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ELECTORAL DIALOGUE

EC will now wait until parties complete reforms

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission (EC) will not sit in dialogue with any political parties on its proposed electoral reforms until the much-talked intra-party reforms are completed, Election Commissioner Muhammed Sohul Hussain said yesterday.

The EC that was eager to talk with the political parties even amid the ban on indoor politics, has now taken a stance of waiting for completion of reforms within the parties.

"Reforms within the political parties are to be completed first. If we invite a political party before

the reforms are done, who will represent the party?" Election Commissioner Muhammed Sohul Hussain told reporters.

"If we hold any discussion in such a situation, it will be with individuals, not with the parties. So, we will sit in dialogue with them once they complete their reforms," he said.

The EC would take decision considering the political situation after lifting or relaxing the ban on indoor politics, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hossain told The Daily Star last night.

"Noticing hesitation in some

political parties over the intra-party reforms, we are still undecided about who to call and who not to," he said.

The political parties will have to take a shape through the reforms, Election Commissioner Sohul said when asked whether the EC will hold discussion with the political parties if the government lifts the embargo on indoor politics now.

The EC, which had been waiting for the last three months for the withdrawal of the ban on indoor politics to sit in dialogue with the parties, yesterday came up with its new stance at a time

when the government is considering relaxing the embargo on indoor politics 'for the sake of reforms in the parties'.

Dissident leaders of the BNP, Awami League and Jatiya Party (Ershad), who are set to bring 'radical reforms' within their parties, have been holding meetings and discussions ignoring the ban on all sorts of political activities with an apparent support of the interim administration.

Pro-reforms leaders have started announcing proposals for party reforms while following pressures from within and outside

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Pintu sued for plundering relief materials

STAR REPORT

Police filed two cases against former BNP lawmaker from Lalbagh Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu on Sunday for misappropriating government relief material while another case was filed against former BNP lawmaker from Natore-4 constituency Mozammel Haq yesterday on charges of embezzlement of money.

The two cases against Pintu were filed with Kamrangirchar Police Station following recovery of 216 corrugated iron (CI) sheets meant for relief from two places at Kamrangirchar in the capital, reports our staff correspondent.

Some 110 CI sheets were seized from Abdul Awal College at Ashrafabad and 106 sheets from Shamsul Haq Market at Nabinagar, police said.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Abdul

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Over 200 hill plunderers identified in Chittagong

Noman, Mohiuddin on the DoE list

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Chittagong

Department of Environment (DoE) has primarily identified 155 hilly areas in Chittagong Division that were subjected to illegal hill cutting, and listed over 200 individuals, organisations and business groups as plunderers of hills.

Former fisheries and livestock minister Abdullah Al Noman and detained Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, Chittagong City Corporation (CCC), Kafco and KEPP and Abul Khair Group are on the DoE list.

The list is based on information collected by seven DoE teams through field visits in Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and the three hill dis-

tricts of Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban, DoE Director Nazmul Hoque told The Daily Star. They might finalise the list today and send it to the Ministry of Environment.

The DoE director said they would continue mobile court drives in the affected areas and take legal action against all those responsible for hill cutting.

In the port city, hills were devoured for setting up housing projects, brickfields, hospitals and other establishments in around 48 areas. Fifty people and thirteen organisations and commercial firms were involved in the evil practice.

The DoE teams detected 27 incidents of hill cutting in Sitakunda, 16 in Satkania, 14 in

Rangunia and Chandroghona, 14 in Hathazari, 4 in Chandanais, 5 in Anwara, 5 in Banskhal, 2 in Mirsarai, 4 in Lohagara and 7 in Cox's Bazar, 5 in Rangamati and 4 in Khagrachhari, DoE sources said.

Abdullah Al Noman levelled huge hills spreading over 10 acres of land on the west of Chittagong Polytechnic Institute till 2006 and gave it to one Md Sagor for setting up a poultry farm.

Mayor Mohiuddin levelled a hill in the name of Thandachari Chinnamul Asram project at South Pahartal, Prof Rabiul Hossain and SM Moshed Jafar levelled hills for setting up a hospital - Imperial Hospital - in Khushi area near DoE divisional office.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

No atmosphere for council: Khaleda

Reformists collect signatures for meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The atmosphere in the country is not congenial enough right now for holding a party council where the councillors could speak without fear, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia said yesterday.

She issued a tacit threat of disciplinary action against BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan if he does anything against the spirit of the party constitution, and urged party leaders and activists to be unitedly vociferous against the conspirators who want to split the party.

"The country is now under an emergency and political activities are banned, making it impossible for anybody to speak freely in a council right now," she quipped during a tele-conference yesterday

with journalist living in New York, moderated by Gias Ahmed, international affairs secretary of the BNP central committee.

Meanwhile, reformist leaders of the party said preparations for a council are underway according to the party constitution and they are also collecting signatures of the councillors in support of the council as part of the preparations.

They said Mannan Bhuiyan will meet the party chairperson to discuss the council and to seek her permission for it after finalising their reform proposal, while they are also preparing themselves to call a requisitioned meeting of the party councillors if Khaleda does not allow the secretary general to hold the council.

Gias Ahmed, the moderator of

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Tofail comes up with his reform proposal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another presidium member of Awami League (AL), this time in Tofail Ahmed, has come up with reform proposals, identical to those unveiled by Abdur Razzak.

Addressing a crowded press conference at his Banani residence, Tofail said currently the political parties are at a crossroads and there is no alternative but to carry out reforms.

Before starting, he claimed that the proposals he would place were absolutely his own. Asking journalists not to question him, he said, "Please help us. We are going through a very critical time."

Another presidium member, Suranjit Sengupta, too will place his proposals before the media shortly. And finally, Amir Hossain Amu, who is spearheading the campaign for reforms apparently

aiming to dethrone AL President Sheikh Hasina, will place his on return from Singapore, said sources in the AL.

Like his presidium colleague, Tofail's proposals include the one that says no one would be allowed to hold the posts of president and

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Tofail Ahmed

10 low-tariff small power schemes get govt nod

SHARIER KHAN

The caretaker government's purchase committee yesterday approved awarding of contracts for 10 small power projects with a total production capacity of around 200 MW at a better tariff rate than that in a previously cancelled bid.

Installation of these gas-fired plants is supposed to be completed with power generation starting within 15 months of signing of the agreement with the Power Cell of the power ministry, cell sources said.

"But given the situation, we are negotiating with them to have the plants completed, and run within a shorter time," said an official.

Thrift offers by these plants are

also much better than those found in the previous tender (cancelled in April). The previous tender for nine plants with 190 MW capacity drew tariff offers ranging between Tk 2.48 per kilowatt hour (or one unit) and Tk 3 while the present offers range between Tk 2.28 and Tk 2.49 per unit.

Four of these plants will be set up by Summit Power, which is already operating some small power plants and a 110 MW barge-mount plant. The four plants of Summit will generate 100 MW. Of these, three 30 MW plants will be set up in Comilla, Narayanganj and Gazipur (power tariff for each of these plants is Tk 2.38 per unit) and one 10 MW plant in Sirajganj (Tk 2.49 per unit).

Saiham Power Ltd will set up four plants with their production capacity totalling 70 MW. Of these, three 20 MW plants will be set up in Feni, Tangail and Narsingdi (Tk 2.28 per unit power tariff) and one 10 MW plant in Feni (Tk 2.47 per unit).

Regent Textiles will set up a 20 MW plant in Barabkundu of Chittagong (tariff Tk 2.32 per unit) and Energy Pac a 10 MW plant in Habiganj (Tk 2.48 per unit).

Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam, who presided over the purchase body meeting, said the newly approved schemes will save around Tk 450 crore.

The Power Cell is also expected

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Govt to show zero tolerance for illegal tree felling: CA

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday said the government will show "zero tolerance" for indiscriminate felling of trees and destruction of forests in the country.

Referring to the arrest of some top forest officials on charges of corruption, he asked the officials and employees concerned to remain 100 per cent accountable in conserving trees and forests to avert such action.

"Stern legal actions will be taken if any official and employee's negligence is proved in protecting trees and forest resources," he warned.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Cricket updates are now in your pocket.

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Long-serving wicketkeeper Khaled Mashud was dropped as Bangladesh, smarting from a heavy defeat in the first game, made three changes for the second Test against Sri Lanka starting here today at the P. Saravanamuttu Stadium.

The hosts lead the three-match series 1-0 and the Tigers, after the humiliating innings and 234-run defeat, fully concentrated on their batting to try and spare the blushes. That was the reason they have taken the tough decision of omitting Mashud -- still number one as a keeper -- as his replacement Mushfiqur Rahim is

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

BANGLADESH BOLSTER BATTING 2nd Test from today

BISHWAJIT ROY from Colombo

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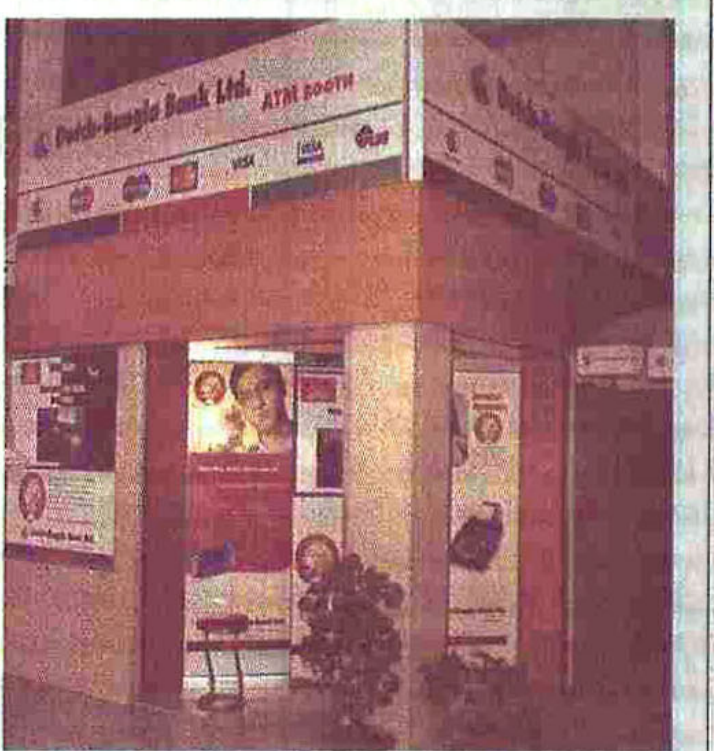
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