait and see," the election commissioner said.

"We will discuss with political parties, if it is possible. We, however, have received significant feedback from eminent personalities of the civil society and journalists on the draft proposals for electoral reforms," Sohul said, adding, "Besides, we have earlier talked with some political parties when they called on the new Election Commission."

A day before announcing the draft proposals for electoral reforms, the CEC at a meeting with the law adviser on April 4 urged the government to withdraw the embargo on indoor politics allowing the EC to hold talks with political parties.

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Canada wants polls as soon as possible
Envoy says after meeting Mainul

UNB, Dhaka

Canadian High Commissioner Barbara Richardson yesterday said her country encourages the caretaker government to hold election as soon as possible as Bangladesh people want to return to a sustainable democracy.

Talking to reporters after meeting with Law and Information Adviser Mainul Hossain at his office, she said, "We are looking at everything that is happening here positively... We're following all the events with great interest."

Asked her comment on whether democracy and state of emergency can move together, Richardson said the people of Bangladesh will have to decide it.

"We focused our discussion on issues under the law ministry like separation of Judiciary and also discussed other issues of the information ministry," she said.

A press release of the information ministry said matters relating to bilateral issues and recent reform programme of the caretaker

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Awami League leader Abdul Jalil being taken to his hospital bed after medical check-up at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital yesterday.

Squad for SL tour named

SPORTS REPORTER

Mahmudullah Riyad was the only fresh inclusion in Bangladesh's squad to tour Sri Lanka in June-July for three Tests and as many one-day internationals.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) yesterday named a 15-member Test squad and five additional players who would join the one-day series.

The 21-year old off-spinning all-rounder Riyad, who hails from Mymensingh, was included in the additional list along with Aftab Ahmed, Tamim Iqbal, Tushar Imran and Forhad Reza, who will join the team in the island on completion of the Test series.

The selectors, however, will wait till the Test series to decide who would return.

Former captain Habibul Bashar, who stepped down as one-day captain but wished to continue as a player, retained his place in the Test side. Two changes have been made from the previous Test squad against India with middle-order batsman Tushar and left-arm spinner Enamul Haque dropped to make way for wicket-keeper cum batsman Mushfiqur Rahim and Abdur Razzak.

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Firefighters trying to tame the blaze at Chinese cargo ship MV Jin Cheng in Chittagong Port yesterday.

UN offers help to recover laundered assets

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The visiting UN counter-terrorism team yesterday offered technical support in recovering laundered assets from overseas and help Bangladesh Bank's (BB) coordination with other central banks' financial intelligence units (FIU).

The 11-member UN delegation head, Sergey Kerev, who is also assessment and technical assistance director of the counter-terrorism committee (CTC), informed the media of this offer after he met BB Governor Salehuddin Ahmed.

The high-powered delegation were given a presentation on counter-terror strategies at the Police Headquarters.

They also met the director general of Bangladesh Rifles, and the

attorney general, to gain an understanding of counter-terror law and their enforcement.

The delegation is set to meet intelligence agencies, the Anti-Corruption Commission, port administrators, the UN resident coordinator, bankers association and the NGO Affairs Bureau today.

Sources said the delegation has been looking into terror funding through various channels, including NGOs suspected of being used for militant activities. Notably, the NGO Affairs Bureau on May 6 cancelled the registration of controversial Kuwait-based NGO, Revival of Islamic Heritage Society, which is suspected of funding militancy.

The delegation is also looking into how to better coordinate

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Proposal to hike power tariff again suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Advisers Committee on Economic Affairs yesterday deferred a proposal for a further hike in electricity price and instead formed a high-level committee to review the power tariff situation first.

"We have asked for more scrutiny of the power ministry proposal as it might cause problems for the subscribers," Finance and Planning Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam told reporters after the meeting.

He said the committee headed by Energy and Power Adviser Tapan Chowdhury would examine the possible effects of price rises and submit a detailed report.

"The gap between production and selling cost of power is widening, and the government has to provide huge subsidies for the power sector," the finance adviser

said adding that the proposal sought to adjust the production cost and selling price and reduce the subsidies.

Power Adviser Tapan Chowdhury, who also attended the meeting, said his committee is likely to report back within a month. The present caretaker government has already increased the electricity tariffs by 5 percent with effect from March 1, 2007.

The advisory committee at yesterday's meeting de-listed six state-owned petroleum companies from the privatisation proposal. The companies left out are Padma Oil, Jamuna Oil, Meghna Petroleum, Liquefied Petrogas Company, Eastern Lubricant, and Standard Asiatic Company.

The meeting also decided to offload 30 percent shares of the companies in the stock market.

These companies were put on the list of the Privatisation Commission for a sell-off during the BNP-led alliance government.

Sources said the power ministry submitted the proposal for one-day rise in power price in consultation with the finance ministry. The proposal was drawn up in the light of the donors' condition that different ventures will have to be turned profitable if the country is to receive their assistance for the development of power sector.

But the government policymakers fear that a further hike at this time would mean more trouble for the people who already face an increased cost of living, said sources.

"The government is in fact

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Chinese ship catches fire at Ctg port

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A Chinese cargo ship caught fire yesterday morning at Chittagong Port leaving one of its crew hurt and the officers' cabins gutted.

Laden with cargoes like paper rolls, CR coils and steel plates, MV Jin Cheng, however, escaped extensive damage, thanks to the prompt actions taken by the fire fighting teams of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA), Bangladesh Navy and Fire Brigade.

Chui Dianfang, 44, the chief cook of the ship, was rushed to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) with burn injuries to legs. His burns are not

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82 killed as fighting rages in Sri Lanka

AFP, Colombo

Artillery and mortar battles between government troops and Tamil rebels raged in northern Sri Lanka yesterday, the day before an attempt by top donor Japan to revive the tattered peace process.

The clashes followed on from fierce hand-to-hand battles over the weekend that left 82 combatants dead along the front lines that separate government areas from the mini-state run by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

"The army conceded the territory they had recently captured along the Mannar and Vavuniya defence lines," a top military officer who declined to be named said of Sunday's fighting.

"Security forces were too thinly spread when the Tigers attacked," he said.

The guerrillas, who have been fighting for an independent homeland since 1972, said they had smashed at least four positions, captured weapons and drove off with at least two army vehicles, including an armoured personnel carrier.

Both sides offered conflicting accounts and casualty figures, but agreed that it was the bloodiest fighting in recent months.

The Tigers claimed that they killed 30 soldiers and placed their own losses at 18, while the military claimed to have killed at least 52 Tigers and placed their own losses at 10 killed and 20 wounded.

However, military sources said both suffered several times more than they were publicly admitting and the total number of casualties

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Judgement in Mamun's graft case Thursday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court dealing with graft cases yesterday fixed next Thursday for delivery of the verdict of a case filed by Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) against Giasuddin Al Mamun. The case was filed in connection with not submitting the wealth statement to the ACC in defiance of the commission's notice.

Following the closing arguments of prosecution and defence lawyers the Fifth Special Court Judge Ashraf Hossain fixed the date for the delivery of the judgment of the case.

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Iran ready to resist West on nukes
Warns Khamenei

AFP, Tehran

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warned Western powers yesterday that Iran was prepared to "pay a price" and "resist" in the intensifying global standoff over its nuclear programme.

In a speech marking the 18th anniversary of the death of Iran's revolutionary founder Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Khamenei scoffed at the notion of Iran "begging" to Western powers to allow its nuclear drive to continue.

"The only way for a nation to realise its rights is vigilant resistance. They should be alert, recognise their rights and insist on it," Khamenei told thousands packed into Khomeini's shrine in the southern outskirts of Tehran.

"A nation that wants to reach independence must pay a price. If it wants to preserve its rights against bullies, then it has to pay a price," said Khamenei to chants of "nuclear energy is our natural right" and "death to America".

"It cannot sit in a corner and expect development and progress," he added.

Khamenei's speech comes at a crucial moment in the crisis over Iran's nuclear programme, with the United States and Western powers pushing for a third set of UN sanctions to punish Tehran for its nuclear defiance.

Iran has infuriated the West by refusing to suspend uranium enrichment, a process Europe and the United States fear could be used to make nuclear weapons and want Tehran to suspend immediately.

"Iranians should not beg for their right to obtain nuclear energy. They should not beg to the domineering world powers. This is not the way of an independent and free nation," Khamenei added.

The United States accuses Iran of seeking nuclear weapons, a charge vehemently denied by Tehran, which says it wants only to generate energy. Washington has never ruled out the use of force to make Iran heed the Security Council's ultimatum.

Work on Padma Bridge to start in FY 2008-09
Donors so far pledged \$1b, says adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The construction work of the Padma Bridge will commence in 2008-09 fiscal year with three donor agencies having so far committed to provide around \$1 billion as project loan to the government.

This was disclosed at a meeting at communications ministry with its Adviser MA Matin in the chair yesterday.

The donors are the World Bank (WB), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Japan Bank of International Co-operation (JBIC).

The government has planned to construct the bridge spending Tk 8,588 crore out of which Tk 5,883 crore would come as project loan from the donors and the rest from the government fund, meeting sources said.

Earlier, Japan International Co-operation Agency (Jica) conducted a survey and recommended Mawa-Jajira point as the most suitable place for constructing the bridge.

The length of the bridge with four lanes would be around 5.58

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Special court to take up Nasim's WorldTel case


UNB, Dhaka

The special judge's court, trying high-profile corruption suspects, will take up the WorldTel scam case against former post and telecommunications minister Mohammad Nasim on Wednesday for charge hearing.

According to the case, Nasim, now in jail, by abusing power allowed WorldTel Holdings Consociates Limited to install

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Prayer Timing		
June 5		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-05	4-40
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-45	6-50
Esha	8-15	8-45
Source: Islamic Foundation		



A file photo shows a glacier on the Himalayas melting away fast.

FILE PHOTO

Himalayan glaciers may go in 50 years

Fear experts

AFP, Kathmandu

Himalayan glaciers are retreating fast and could disappear within the next 50 years, experts warned yesterday at a conference in Nepal's capital looking at the regional effects of global warming.

The melting ice fields have also caused a dramatic increase in the number and size of glacial lakes that now risk bursting and devastating mountain communities, delegates at the conference said.

"If temperatures continue to rise as it is, then there will be no snow and ice in the Himalayas in 50 years time," said Surendra Shrestha, the regional director

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