

AL monitoring voter listing scheme closely

Says Hasina
UNB, Dhaka

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her party is closely monitoring the process of preparing national identity card plus voter list with photographs.

She made the remark to the reporters after visiting ailing Sahib Uddin alias Suruj Mia, a classmate of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, at his Paltan residence in the capital.

Hasina talked to Suruj Mia, took some notes about his school life with Bangabandhu and inquired about his health.

Journalist Zahirul Haq no more

BSS, Dhaka

Noted journalist and former director general of external publicity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Zahirul Haq died of heart attack in Dhaka yesterday. He was 62.

Zahirul, a former secretary general of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and

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CHANDPUR POWER PROJECT

Blacklisted Harbin set to get deal

SHARIER KHAN

Power Development Board (PDB) is set to sign a deal with controversial and blacklisted Chinese company Harbin Power Engineering (HPE) on June 12 for setting up 150 megawatt Chandpur Power Project Phase-1.

Sources said to steer out of controversy the government-owned Chinese company has mounted pressure on fellow government-owned company CMEC to withdraw its allegations against Harbin.

The CMEC had accused the PDB of siding with Harbin in Chandpur deal and filed a petition with a review panel of the Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) of the planning ministry. The review panel on October 18, 2005, disqualified Harbin and rejected its Financial Proposal since no Technical Proposal was submitted by it at the second stage.

On February 24 this year, the CMEC submitted a complaint with the chief of the caretaker government. On March 11, the CMEC requested intervention by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) for upholding verdict of the first Review Panel formed by the IMED to investigate irregularities in the project. Another complaint was lodged with the adviser for power on March 29.

None of these letters were responded to and nothing has changed.

Harbin was blacklisted by the Eastern Refinery Ltd (ERL) last year for failing to install and launch a small 3-MW power plant. It had earlier installed and launched the simple cycle 80 MW Tongi power plant with substandard design and machinery, causing the plant to trip more than a hundred times since 2005.

Chandpur project is one of the five controversial power projects that were scrutinised by a technical committee of the caretaker government to detect anomalies in it. The committee in early May cleared the project maintaining that Harbin's performance and dealings were dubious.

The committee headed by former vice-chancellor of Buet Prof Abdul Matin Patwari okayed it since the cabinet of the past BNP-led alliance government had approved it and therefore legalised all bidding anomalies. The committee concluded that Harbin's implementation of Chandpur plant would be strictly monitored and cost of the project would not be increased.

PDB sources said that during investigation, the technical committee was mainly briefed by the same group of PDB people who had violated rules and were identified by the Review Panel for their

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Fishermen return to Kattali in Chittagong from the Bay of Bengal yesterday as danger signal-3 was hoisted there due to a depression over the Bay.

Inadequate parking in skyscraper evokes traffic jam scare

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 25-storey under-construction commercial building adjoining Gulshan-2 intersection in the capital is likely to worsen the existing traffic congestion in the residential area as the building lacks sufficient car parking facility.

The residents of Gulshan face traffic congestion during the busy hours and another large commercial building at the intersection will add to their sufferings, they said.

"How can the authorities approve such a thin and tall building without adequate car parking facilities while the traffic situation here is already bad?" said a resident of Gulshan.

The under-construction multi-storeyed Doreen Tower, to be inaugurated within the next year, has only two basement car parking spaces for 72 cars in total, said engineers working at the site.

But according to the Dhaka Building Construction Regulation-2006 that says there should be parking facility for one car for every 100 square metre of gross area, the building should have parking facility for 139 cars.

"Although they got permission from Rajuk, such a huge building should have at least three floors for car parking," said Shamsur Rahman, authorised officer-2 of Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk).

Besides, the building is nearly 250 feet tall but the aviation authorities do not approve construction of more than 150 feet tall building in the area, he added.

Siddiqui Group Chairman Nure Alam Siddiqui, who is the owner of 'Doreena Tower', said that permission for construction of the building was received from the Building Committee of Rajuk.

He said there will not be any problem as he will not allow more than two cars for offices on each floor.

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This 25-storey building near Gulshan-2 intersection in the capital has parking space for only 72 cars in its two basement floors. Locals fear the building's inadequate car park would contribute to traffic jams in the area.

Woman trampled to death by wild elephants

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Wild elephants trampled a tribal woman to death at village Dhophajuri in Haluaghat, a frontier upazila of the district on Saturday night.

The victim was identified as Alpana Chirang, 25, wife of Abdul Khaleque.

Alpana fell victim as a herd of wild elephants from across the Indian border entered the village at

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Karzai escapes Taliban rocket attack

47 Taliban militants, 2 cops killed in fighting, air raids

AP, Kabul

Taliban militants fired up to six rockets near a gathering where President Hamid Karzai was giving a speech yesterday in central Afghanistan, but no one was hurt, officials said.

The attack happened as clashes and airstrikes in the country's south and northwest left 47 suspected militants and two police dead.

Karzai was giving a speech to the elders and residents of Andar district of Ghazni province when rockets were fired nearby, said Ali Shah Ahmadzai, provincial police chief.

Witnesses said they heard between four and six rockets fired.

The rockets missed their target, and Karzai continued his speech, calling on the those gathered to remain calm, said Arif Yaqoubi, a local reporter attending the event.

Purported Taliban spokesman Qari Yousef Ahmadi told the Associated Press that Taliban militants were behind the attack. He spoke by satellite phone from an undisclosed location.

Six rockets were fired nearby as Karzai was telling people gathered at a school yard in Andar about government projects to build roads and clinics, Yaqoubi said.

"He briefly stopped his speech, and the people were concerned and worried," Yaqoubi said. "But then Karzai continued by saying, 'Calm down and don't worry.'"

Khial Mohammad, a Ghazni lawmaker also at the event, said that during the speech "we heard the sounds of rockets whizzing over our heads" before slamming in the distance.

"The programme went on as scheduled. Nothing was stopped," said an Afghan government official, who did not want to be named because he was not authorized to speak about the incident. Karzai returned to Kabul afterward, he said.

In northwestern Afghanistan, meanwhile, militants attacked three separate posts Saturday in Murghab district of Badghis province, sparking a six-hour long battle that left 20 suspected Taliban and two police killed, said provincial police chief Gen Mohammad Ayub Naizyar.

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Prof Yunus slams G8 over climate

UNB, Dhaka

Prof Muhammad Yunus has vented his disappointments over the failure of the rich nations of G8 to deal with trade issue effectively and reach a firm decision on climate change, which affects Bangladesh directly.

The Nobel laureate's views came during his live television discussion with German Chancellor Angela Merkel about the outcomes of the G8 Summit, and the role of industrialised nations in combating poverty in the world.

According to a message from Yunus' secretariat, the pioneer of bank lending to the poor noted with disappointment that the MDGs involving the poorer countries were not on the agenda of the G8 forum.

"There's also no firm decision on climate change which affects Bangladesh directly," he said and expressed frustration at the lack of progress on trade.

Bishop Mvume Dandala of South Africa represented Africa at the discussion.

The discussion took place in front of an audience of 5,000 people in Cologne a day after the G8 Summit ended in Heiligendamm.

Professor Yunus shared his experience about Grameen Bank and said Bangladesh is on track to reach the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

He said that G8 and all countries should have a clear roadmap for the elimination of nuclear weapons and all weapons of mass

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STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Energy Adviser Tapan Chowdhury yesterday said the much-awaited coal policy would be finalised by next month.

"Finalisation of the national coal policy is now in the final stage and I hope it will be formalised by the next month," the adviser told a roundtable in Dhaka organised by Energy and Power, a fortnightly energy magazine.

The adviser said experts would decide on the methodology for coal extraction from two choices-- open pit and underground mining.

He said, "No policy will be taken which will go against the interest of the people."

"We welcome all to give their suggestions in formulating the coal and energy policies. We will finalise the policies only after evaluating the opinions," the adviser said.

He said the coal policy would be included in the energy policy.

Tapan emphasised the coal sector's development as demand for power is increasing day by day while supply of gas, the main source for power generation, is plunging gradually.

He viewed that coal is the only alternative source, which can be used for power generation after gas.

Tapan said private sector would get opportunities to sell power to

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IGP talks tough against corrupt policemen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Noor Mohammad yesterday sought cooperation from the people in developing good policing and urged them to be watchful of police activities.

"Protest instantly or inform us if you see any policeman doing anything wrong or unfair... Speak up loud against anything bad they do... Today's problem was created due to keeping mum over the years," he said while addressing a meeting with civil society members at Rajshahi deputy inspector general's conference room.

"A corrupt policeman, whatever position he may hold, will lose his job and land in jail and such elements cannot save themselves from the punishment by lobbying," the IGP said.

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Garro leader Ritchil's body exhumed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Indigenous leader Chalesh Ritchil's body was exhumed yesterday and sent to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital for an autopsy.

Mahfuzur Rahman, additional superintendent of police (North) in Tangail, told The Daily Star that first class Magistrate Siddiqui Rahman was present during the exhumation at Magunthinagar village in Madhupur.

Sources said Sandhya Rani Simsang, Ritchil's wife, along with other family members, local indigenous leaders, Tariqul Islam, additional district magistrate of Tangail, Dr MA Parvez Rahim, upazila nirbahi officer of Madhupur, and Riaz Ahmed, officer in charge of

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A pufferfish, poisonous fish locally known as Potka, was caught in the fishermen's net in the Bay near Cox's Bazar yesterday.

4 of a bridal party killed in bus crash

CU CORRESPONDENT

Four people of a bridal party, including the groom, were killed on the spot when the microbus carrying them collided head-on with a speeding truck on Dhaka-Chittagong Highway at Sonapahar area under Mirsarai upazila yesterday afternoon.

The dead are Mamun, 25, the groom, Aleya, 27, Korban Ali, 30, and Mohammad Shahin, 26.

Five others were also injured critically in the fatal accident. Three of them are identified as Shirin Akhter, 20, the bride, Nurunnahar, 23, and her brother Shah Poran, 18.

The accident occurred at around 3:30pm when the speeding Chittagong-bound truck hit the microbus, damaging it completely.

The injured were sent to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where they were undergoing treatment. Shirin suffered grave injuries to her head, sources said.

The bridal party was returning to the groom's village in Fatikchhari upazila from the house of the bride at Chaitanya Hat in the Mirsarai upazila after joining a post-marital ceremony.

Police seized the truck while the driver managed to flee.

NGO worker abducted for ransom

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A gang of criminals has demanded a Tk1 lakh ransom for the release of an NGO worker they had abducted early yesterday from Kulbaria unit of Nijera Kori, a Jessore based NGO.

The abducted, Ferdous Wahid Pramanik, 35, is a resident branch manager at Kulbaria unit of Nijera Kori, a Jessore based NGO.

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