

## National Security Council under process: Iftekhar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The process of establishing a National Security Council is underway but the timeframe of its formation is yet to be decided, Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury said yesterday.

"So far, I know that there were discussions over it and now the process is going on. But I cannot tell you exactly when it will be established," he told the journalists after the launching ceremony of "Promoting good governance: key reform challenges facing Bangladesh".

The foreign adviser spoke as the chief guest at the function organised by Bangladesh Enterprise and its former MPs.

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# BNP leaders' canal grabbing causes DND waterlogging

SHEIKH SABIHA ALAM

The severe waterlogging inside Dhaka-Narayanganj-Demra (DND) embankment project area has worsened as drainage system leading to a major canal is being choked up -- thanks to encroachment of the canal by BNP leaders and its former MPs.

One of the major drainage canals

inside the project, Kutubkhali canal, has shrunk drastically as the BNP big shots built several CNG filling stations, workshops and other structures filling up a large chunk of the canal.

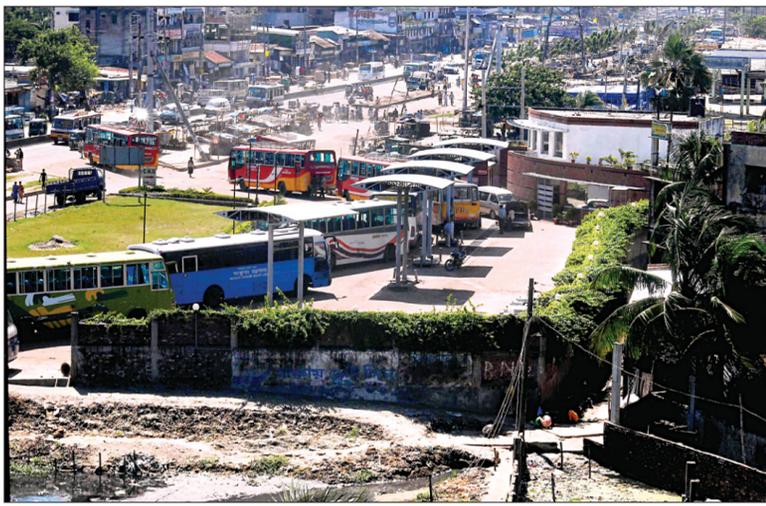
Roads and Highways Department (RHD) during the last BNP-led coalition government leased out 27 to 30 decimals of land beside the Kutubkhali canal

between the stretch of Jatrabari and Kanchpur along Dhaka-Chittagong highway and approved construction of various workshops and other structures including seven CNG filling stations.

The lessees, however, illegally filled up over 200 decimals of land, said sources.

Three such CNG stations that

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One of several CNG filling stations between Kanchpur Bridge and Jatrabari of the capital which BNP big shots built on the Kutubkhali canal, drastically reducing Dhaka's drainage capability.

PHOTO: STAR

## BB stalls move to seek account info of 198 graft suspects

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The central bank has suspended its move to seek account information of 198 alleged corruption suspects following a directive from the National Coordination Committee (NCC) on Combating Corruption and Crime.

Earlier, the Bangladesh Bank (BB) asked commercial banks to provide account information of 198 corruption suspects.

The central bank, however, refused to clarify the reason behind the suspension of its move. "We just carried out the advice of the NCC and the suspension of our move also came from them," said an official of the central bank.

The list had names of Awami League (AL) leader Tofiqul Ahmed,

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## HASINA'S BAIL SC Appellate Division to hear case tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chamber judge of the Supreme Court (SC) yesterday did not make any ruling on the government appeals against recent High Court (HC) orders granting Sheikh Hasina bail and staying the Anti-Corruption Commission's asking for her wealth statement.

Instead, Justice Hasan Ameen referred the matters to a regular bench of the Appellate Division of the SC for hearing tomorrow.

He came up with similar decision on another appeal against the

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# EC can draw voter list without photo

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Electoral Rolls Ordinance 2007 that makes it mandatory to prepare voter list with photographs has also empowered the Election Commission (EC) to do the task without photographs if it is not possible for any particular constituency or area.

President Iajuddin Ahmed on Thursday promulgated the new electoral rolls ordinance, clearing the way for preparing a fresh voter list with photographs for holding

polls to different elected bodies, including parliament.

Complying with the new law, the field level task for preparing the fresh voter list with photographs started on Saturday in Rajshahi City Corporation area. The countrywide task is scheduled to be completed in phases by October 2008 according to the EC's announced roadmap for holding the stalled ninth parliamentary polls in December next year.

But in cases where necessary, the EC can take special measures to

prepare the voter list without photographs, as in the existing voter list, officials in the EC Secretariat said.

"By issuing official gazette notification, the Election Commission can prepare voter list under special measures for an electoral area or a voter area if preparation of a voter list with photographs is not possible due to unavoidable reasons," said the new ordinance.

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## NBR to sue Mir Nasir, son for hiding income

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) yesterday decided to file cases against former state minister Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin and his son barrister Mir Helaluddin for concealing their incomes in their income tax returns.

The NBR in a board meeting also decided to review a case against former deputy minister for land Ruhul Kuddus Talukder Dulu.

Tax officials primarily found Nasir and his son guilty of concealing their actual incomes, NBR sources said.

According to an income tax ordinance, a person may be awarded with minimum three months and maximum five years imprisonment as well as financial penalty if anyone conceals his or her real income.

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## Commentary

# My Lord, we beg to differ

But we share CJ's vision for a better higher judiciary

MAHFUZ ANAM

Chief Justice (CJ) of Bangladesh Mohammad Ruhul Amin said in a speech on Saturday, "The Supreme Court played a role in the past at critical junctures of the nation. It is doing so at the present and will also do so in the future to pull the nation out of mire." We most humbly beg to differ. Yes, there are many grand examples of the Supreme Court serving the nation in times of crises. However, there are just as many examples of when it did not. May we suggest with all due respect your high office demands and deserves, that if the Supreme Court had played such a role in the recent past then we would not be where we are today. Why after 15 years of democ-

racy, however flawed, we needed an emergency to bring about the reforms that the nation needs so badly, which regrettably are becoming increasingly doubtful?

Permit us to recall the writ petition challenging the legality of President Iajuddin Ahmed assuming the post of the chief adviser, clearly violating the constitution that specified the steps necessary to be taken before the president may assume that crucial post. Unquestionably the subject of the writ petition was one of the most important there could be before the higher courts. Not only as an interpretation of the constitution but also as a crucial matter facing the nation at that moment in time, the writ petition merited a hearing. The

hearing on the writ petition was proceeding and the honourable judges of the High Court Bench had announced that they would pronounce their ruling the following day. But just when they were about to do so, a note from the then chief justice, hand carried by the attorney general, informed the judges concerned that the whole proceeding had been stayed. It is indeed very rare that a CJ stays a hearing while it is in progress. Rarer still is the staying of the case when the bench was about to pronounce its ruling on it. We all recall the chaos that the stay order led to, including the converging on the chief justice's chamber, vandalism,

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# IFC attempts to delay 2 power projects

SHARIER KHAN

The International Finance Corporation (IFC) is putting pressure on the government to delay two major private sector power projects which are now in an advanced stage, and quicken the pre-mature Bibiyana power project seemingly prioritising gas sales from Chevron's Bibiyana gas field.

The IFC of the World Bank group in a letter to the power secretary on August 3 suggested that tenders for Meghnaghat-3 and Sirajganj 450 megawatt Independent Power

Projects (IPPs) may be floated in February 2008 with the aim to sign agreements in September the same year.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) which is technically assisting the government regarding these two projects plans to complete awarding contracts for these by May 2008. The sites, major infrastructures and some tender documents for both the projects are already there for a quick tender.

But arguing that simultaneous tenders for multiple large power projects will not generate bidders

interest, the IFC wants to initiate the brand new Bibiyana 450 MW power project from August 15 with the aim to sign agreement by April next year.

The idea of Bibiyana power project is completely new and it emerged after US oil company Chevron developed Bibiyana gas field with a gas processing plant to supply 600 million cubic feet gas per day (mmcf). As the present gas transmission system does not allow evacuation of a good share of this capacity, the IFC came up with

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## Bhuiyan denies existence of factions in BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday denied the existence of factions in his party.

"There is no division in the party," he said replying to a question during a media briefing after distributing relief goods among flood victims at Maniknagar in the capital.

Bhuiyan stayed about 15 minutes among the flood affected people on the premises of Maniknagar Model High School. A large number of police and Rab personnel were deployed there to ensure security during the programme.

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## Matin sees brighter side of flood

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Extolling the positive effects of the disastrous flood, Communication Adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) MA Matin yesterday said there would be a boost in agriculture produce after the flood is over.

"Flooding has its positive side also, if we can properly supply seeds and other necessary things to peasants, there would be a huge harvest after the flood," Matin, also the adviser to the Ministry of

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# CA firm on holding polls by 2008-end

UNB, Rangpur

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday said his government is determined to implement its main agenda of holding a neutral, fair and acceptable general election free from unholy influences by December 2008.

"Honest and dedicated people would be encouraged to contest the polls where there won't be influence of black money and muscle power and abuse of authority," he said

addressing an opinion-exchange meeting with local elite and government officials here.

The meeting was organised by the district administration where representatives of various professions, including businessmen, lawyers, journalists and teachers, took part.

Fakhruddin said there is no alternative to strengthening the local government and informed that the Election Commission is

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## Moeen visits ICDDR,B to see diarrhoea patients

UNB, Dhaka

Army chief General Moeen U Ahmed yesterday visited diarrhoea patients admitted to ICDDR,B in the capital and enquired about their treatment.

Gen Moeen observed that critical patients could be shifted to Combined Military Hospital (CMH) for their treatment if there is

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# 35,000 attacked with diarrhoea

ICDDR,B overcrowded; temporary hospital may be set up at Uttara Haji Camp

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 34,989 people contracted diarrhoea across the country and five died since July 30 and at least 3,017 people were diagnosed with the disease in 24 hours ending at yesterday noon.

To deal with the ever increasing diarrhoea patients in Dhaka city, International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) and the army medical staff are thinking about launching a temporary hospital at the Uttara Haji Camp.

Even though the number of diarrhoea patients is increasing every day, only 11 patients checked into the 100-bed emergency diarrhoea unit in Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) since its opening Saturday.

Sources claim the DMCH unit has inadequate facilities. A number of patients and their relatives said the diarrhoea unit could not even supply adequate number of saline.

Refuting the allegations, Director of DMCH Brig Gen Abdus Shahid told The Daily Star, "People feel more comfortable at the ICDDR,B since it is a specialised hospital... but we have enough supply of oral

and cholera saline."

Around 900 diarrhoea patients were admitted to the ICDDR,B in 24 hours ending yesterday evening. When asked, if any patients had cholera, Dr Propid Bardhan, acting chief physician at the ICDDR,B told The Daily Star that none of the patients were diagnosed yet to see if they had cholera. "How could you tell if patients came with cholera germs or not?" he said.

Meanwhile, official figures of the flood-related death toll varied in the Health Directorate report and the Press Information Department (PID) reports. The Health

Directorate sources said the number of casualties is 346 while the PID is saying 268 people died till yesterday.

Admitting the discrepancies between the Health Directorate and PID reports, Director of Disease Control Prof Moajjem Hossain told The Daily Star, "Yes, there is a gap... for health issues only the concerned department can give reliable answers. It is better to let other bodies do their own jobs like relief distribution."

He said currently diarrhoea patients are getting treatment at

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Hundreds of flood-hit people crowd a flood shelter at Basabo in the capital for relief yesterday. But they returned empty handed waiting for around two hours after the authorities postponed relief distribution due to "security reasons".

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## AL won't join EC reform talks if ban on politics exists

Says Zillur

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League (AL) would not participate in the Election Commission's planned dialogue with political parties on electoral reforms in September if the current ban on indoor politics remains, acting AL president Zillur Rahman said yesterday.

"We have to take decision about our position on proposed reforms at the working committee meeting before joining such dialogue with the EC," he told journalists at his Gulshan residence.

Zillur said they cannot participate in the EC's dialogue without holding discussion within the party forum.

Election Commissioner Brig. Gen. (ret'd) M Sakawat Hussain Thursday said the Commission would discuss electoral reforms with political parties in September whether or not the restriction on indoor politics is in place.

Zillur welcomed Chief Justice

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## TAX EVASION CASE Arrest warrant against Obaidul Quader's wife

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday again issued an arrest warrant against Isratunnessa, wife of detained Awami League Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader, in connection with a tax evasion case.

The same court directed the authorities concerned to hang up an arrest warrant in a graft case against Harris Chowdhury, political secretary of former prime minister Khaleda Zia, near his Dhaka and Sylhet residences.

**ISRATUNNESSA CASE** Judge Mohammad Azizul Haq of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order after Ramna police informed the court that they are to yet get any arrest warrant issued earlier from it.

On August 7, the same court had issued arrest warrant against Isratunnessa after Nigar Sultana, assistant tax commissioner of the NBR, filed the case.

In the case statement against Isratunnessa, the complainant said that she had evaded income tax

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