

Govt slated for letting Khaleda, Saifur legalise hidden money

Two senior leaders of Awami League (AL) and BNP yesterday said the government's move allowing former prime minister Khaleda Zia, and former finance minister Saifur Rahman to legalise their undisclosed money was not legally sound.

Make cops professional, free of political influence

Calls The Daily Star roundtable on draft Bangladesh Police Ordinance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Legal experts and former high officials yesterday called for the government to form a professional and honest police force free of political influence to serve the cause of democracy and the rule of law.

financial incentives and allowed to conduct themselves in a way that would ensure their accountability. The observations came at a roundtable discussion on Draft Bangladesh Police Ordinance, 2007. A number of former inspectors general of police (IGPs), Attorney General Fida M Kamal, Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner

Nayeem Ahmed, legal experts and rights activists took part in the programme organised by The Daily Star at its conference room. The discussants lauded the government initiatives to bring reforms in the police, but noted



Speakers at a roundtable on "Draft Bangladesh Police Ordinance 2007" organised by The Daily Star at its office yesterday.

Korean hostages could be freed this weekend

Seoul holds direct talks with Taliban

AFP, Ghazni

A Taliban negotiator yesterday said 21 South Korean hostages could be freed as early as "today or tomorrow" but only if the Afghan government accepted its demand to free militant prisoners.

The offer came as spokesmen for the kidnapers said they were "optimistic" about talks aimed at releasing the group of Christian aid workers captured in the southern province of Ghazni and held captive more than three weeks ago.

Kabul has steadfastly rejected previous offers of a prisoner swap and its position was reiterated by President Hamid Karzai's office Saturday.

"We are optimistic about the result of our talks," Qari Bashir, one of two Taliban negotiators, told reporters outside the offices of the Afghan Red Crescent Society in Ghazni, 140km south of Kabul.

But he reiterated: "The hostages will be freed if the government accepts our demands to free some prisoners.

"If they accept our demands, maybe they'll be freed today or tomorrow," he said, speaking during a pause in the talks with South Korean government representatives, at what amounted to the Taliban's first press conference in several years.

The al-Qaeda-backed insurgents, who have been waging an insurgency since being toppled from government in 2001, usually speak to the media through spokesmen who make telephone

Cops-public talks in DMP get underway

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a bid to bridge the gap between the police and the people, Dhaka Metropolitan police (DMP) yesterday introduced monthly "Open House Day" in 32 out of its 33 police stations.

The Open House Day was first introduced at Uttara Police Station in June 2007.

On the Open House Day, each of the eight Crime Divisions of DMP consisting four to five police stations will organise a public discussion on a Saturday of each month encouraging locals to participate and assist law enforcers in maintaining law and order.

The initiative under police reform project (PRP) is aimed at gaining mutual understanding, trust and cooperation through transforming the old colonial policing practices into a people-friendly one.

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Dhaka in dilemma over Rohingyas held in KSA

PORIMOL PALMA

Saudi Arabia is trying to deport 267 Rohingyas to Bangladesh saying that they had migrated to the Middle Eastern country from Bangladesh.

According to an official concerned, the Saudi government has recently asked the Bangladesh mission in Jeddah to make arrangement for deporting the Rohingyas, who have been arrested on charges of criminal activities.

The Saudi government however could not show any document, which can prove that they are Bangladeshi citizens, a foreign ministry official told The Daily Star.

Following such requests from Saudi Arabia, an inter-ministerial meeting was held recently at the home ministry. Officials of the foreign and food and disaster management ministries, and members of the intelligence agencies were present.

The meeting observed that Bangladesh cannot accept any migrant from a third country unless they have valid documents, which can prove that they are Bangladeshi nationals.

When asked whether the Rohingyas have Bangladeshi passports, the foreign ministry official said there are no such records.

He said "It will be unfortunate if the Saudi government creates pressures on us to accept them."

"We have around 16 lakh nationals working in Saudi Arabia and we don't want the Saudi government to have any negative feeling about us and our workers," added the official requesting not to be named.

According to manpower businesses and other agencies that deal with Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, the Saudi government had earlier shown mercy to Rohingyas.

They said many Rohingyas went to the Saudi Arabia either with work visa or for performing Umrah after managing Bangladeshi passports.

"Upon their arrival, they destroy the passports and seek shelters and jobs to the Saudi authorities saying they were persecuted in Myanmar," said a manpower agent.

Considering their persecution and religion, the Saudi authorities used to give them work permits, which actually encouraged many Rohingyas to go to Saudi Arabia following this way, he added.

But now the Saudi government is trying to deport Rohingyas as many of them were found involved with criminal activities, said the manpower agent.

"Such incidents are tarnishing the image of Bangladeshi workers in Saudi Arabia," he said adding, "This should be stopped."

Close aide to SQ Chowdhury arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

A close aide of detained former BNP lawmaker Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury was arrested in Chittagong yesterday.

The arrestee, Nasiruddin alias Naishya, 34, son of late Fayez Ahmad of Joynagar of Padua under the upazila, is a listed criminal.

He had been accused in eight cases on different charges including possession of illegal arms, murder, extortion, abduction and timber smuggling, said Morshedul Karim Mohammad Ishtesham, Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Rangunia Police Station.

Sources said the police raided a

Table with Prayer Timing for August 12, including Azan and Jamaat times for Fajr, Zohr, Asr, Maghrib, and Esha.

Iraqi governor, police chief assassinated

AFP, Diwaniyah

The governor and police chief of Iraq's southern Shia city of Diwaniyah were killed when a bomb attack ripped through their convoy yesterday, local security and health officials said.

"The hospital in Diwaniyah received the governor and police chief, and three other corpses from their security detail," said Doctor Hamid Gaati, head of the health directorate in Diwaniyah, 200 kilometres (120 miles) south of Baghdad.

Speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to release the information, a senior security official in Diwaniyah said they were killed in a multiple bomb attack on their conoy.

"More than 10 IEDs (roadside bombs) targeted a convoy of the governor and the chief of police on their way back from Afak to the centre of the city, killing the governor of Diwaniyah and the chief of police," said the official.

The governor, Khalil Jalil

Strong dollar on kerb market smacks of money laundering

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The exchange rate of US dollar has been unusually high at the kerb market during the last three months - a trend that might be a result of smuggling dollar out of the country by black money holders.

According to Bangladesh Bank (BB), on August 7, each dollar was selling at Tk 72.90 on the kerb market - Tk. 4.40 higher than the official selling rate of Tk 68.50.

Industry experts and economists speculate that the kerb market is experiencing a rise in the demand for dollars following the anti-corruption drives of the present government as black money is being converted into dollars and then sent overseas.

"The anti-corruption drives are on and the corrupt are worried about their illegally earned money," said Dr Sazzad Zahir, executive director of Economic Research Group, adding that the corrupt might be whitening their illegally earned

money in the form of remittances.

Pointing at a rising trend of remittance inflow since February, Dr Zahir said the black money holders might be converting their black money into dollar. They smuggle it out of the country and then bring it back to the country legally through remittances.

Officials at the BB also speculated that the country's black money is being whitened through remittances as the money is being sent overseas as dollars and then returned in the country as remittances.

The central bank has received similar complaints and asked law enforcers to investigate the matter, said a BB official.

The official and kerb market dollar exchange rates started to widen in late May, said a BB source. "Usually, kerb market rates [of dollar] are a little bit higher than the official rate. Sometimes it's

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Rebels gun down 11 in Assam

AP, Guwahati

Suspected separatist rebels gunned down a dozen migrant workers as they slept and bombed two markets in India's insurgency-racked northeast, bringing the total number of people killed in a week of violence to 23, police said yesterday.

A group of gunmen armed with assault rifles entered a village inhabited by mostly Hindi-speaking migrants from other parts of India late Friday and opened fire, killing 11 people, said LR Bishnoi, a senior police officer in Assam state.

"They barged into two houses and opened fire at random," he said. The attack occurred in the village of Dolamora, some 155 miles east of Guwahati, Assam's capital.

Militants often target the migrants, who are resented as outsiders, representing the federal government in New Delhi 1,000 miles to the west.

The militants say New Delhi exploits the northeast's rich natural resources while doing little for

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