

Credible polls by end-2008 CA reiterates

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday said the present caretaker government is constitutional and accountable to the people and is moving towards holding a free, fair and credible election by the end of 2008.

The CA made the remarks when US Ambassador Patricia A Butenis made a farewell call on him at his office.

Ahmed told the envoy that his government is committed to a transparent process, freedom of press and the rule of law.

"The government is fully focused on extending all necessary support to the Election Commission for holding the parliamentary elections by the end of 2008," the chief adviser was quoted by an official of the CA's Office as saying.

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4 killed as train rams bus

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Four people were killed and 25 were injured when a speedy train ramed a passenger bus at Dherua Rail Crossing on Dhaka-Tangail Highway at Mirzapur upazila in the district yesterday afternoon.

Of the dead, one was identified as bus passenger Mohammad Sumon, 20, son of Fazlu Miah of Rashid Deohata village of the upazila. The identities of the rest could not be known immediately.

Police and witnesses said that the tragic accident occurred at around 4:30pm as the Rajshahi-bound inter-city train Silk City from Dhaka crashed into the Jamalpur-bound bus from Dhaka at the rail crossing, pushing it into a roadside ditch. One unidentified bus passenger died on the spot immediately.

The train, however, did not stop and continued its journey to Rajshahi.

Local people rescued and sent the injured to Mirzapur Kumudini Hospital. Three of them, including Sumon, 20, died in the hospital.

Among the rest, the condition of 10 was critical, hospital sources said.

Badrul Alam, officer-in-charge (OC) of Mirzapur Police Station, told The Daily Star that it had been raining when the accident happened and there was no signalman at the crossing.

Mirzapur police recovered the bodies and sent them to Tangail General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Hasina has to quit for young leadership

She thinks no 60-plus leader should remain in presidium, working committee; she will be 60 in Sept

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina will have to quit the post of party chief as she yesterday made a dramatic proposal for allowing young leaders to lead the party.

Hasina, who will be 60 this September, gave the proposal through her special aide, according to which no leaders above 60 will be allowed to remain a member of the AL Presidium and Central Working Committee.

"All leaders above the age of 60 will be accommodated in the advi-

sory council of the party," Dr Hasan Mahmud, the aide, told the press after a meeting with Hasina.

Hasan, also AL environment affairs secretary, said the party chief is thinking about the matter and will start discussions after the restriction on indoor politics is lifted.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, a young AL leader said Hasina has already asked younger party leaders to make preparation for the leadership.

"Sheikh Hasina is sincerely desiring a meaningful reform in the party and she wants to encourage

young leadership for better future of the party," said the leader, who keeps regular communication with Hasina.

A few AL leaders observed that through this proposal Hasina has finally disclosed her thoughts on leaving the post of party chief, which she has been holding since 1981.

The AL chief had earlier announced retirement from politics at the age of 57, but refrained

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Mohiuddin to apply to SC for a delayed leave to appeal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

AKM Mohiuddin Ahmed, a condemned killer of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family, will apply to the Supreme Court for allowing him to submit a delayed leave to appeal against the High Court (HC) verdict that upheld his death sentence awarded by the trial court.

However, the ex-army major will have to submit a written explanation along with his application mentioning why he had failed to appeal within the stipulated timeframe of 30 days after the High Court verdict. If the Supreme Court allows it, Mohiuddin will have to submit his leave to appeal through the jail authorities.

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Rupali buyer silent, handover uncertain

No payment, no communication from Prince Bandar

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Stagnancy has gripped the state-owned Ruplai Bank as its prospective buyer, a Saudi prince, apparently stopped communication with the government creating uncertainty about the bank's handing over.

Two local representatives of Prince Bandar Bin Mohammad Bin Abdul Rahman Al-Saud, the highest bidder for this bank, went to Saudi Arabia last week following government pressure to complete the \$458 million deal soon.

"The Privatisation Commission has sent a number of letters to the Saudi prince and talked with him

over telephone asking to make payment but did not get any positive response so far," said a commission source. "Whenever we asked them over telephone to send money, they agreed but did nothing."

Deadlines for making payment already expired with the latest deadline expiring on May 31.

Privatisation Commission Chairman Abu Solaiman Chowdhury could not be contacted for his comment.

The two local representatives of the Saudi prince -- Musa Bin Shamsheer, owner of Datco International, and Frank Peters -- flew to Saudi Arabia on Thursday to persuade him to make quick pay-

ment, sources said.

An official of Datco International yesterday told The Daily Star that Musa Bin Shamsheer is hopeful that they would be able to persuade the prince to pay the money by July.

In February, the government approved a proposal to sell its remaining 26 percent share of Rupali Bank to Prince Bandar for \$128 million, which would give him 93 percent ownership of the bank.

The prince had earlier bought 67 percent share of the bank from the BNP-led coalition government.

Meanwhile, Rupali Bank's

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Reformist BNP leaders in dilemma over Khaleda's fate

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

Pro-reforms leaders of BNP are now in a dilemma whether to keep the party chairperson in place with reduced power or to ask her to quit as the reformists are divided over the issue.

Even though the reformists are working to finalise a draft proposal for reforms they want to have more discussions before finalising the proposals, party insiders said adding that they are likely to take a few more days before disclosing the much anticipated reforms proposal.

The reforms proposal, however, may include rules like no more than one post for one leader, none can occupy a post for more than two terms, committees have to be elected, and curtailing the party chairperson's power.

Many party leaders yesterday met BNP Secretary General Mannan Bhuiyan to talk about what to do with the BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia. Bhuiyan also met party standing committee member Khandaker Mahub Uddin Ahmed to discuss the matter.

Pro-reforms leader Ashraf

Hossain, joint secretary general of BNP and a close aide to Bhuiyan, yesterday said they would disclose the proposal as soon as possible.

Replying to reporters' queries, former whip Ashraf yesterday said, "We do not want a dynasty... We want a democratic system in the party. So, the implementation of reforms is necessary."

"We want to establish the ideals of the party in a democratic way but democracy is non-existent in the party right now," he said after meeting the party secretary general at his Gulshan residence.

Indirectly talking about BNP chief Khaleda Zia, GM Siraj, a former lawmaker from Bogra, said, "If the imam of a mosque cannot lead people in prayers, there is no alternative but to change him."

"I hope she [Khaleda] will perceive the matter and decide considering the interest of the party, not her family," he added.

Selima Rahman, joint secretary general of the party and a close aide to Khaleda Zia, also met Bhuiyan.

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PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Waste from nearby factories pollutes water killing fish cultivated in the flooded Nandipara area on the outskirts of the capital. Two boys collecting the dead fish unaware of health hazards from taking those.

Bombing kills 75 in Baghdad

22 insurgents, 50 civilians killed in fighting

AFP, AP, Baghdad

A massive truck bomb exploded near a Shia mosque in the centre of the Iraqi capital yesterday, killing more than 75 people while 22 insurgents and 50 other people were killed in fighting with US-led forces in southern Iraq.

The bomb ripped through the capital as 10,000 US and Iraqi troops launched a major air and ground assault on al-Qaeda strongholds in the restive Diyala province, the biggest such operation seen in the violence-ridden area.

The explosion, the deadliest in Iraq since mid-April and the latest in

a wave of tit-for-tat attacks against Sunni and Shia mosques, spared the green dome of Al-Kholani mosque in the Sinak area but destroyed its main prayer hall.

Security officials said at least 75 people were killed and 130 others wounded, evacuated to five separate hospitals. The blast left a crater measuring six-metres (20-feet) by three metres, an AFP journalist said.

Police and volunteers pulled burning bodies out of cars while others dug through the pile of rubble to try to find survivors, according to the correspondent at the scene.

Groups of women wailed in the gray dusty air, while others chanted

that the explosion was the work of those who blew up a revered Shia shrine in the northern city of Samarra last Wednesday.

The explosion came just two days after the lifting of a citywide curfew intended to prevent a wave of sectarian Sunni-Shia bloodletting following the Samarra bombing.

Meanwhile, the US military said it had killed 22 alleged insurgents in what it dubbed Operation Arrowhead Ripper as US-led troops supported by helicopters and

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No taskforce to be assigned to probe Hasina's extortion cases

Says adviser Matin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Communications adviser and the chairman of the national coordination committee on checking serious crimes MA Matin yesterday said no taskforce would be assigned to investigate the cases against Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina.

Matin termed the cases 'extortion' cases, not 'corruption' cases, while responding to the reporters' queries.

When asked whether the government is forcing political parties to reform, the adviser said, "It is not a matter of coercion. I don't know whether the government has any intention to impose it."

Worn out, they see no light at end of tunnel

Draft police ordinance holds little relief for low-ranked cops

SHARIFUL ISLAM and EMRAN HOSSAIN

The clock struck 2:00am declaring to the police constable guarding the entrance of a private office at Karwan Bazar in the capital a few days ago that he had been on duty there for 18 hours at a stretch.

Feeling dizzy and unwilling to give his name, the on-duty police constable, who had only two breaks in the day for having his lunch and dinner, lamented about his workload.

"Nobody bothers to think about us, no government cares about us,"

the low ranking law enforcer told this correspondent heaving a big sigh.

Police personnel of lower ranks like our constable possibly will continue to heave such sighs for a long time as the draft proposal for police reforms, prepared by the police high-ups and funded by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom, and the European Union (EU), does not contain any specific proposal for lessening the workload of the police department's rank and file.

A number of police officials said

almost every low ranking personnel of the force is usually posted on duties for an average of 14 hours a day.

"In the current draft of the Police Ordinance 2007 we are not proposing to bring any change to the workload, rather we are focusing on bringing qualitative changes to the way policing is carried out in this country," a top police officer, who is also a member of the committee that had prepared the draft ordinance, told The Daily Star.

National Project Director of the

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Biman's target exceeded as 1,520 respond to retirement offer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of Biman officials and employees responding to Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) reached 1,520 yesterday, surpassing the target of the Biman authorities, sources said.

The 16-day time-limit for accepting the offer of retiring willingly ends today.

However, no high level officials like general manager or director, have accepted the VRS so far, sources said.

Only four to five deputy general managers retired voluntarily while the rest are from the managerial level or below, they added.

On June 5, Biman Bangladesh Airlines offered the VRS to its employees in order to downsize its

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PROF TAHER MURDER

Charges framed against Salehi, Prof Mohiuddin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A Rajshahi court framed charges against six people including Rajshahi University (RU) teacher Mia Mohammad Mohiuddin and RU Islami Chhatra Shibir President Mahbulul Alam Salehi in the Prof S Taher Ahmed murder case.

Key accused Mohiuddin, Azimuddin, freed earlier on bail, Salehi, and three killers who confessed to the killing-Jahangir, Nazmul and Salam--were present in the dock during charge hearing on Monday. Salehi, Jahangir, Nazmul and Salam were sent to jail following the hearing.

Judge Jahangir Alam Mollah of Special Session's Court rejected prayers of Mohiuddin and Salehi for acquitting them from the

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PHOTO: STAR

Right, The memorial built on a killing field in the city's Mirpur for people killed by occupation forces during the Liberation War in 1971. Left, Soil collected from such other killing fields in different parts of the country is being preserved at the memorial built by the Liberation War Museum that opens tomorrow.

A scene that reminds brutality of '71 killers

PORIMOL PALMA

The dead bodies were thrown into an underground water tank adjacent to a pump house and the killers thought they could sink into oblivion all evidence of the genocide, but almost after three decades an excavation led to the exhumation of the mass grave.

Jalladkhana (Butcher's Den), a memorial for the martyrs of the liberation war, who died in the torturing hands of the invading Pakistani army and their local collaborators in one of the worst genocides of the 20th century at Mirpur in Dhaka, is scheduled to be inaugurated tomorrow.

The Liberation War Museum excavated the Jalladkhana, giving identities to the martyrs as their exhumed skulls, bones and personal artefacts were found during

the excavation.

"Like a phoenix we can be born out of the ashes and rise to higher ground, but we must clear the ashes," said Akku Chowdhury, a trustee of the Liberation War Museum, during a visit by journalists to the memorial. The museum excavated it in cooperation with the Bangladesh Army. Seventy human skulls and 5392 human bones were recovered there.

"Most of the skulls revealed signs of being severed from the rest of the body with a sharp weapon and some bore marks of being struck by heavy weapons and one had a bullet hole, shot from a close range. Other bones also showed signs of being hit by heavy weapons." Akku wrote in the memorial brochure distributed among the journalists.

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Rejoinder

Former president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury has issued a rejoinder to part of the report headlined "Big shots levelled vast terrain of Ctg hills" published in The Daily Star on Monday.

He claimed that he and his family have not been involved in any hill cutting or razing, contrary to what was alleged in the report.

"With reference to part of the news report that relates to some

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