

Reform Dialogue

FROM PAGE 1 lifting the ban on indoor politics or relaxing it."

"There are seventeen days to September. Wait and see," Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda said yesterday as reporters drew his attention to Awami League acting president's remark that his party would not take part in any dialogue with the EC until the ban on indoor politics is lifted.

Huda recently said the EC finalised the polls plans in consultation with the chief adviser.

Talking to reporters at his office yesterday, Election Commissioner Mohammed Sohul Hussain said the EC will certainly hold dialogue with political parties in time.

Asked if the ban on indoor politics would be lifted before

AL to observe

FROM PAGE 16 during its play in power from 1996 to 2001.

The BNP-led four-party alliance scrapped the day's official status after coming to power in October 2001.

According to the AL programmes, floral wreaths will be placed at the portrait of Bangabandhu on Dhamondi Road No. 32 at 8:00 and at the Banani graveyard at 8:30 in the morning. Special prayers will be arranged in mosques across the country and foods will be distributed among the flood victims.

A delegation comprising AL leaders Col (ret'd) Faruq Khan and Abdul Latif Siddiqui will visit Tungpara and lay wreaths on Bangabandhu's grave.

AL acting president Zillur Rahman and acting general secretary Mukul Bose have urged all to observe the day in a manner befitting the leader who steered the nation to independence.

Meanwhile, the 'National Committee to Observe August 15' has requested the government for permission to hold discussion marking the death anniversary at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh on August 18.

In a statement, Committee Coordinator Prof Anisuzzaman, Joint Coordinators Ramendu Majumder, Nasiruddin Yusuf and Member Secretary Golam Kuddus yesterday expressed concern that they have yet to get a response to their application to the Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner. The application for permission was submitted on August 2.

When the chief adviser and chief of army staff have said they want Bangabandhu to be officially recognised as the father of nation, their sincerity would come into question if a non-political organisation is not allowed to hold the discussion, they said in the statement.

Floodwaters

FROM PAGE 1 the Padma receded significantly.

Diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases are spreading. Yesterday, 23 new patients were admitted to various hospitals with flood-related diseases. At least 335 patients are having treatment in different medical centres in the district.

According to sources in the district agriculture extension department and the district administration, crops on 36,537 hectares of land was damaged. Around 8,691 hectares of Amon, vegetables on 2,165 hectares and jute on 20,063 hectares were destroyed.

Our staff correspondent in Khulna reports: Five villages under Koira upazila were inundated as breaches developed in the 65km-long flood-protection embankment there. Bangladesh Coastguards and locals were trying to repair the embankment.

Our correspondent in Magura reports: Even though floodwater of the villages in Shalikhna and Sadar upazilas started to recede, flood

Govt okays plan

FROM PAGE 1 task," he said.

The finance adviser said the large-scale work will be put on tenders in phases, as it might not be possible to find a single local firm competent enough to implement such a big housing project all by itself.

Meeting sources said Malaysia based company, Metro Ikram Sdn Bhd, submitted a proposal to the Bangladesh government for building one lakh apartments in the capital under the 'build and transfer' (BT) system.

The meeting also decided to offload up to 49 percent shares of each of the state owned Meghna and Jamuna oil companies by October.

Chaired by Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam the committee however rejected a proposal from the industries ministry for providing financial help to sick industries, including waiver of bank loans and the interests on them.

Another proposal from the same ministry for declaring the newly established leather and leather goods industry at Savar near the capital as a special economic zone, also failed to get approval of the committee.

About offloading the shares of Jamuna and Meghna oil companies, the finance adviser said the

September, he said September is still far away. "Wait and see."

The election commissioner explained some provisions of the electoral rolls ordinance 2007.

On the provision empowering the EC to prepare voter list without photographs in a particular constituency or area, he said it is intended to meet any exigencies for preparing the electoral rolls.

"In case of any emergency, we will formulate rules for preparing the voter list without photographs by using this power," Sohul said.

Replying to a query if one will be registered as voter if he or she refuses to have his or her photograph taken for the voter list, he said the EC would examine the number of such prospective voters.

"We will have to think whether they can be registered as voters by formulating rules under the electoral rolls ordinance," he said.

Sohul, who earlier visited Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) area and Comilla Municipality area, said people are visiting the voter registration centres to have their photographs and fingerprints taken for getting listed as voters.

"The state of emergency is not affecting the voter listing task," he said.

Diarrhoea

FROM PAGE 1 there for treatment till yesterday evening though a ten-bed ward has been set up for diarrhoea patients.

"People find it more logical to go to the ICDDR,B as our hospital is specialised for chest diseases," said NIDCH Director Mostafizur Rahman.

"There were no special beds for patients like in the ICDDR,B and even toilets are in distant places," said Mohammad Shahin, 20, a diarrhoea patient, while leaving Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for admission to the ICDDR,B.

A total of 33 patients were admitted to the DMCH against 100 beds since Saturday, sources said.

Shaheed Suhrawardi Hospital received only four patients in its 20-bed diarrhoea corner.

However, 37 patients were admitted to Mitford Hospital in last three days against 20 beds allocated for diarrhoea patients.

According to the DGHS, about 4,104 people fell victim to diarrhoea across the country yesterday while one died of the disease.

Pradip K Bardhan, head of ICDDR,B's ICU (Intensive care unit), told The Daily Star that 955 patients were admitted to the institute in 24 hours.

A total of 39,093 people were affected with diarrhoea in 39 flood-hit districts since July 30 while seven people died of diarrhoea so far.

situation of the district deteriorated following incessant rain during the last two days.

Ziaul Haq Zia

FROM PAGE 16 Zia, a listed graft suspect of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), did not mention the SUV in the wealth statement he had submitted to the ACC.

Price of the seized vehicle, a Lexus LX 470 V8, has been estimated at Tk 1.30 crore by the taskforce. A 2007 model of the SUV is priced \$67,395 to \$72,566 in the US market.

Nabila Haq Chowdhury, owner of the factory, said Zia owed her \$ 30,000 and to pay off the debt, he had given her the automobile three months ago.

Nabila, however, failed to produce any document to corroborate her claim, said a taskforce official.

The SUV was taken to Joydevpur Police Station.

process of offloading the shares of the two state owned oil companies might be completed by October.

The government will continue to own 51 percent shares in each of the oil companies, he said.

About not providing financial help to sick industries, Mirza Azizul Islam said financial help like waiving bank loans and interests on them do not bring any change to sick industries, rather the situation worsens.

"It has been proven in the past that no sick industry gets out of its sickness after getting financial assistance," he said.

About not announcing the newly established leather and leather goods industry at Savar as a special economic zone, the finance adviser said, "We do not have necessary laws for announcing such industrial areas as special economic zones."

Shamim Osman

FROM PAGE 16 income tax of Tk 14.45 lakh and concealing information about his properties worth Tk 75.22 lakh.

Earlier, he was sentenced to three years of imprisonment and his movable properties were attached in a case filed by Anti Corruption Commission (ACC).

Criminals assault Ctg journalist

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A gang of criminals attacked a senior journalist and damaged his motorbike at Bakalia in the port city yesterday.

According to sources, the gang, led by listed criminal "Kirich" Babul, attacked Mohsin Chowdhury, senior staff reporter working at the Chittagong bureau of Bangla daily, Janakantha, on Kazem Ali Road under Bakalia Police Station at around 1:30am.

Mohsin along with his nephew Zahedul Hakim was heading toward his office and stuck on the road as a CNG-run autorickshaw knocked his bike from behind.

AS Mohsin stopped the autorickshaw driver for rough driving, Babul and his accomplices appeared the scene and swooped on him, witnesses said.

The gang beat up Mohsin and his nephew and damaged the motorbike. On information, police reached the spot and arrested Babul's accomplice Anwar while the rest managed to flee. A case was filed with Bakulia Police Station.

Only half

FROM PAGE 16 DB arrested Rajib and his three associates from the capital on August 1 with three stolen motorbikes in their possession. The other arrestees are Monir, Pankaj and Amir Hossain.

Hailing from Kaliganj upazila in Satkhira, Rajib said he had worked as a machine operator in Dhaka Paper Mill for three years until he was laid off and joined the gang of motorcycle thieves in 2002. An accused in 12 theft cases, Rajib had been arrested before in 2003, and was released from jail in only six months. After his release from jail he went to Saudi Arabia, where he even performed the Hajj. A year and a half later he was deported to Bangladesh as he had gone there on a tourist visa but started stealing motorcycles there too, Rajib told The Daily Star.

He was arrested again only four months ago on similar charges and was sent to jail just to be out on the street again on bail in just 20 days.

The same court had issued arrest warrant against her on August 5, after a tax official of National Board of Revenue (NBR) filed the cases.

In the case statements, Nurul Amin, deputy tax commissioner of Tax Payers' Service Wing, mentioned that Afroza evaded income tax of Tk 11,58,746 as one of the directors of Dhaka Bank from 1997 to 2002.

She also evaded tax upon her income of Tk 4,67,95,634 from 2002 to 2007.

KHOKON CASE The same court yesterday fixed August 16 for the hearing on charge

Hasina's bail

FROM PAGE 1 regarding the extortion case she faces under the Emergency Power Rules (EPR) and the ACC notice asking her to submit wealth statement.

The extortion case under the EPR debars an accused from seeking bail until the case is resolved in trial courts.

Noor Ali filed the case with Tejgaon Police Station on June 13, accusing Hasina and her cousin former Awami League lawmaker Sheikh Helal and his wife Rupa Chowdhury of extorting Tk 5 crore from him.

Police are now investigating the case.

About the legality of the ACC notice, Hasina submitted that the ACC does not have any legal authority to issue such notice depending on mere surmise.

Mir Nasir

FROM PAGE 16 building he has at Chandgaon residential area and made no mention of his Rajuk plot at Banani in the capital and 84 pieces of farmland at different places in Chittagong in his statement of assets.

The same income tax circle discovered that Helal's actual bank deposit was Tk 25.50 lakh in FY 2002-03 which jumped to Tk 1.03 crore in 2003-04, Tk 2.07 crore in 2004-05, Tk 3.9 crore in 2005-06 and reached Tk 10.41 crore in FY 2006-07.

Helaluddin concealed his income from renting out a flat, concealed two plots at East West Properties Ltd and 22 decimals of farmland in Chittagong.

The NBR on Sunday decided to file cases against them.

Says Gen Moeen

FROM PAGE 1 General Moeen distributed relief goods among the flood victims on the premises of Mirzarchar Union Parishad Office in the upazila.

Voter listing

FROM PAGE 1 thinking ways to complete the procurement as soon as possible by complying with the legal provisions.

In its roadmap announced on July 15, the EC said the task for preparing the voter list with photographs will be completed by October next year and the stalled parliamentary election would definitely be held in December 2008.

In a bid to implement the roadmap, the EC Secretariat on July 7 floated international tender for purchasing of 8,000 laptops, 8,000 webcams, 8,000 finger print scanners, 8,000 Bangla keyboards and 3-button mouse, 550 desktop computers with UPS and monochrome laser printer, 3,000 portable electricity generators, 90 desktop computers with UPS and 64 colour laser printers for the task of voter listing.

Initially it started the task in Rajshahi City Corporation area and the task in Khulna City Corporation and eight municipality areas will begin on August 19 using the equipment received from donors.

According to the EC's roadmap, the task of enumeration and data entry is supposed to be completed in June next year while the task for correction of draft voter list is to continue from November this year to August next year. September and October are allocated for printing and distribution of the final list.

If starting of the field task in full swing is delayed, it will be very difficult to maintain the timeframe as there are other steps in the voter listing, officials at the EC Secretariat said.

The CEC on April 5 announced an 18-month timeframe for preparing a voter list with photographs and completing other preparations to hold the stalled ninth parliamentary election.

Abbas' wife

FROM PAGE 16 Mirza Khokon in connection with a tax evasion case will be held on August 16.

CASE OF ABBAS' WIFE Senior Special Judge Mohammad Azizul Haq of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court directed the authorities concerned to hang up the arrest warrant in tax evasion cases against Abbas' wife with a post near her residence in the capital.

The court transferred the case to the Third Special Judge Court set up at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar CP Hostel for its quick disposal.

In the case filed with the same court on July 30, Rahima Khatun, NBR's assistant tax commissioner, mentioned that Khokon evaded income tax of Tk 12,96,863 in fiscal years 2005 and 2006.

Khokon, brother of Mirza Abbas, has been absconding since the joint forces launched drives to arrest bigwigs on corruption charges.

AMAN CASE Another Dhaka court yesterday fixed August 19 for the hearing on charge framing against detained former state minister for labour and employment Amanullah Aman in connection with an attempted murder case.

First Class Magistrate Delwara Begum adjourned the hearing following a time petition by the defence lawyers.

Aman was produced before the court amid tight security during the hearing of the case.

The case was filed with Dakhin Keraniganj Police Station against Aman and six others in March this year.

Impossible task

FROM PAGE 1 on an average, to submit those to higher officials concerned before submitting them to the court.

An SI at a city police station always has on an average 15 cases in his hand to investigate besides his regular duty of around 12 hours every day almost round the year often without leave even on occasions like Eid or other festivals.

An officer-in-charge (OC) of a city police station said, wishing anonymity, that a fund has now been provided to the police stations for the last one year for buying stationeries and furniture, but that is not sufficient at all to meet the expenditure of a police station.

"The entire cost for an investigation goes from our own pocket. If I do not take bribe, how will I bear the expenditure?" an SI of Tejgaon PS said. Referring to the cost they have to bear for the food of an accused, he said, "Will any restaurant serve food for the accused today and take the payment after a year?"

Besides, policemen investigating cases of repression of women and children often need ultrasonogram of the victims and the IO concerned has to bear the expenses since the victims are poor, police officials said. But most district government hospitals do not have the facility, so, the tests have to be done elsewhere which cost even more.

This has led the police towards taking bribes from both the accused and the complainants and submitting investigation reports favouring those who pay the higher amount, said police officials.

Another SI of Mirpur PS told The Daily Star, "We have to collect money in forbidden ways to meet the expenses of investigation or submit flimsy investigation reports prepared without duly visiting the places of occurrence and without interviewing sufficient witnesses."

Police officials said the rate of conviction in cases is only eight to 10 percent now and the reason behind this low rate is flawed investigation reports.

equipment in September, the EC however cannot use the equipment for voter listing, as the other equipment like Webcam will not be available to make a complete set for the job.

At yesterday's meeting, the EC also asked its secretariat whether more equipment can be collected by alternative ways as it received a few hundred laptops, webcams and other equipment from different donors.

By using the equipment, the EC started the field level task for simultaneously preparing the voter list with photographs and national identity cards on last Saturday on a limited scale.

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Ban on politics

FROM PAGE 1 are allowed although the party chairperson can take action any time," Hannan said on Sunday during a teleconference with US chapter BNP, moderated by its General Secretary Zillur Rahman.

Criticising the party secretary general, Hannan alleged leaders like him [Bhuiyan] enjoyed everything when the party was in power. And now they have somersaulted as the party is facing a bad time.

But Maj Gen (ret'd) ZA Khan, another adviser to the BNP chairperson, told The Daily Star that through consultation with party leaders they would take a decision about talks with the EC.

Asked about Hannan's remarks that the party will take decision against them (dissidents), Khan said, "Time will say".

Mannan Bhuiyan and Hannan Shah yesterday separately distributed relief materials among the flood victims in different areas of Savar and Narshingdi.

In the teleconference, Hannan alleged that Bhuiyan and his associates are conspiring but they would not be successful.

"I think he [Bhuiyan] can understand this as security forces like Rab and police escorted him during relief distribution but I am distributing relief in different places on behalf of the party chairperson with the love of people," Hannan said.

While distributing relief, Hannan regretted that the authorities are not allowing BNP chief and former prime minister Khaleda Zia to stand by the flood victims.

"Flood affected people would benefit if the state of emergency is relaxed," he said. It would be better for the country if power is handed over to elected representatives of the people quickly, he added.

Meanwhile, acting AL President Zillur Rahman had earlier told reporters his party would not participate in any dialogue with the EC as long as the ban on political activities continues.

7 killed

FROM PAGE 16 Showing the mangled wreckage of the three-wheeler, witnesses said that as the bus slammed into the light vehicle, it was dragged for about 40 yards before the bus came to a stop.

A mob of locals caught the bus driver and set the bus on fire. They also vandalised at least 30 vehicles on Dhaka-Chittagong highway and barricaded the highway for about an hour in protest at the reckless driving by drivers of heavy vehicles. The mob withdrew the agitation after the police and the army intervened. The driver was placed under police custody.

With yesterday's fatal accident, third one during the last three days in the district, death toll now stands at 17.

Earlier on Sunday morning, five members of a family were killed and 10 others injured when a city service bus and a microbus had a head-on collision in the city's Customs Bridge area under Bandar Police Station.

On Saturday, in Bhatari area under Hathazari upazila, five people were killed and 14 injured when a speeding four-wheel driver skidded off the road as the driver of the vehicle lost control of it.

Pak PM

FROM PAGE 16 the country's chief justice and a surge in attacks and suicide bombings across the country since early July.

The rising opposition comes as Musharraf seeks re-election for another five-year term, amid growing calls for greater democracy and for him to quit his army post.

Aziz said the ongoing political crisis and surge in Islamic militancy have stained the country's image abroad, resulting in a slowdown of economic growth over the past few months.

"Whenever you have agitation and uncertainty, it affects your ability to deliver quality of results. That does not help to build the brand of any country," Aziz said in the interview.

He said the "politics of agitation" and the siege at Islamabad's Red Mosque last month "have had an impact on the perception of Pakistan in certain quarters."

Militants have stepped up attacks across Pakistan since the army stormed the mosque in the Pakistani capital to oust radical clerics and their followers early in July. At least 102 people were killed in the fighting.

More than 280 others have been killed in a wave of attacks and suicide bombings, mostly in Pakistan's northwestern tribal belt on the border with Afghanistan, where US and other officials believe al-Qaeda and Taliban are regrouping.

But Aziz said the government is "coping and dealing with the situation" to keep economic growth within its targeted range of 6 percent to 8 percent for the next two years.

"Things are calming down and we hope this environment is conducive for growth," he said.

Bush's 'brain' Rove

FROM PAGE 16 showing since president Jimmy Carter, sending alarm bells through the Republican establishment.

No reaction to the announcement, which was posted by the paper on its website at about 4:00 am (0800 GMT), was immediately available.

The paper said Rove's resignation as deputy White House chief of staff will become effective on August 31.

A astute political operator from Texas, who has been with Bush since his Texas gubernatorial campaigns of the 1990s, Rove has been under fire since 2003, when retired US diplomat Joseph Wilson claimed he had illegally leaked to the media the identity of Wilson's wife, Valerie Plame, a covert CIA employee.

Wilson asserted the leak had been orchestrated in retaliation for his New York Times article, in which he claimed that the Bush administration's assertion that the Iraqi government of Saddam Hussein had explored ways of purchasing uranium ore from the African nation of Niger had no foundation in fact.

The claim, made by Bush in his 2003 State of the Union address, was widely used to justify the subsequent invasion of Iraq.

The leak has effectively ended Plame's Central Intelligence Agency career.

The investigation led to perjury and obstruction of justice charges, and subsequent conviction of Lewis "Scooter" Libby, a former chief of staff for Vice President Richard Cheney.

But prosecutors determined last year there was no reason to charge Rove with any wrongdoing.

Although not directly involved in foreign policy decisions, Rove has been widely reported to have played a key behind-the-scenes role in persuading Congress to endorse the March 2003 invasion of Iraq.

He chaired meetings of the White House Iraq Group, a special panel created eight months prior to the invasion to educate the public about the "threat" posed by Saddam Hussein.

"Iraq will be in a better place," Rove said in the Journal interview, despite criticism that the troop "surge" strategy announced by the president at the beginning of the year was not bearing any fruit.

A champion of bare-knuckled politics, Rove has been accused of masterminding last year's firings of eight federal prosecutors because they allegedly refused to pursue cases that could yield political benefits to Republicans, a charge the White House fervently denies.

He rarely minced words, even if

Pakistani troops kill three militants

AFP, Wana

Pakistani troops killed three suspected Islamic militants in a clash in a remote tribal town near the Afghan border, the military said yesterday. Fighting erupted overnight when some militants opened fire on a check post in the Tanai area of the South Waziristan tribal region, chief military spokesman Major General Waheed Arshad said.