

COUNCIL MEETING
Govt to make getting passports easier

UNB, Dhaka

The caretaker government is going to make easy the issuance and renewal of passports by simplifying the existing intricate rules and formalities.

Extending validity period of passport to 10 years from the currently five years and passport processing under private sector are also under consideration.

The regular weekly meeting of the Council of Advisers with Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in the chair yesterday thoroughly discussed the matters regarding issuance and renewal of passport and

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Birdem doctors' job contracts to be renewed

Says diabetic assoc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Diabetic Association of Bangladesh in a press release yesterday said it would renew the job contracts of indoor medical officers at Birdem Hospital and take immediate steps for regularising them.

The indoor medical officers of Birdem Hospital went on strike on June 25 following a notification regarding renewal of their job contracts. The doctors withdrew their strike on June 28 on consultants' request.

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UN shuts down Iraqi WMD monitoring

AFP, United Nations

Four years after the US-led invasion of Iraq failed to turn up Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, the Security Council Friday shut down a UN programme that monitored such arms, closing "an appalling chapter in Iraq's history".

The 15-member council adopted a US-British resolution that "immediately" shut down the work of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC).

The text also terminated the

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| Prayer Timing | | |
|----------------------------|-------|--------|
| July 1 | | |
| | Azan | Jamaat |
| Fajr | 4-10 | 4-45 |
| Zohr | 12-45 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 5-00 | 5-15 |
| Maghrib | 6-55 | 7-00 |
| Esha | 8-17 | 8-45 |
| Source: Islamic Foundation | | |

Legal framework must to keep criminals away from politics

Lt Gen Masud shares his anti-graft drive experience

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A legal framework should be in place to make sure that the political parties stay out of criminalisation and respect people's basic rights of movement and livelihood, coordinator of the National Coordination Committee (NCC) for Combating Crime and Corruption observed yesterday.

"Both ruling and opposition political parties should ensure that nobody with a background of corruption finds any place within their fold," Lt General Masud Uddin Chowdhury, the NCC coordinator, said.

He was speaking as the special guest at a seminar on 'Sharing the Anti-Corruption Experience' organised by Probe news magazine at the Jatiya Press Club.

The corrupt people irrespective of their status, identity and political affiliation must be brought to justice without favour or fear, Masud said adding that these steps require reforms within the political parties

and in the Election Commission (EC).

The NCC coordinator suggested opening monitoring units in ministries and departments to look for media and other related reports on corruption and take actions accordingly. A central monitoring unit could also be established to ensure that the individual ministries and departments function effectively, he noted.

"Side by side, the executives have a key role to play. They need to be honest, committed and determined," Masud, also the Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division, said stressing the need for a neutral Public Service Commission and transparent public recruitment system.

He said that a truly independent Anti-Corruption Commission, effective anti-corruption laws and empowered local government, free media and participation of civil society are imperative to check corruption.

Emphasising the right of access

to information to guarantee transparency in public services, the NCC coordinator said, "It is the high time for Bangladesh to formulate a Right to Information Act."

Key challenge in fighting corruption is its link with power, he said sharing his experience. "Whatever sector of the government or society we have stepped in, corruption cases and practices unfolded."

Laundering thousands of crores of taka illegally, acquiring assets including luxurious apartments, businesses in foreign countries justify the reason "why even 36 years after independence we remained the poorest of the poor as a nation and topped the TI (Transparency International) list consecutively."

Masud also mentioned a number of legal and procedural limitations in the ACC act for dealing with high profile offenders.

"We are facing difficulties in getting information and recovering such wealth," the NCC coordinator

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Govt may invite tender for 3 IPP power plants this month

UNB, Dhaka

The government is likely to invite international tenders this month for setting up three large independent power producer (IPP) plants.

The proposed plants, with about 1,350MW total capacity, are 450MW Meghnaghat phase-III, 450MW Sirajganj combined cycle, and 450MW Bibiana combined cycle.

The plants will be set up in the private sector on Build-Own-Operate basis.

Soon after assuming office, the present caretaker government, which inherited the countrywide nagging power crisis, moved swiftly to implement the projects with support from two donor agencies.

The country is experiencing its worst power crisis having a shortfall of between 1,500-2,000MW against the demand for more than 5,000MW.

According to official sources, the power cell, a reform-implementing agency of the power ministry, will invite international firms for pre-qualification (PQ).

On completion of PQ, the pre-qualified bidders will be asked to submit their technical and financial proposals through a 'Request for Proposal' format to be issued by the power cell.

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US raids Baghdad slum: 26 Iraqis die

Suicide bomber kills 16 police recruits, dozens of bodies found in mass grave

AP, AFP, Baghdad

American soldiers rolled into Baghdad's Sadr City slum yesterday in search of Iranian-linked militants and as many as 26 Iraqis were killed in what a US officer described as "an intense firefight."

But residents, police and hospital officials said eight people were killed all civilians in their homes,

and angrily accused US forces of firing blindly on the innocent. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki condemned the raids and demanded an explanation for the assault into a district where he has barred US operations in the past.

Meanwhile, a suicide bomber exploded himself in a crowd of police recruits Saturday in a market area northeast of Baghdad, killing

at least 16 people, police said.

The bomber detonated his explosives belt in a market area outside a police station in Muqdadiyah, 90km north of the Iraqi capital, a police officer said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to release the information.

All of the victims were new

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MIGRANT WORKERS

Govt wakes up to find reasons for low wage

PORIMOL PALMA

The government has taken an initiative to investigate why the Bangladeshi workers abroad get lower salary than the same category of workers of other countries, and take necessary measures towards its redress at the earliest.

"Last week we sent letters to all the ten labour wings in eight major labour exporting countries asking them to investigate if the Bangladeshi workers get lower salaries and report to us as soon as possible," said Abdul Matin Chowdhury, secretary to the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment.

The ministry also asked the labour wings to make recommendations on the steps to be taken for

increasing the salaries for the Bangladeshi workers if it is found that they get lower pay, he said.

The letters were sent to the Bangladesh's labour wings in Malaysia, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Singapore, Bahrain, Oman and Libya, a ministry official told The Daily Star on June 18.

Reports that the Bangladeshi workers abroad, especially in the Middle East countries, get lower pay, prompted the initiative to investigate the issue, the secretary said.

He said the government will negotiate with the manpower receiving countries, if necessary, and take steps to train up the workers so that Bangladeshi workers'

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40 fishermen missing in rough sea

UNB, Bagerhat

Some 40 fishermen went missing as 14 trawlers capsized in the Bay since Friday noon to early yesterday amid inclement weather.

Sources said the 14 trawlers with 155 fishermen aboard were caught in windstorm triggered by a deep monsoon depression over the Bay and sank.

Of the fishermen, 115 were rescued or swam ashore while the rest remained missing, the sources added.

Coastguard men are searching for the missing fishermen. They gave first aid to 10 injured fishermen.

Members of the coastguard of Mongla (west zone) recovered seven trawlers from Kochikhali,

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British police hunt bomb suspect

AP, London

Police mounted increased patrols in a jittery London yesterday as detectives conducted an intense hunt for a man seen running from an explosives-packed car in the heart of the city's entertainment district.

Two Mercedes loaded with gasoline, gas canisters and nails were found abandoned Friday in what police believe was an attempt to kill scores or even hundreds of people. Detectives said they were keeping an open mind about the perpetrators, but terrorism experts said the signs pointed to an al-Qaeda-linked or inspired cell.

Scotland Yard would not comment on a report by ABC News in the United States that police had a

"crystal clear" picture of one suspect from CCTV footage.

Forensics experts were searching the two cars for clues. One was abandoned outside a nightclub in Haymarket, a busy street of shops, clubs and restaurants just yards from Trafalgar Square and Piccadilly Circus.

The other was towed after being parked illegally in nearby Cockspur Street and was discovered in an impound lot about a mile away in Park Lane, near Hyde Park.

Deputy Assistant Commissioner Peter Clarke, the Metropolitan Police anti-terrorism chief, said the two devices could have caused "significant injury or loss of life."

"The discovery of what appears

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PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

A truck laden with iron rods makes its way through the heavy traffic on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in the capital yesterday. Sharp edges of the rods remain dangerously outside the truck.