

## Indoor politics

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DFID (Department for International Development) in Bangladesh.

They visited the Rajshahi Divisional Stadium where the main data entry server has been set up and two voter registration centres at Madar Baksh Home Economics College and Barendra College.

The election officials informed them that the voter-listing project in RCC will need five more days to complete, with 2,42,253 voters registered so far. The number was 2,74,128 in the 2006 voter list, they said.

Briefing the journalists later, Shakhatullah Hossain reiterated EC's firm stand on holding the general elections in due time.

"We requested the government to withdraw the ban on indoor politics for holding talks between the EC and the political parties over electoral reforms and other issues...and if the ban cannot be lifted completely at this moment, the government should at least create a environment for the talks," he said.

The election commissioner, however, said that the government is aware of the election roadmap by the EC and they have extended support to EC's steps. "So we still think that the government will allow politics in accordance with our programme."

"If the government thinks it will not be possible to lift the ban, some arrangements will be made for the talks," he said replying a question.

Shakhatullah said that they would schedule the talks according to the roadmap. "All the parties will sit for the talks with us as they all want election and we, too, are on the way towards the election."

About some demands of several political parties, the election commissioner said that it was the matter of the parties themselves and the government. "What we want to say is that we don't want to move away from our roadmap," he added.

**BRITISH HIGH**  
Peoples Jute Mills

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Law enforcers later dispersed them.

The first instalment of the gratuity was scheduled for payment on August 31. But as it was a weekly holiday, the authorities moved to pay off the part yesterday.

The mill's project director, Habibur Rahman, said he did not get any government allocation for full payment, adding that refusal to accept instalments will result in no payment at all.

Meantime, tension is running high in the city's Alim Jute Mills where workers are yet to get their 30-week wage arrears.

The mill's project director said the government has stopped fund for buying raw materials to run the mill.

**BTW autonomy**

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Just days before handing over power to a caretaker government, the then AL government in July 2001 passed the BTW to make BTW autonomous. But the law triggered enormous controversy over the government's sincerity, alleging it allowed more control over BTW.

Besides, the law was made ignoring the high profile 16-member commission's major recommendations submitted after a year of its formation.

The then AL government at the flag end of its tenure in 2001 passed two laws to give autonomy to the state-run media.

While discussing the law ministry's proposal for enforcement of the BTA yesterday, the council of advisers asked the information ministry to revise the commission's recommendations and make suggestions that can be incorporated in the existing law. They believe that no political government will give autonomy to the state-run media, which were used by successive governments in the past as their mouthpiece, sources said.

The commission recommended that a single body run both BTW and Betar and that the president appoint the chairman and members of such a body for a five-year term.

But the laws made by the AL government said there will be two separate authorities for Betar and BTW, and the government will appoint the chairmen and members of the two authorities for three years each. And both the authorities will be accountable to the information ministry, and the government will have power to remove the chairmen and members to be chosen from among experienced persons in the fields of education, culture, journalism, administration and broadcasting. Besides, the information ministry will approve the budget of the two media, said the laws.

But the commission recommended that the government cannot remove the chairmen and members and that the National Broadcasting Commission, which will be formed comprising eminent personalities, will approve the budget for the two media. The commission will be accountable to the parliamentary standing committee on information ministry, it suggested.

### COMMISSIONER'S BRIEFING

Briefing the reporters at Rajshahi Divisional Stadium, British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury expressed hope that the data entry and the election processes will be completed soon.

"As a friend of this country, we believe in enhancing the country's democracy...Everybody wants the return of a better democracy as soon as possible," he said.

The high commissioner termed the ongoing work for preparing the voter roll "a great job" and lauded the roles of the EC, army and the local people. He asked the authorities to be careful about security of the data being collected and the transparency in the system.

Anwar said that EC and army officials briefed him about the work they are doing and he is highly impressed.

"We are simply taken aback watching the levels of organisation, the kind of checking and the young people doing the data entry and the young students helping...," he added.

The high commissioner said that they have asked the people involved with the task to make sure that everybody is registered, especially the minority people and the disabled people from all wards in the city corporation.

"We hope that the voter registration project, if it is completed successfully, will be unique in Asia," Anwar said.

He also said that DFID has just handed over \$20 million to the Election Commission for the voter roll registration project. "Other donors will be giving more as the time goes on," he added.

Chris Austin, head of DFID in Bangladesh, said that the new voter list will create confidence among people. The British government is delighted to help in the project, he added.

Rajshahi voter listing task coordinator Lt Col Taher, deputy commissioner Khalilur Rahman and election officer Sayed Muhammad Musa were present at the briefing.

### Probe body

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"We are gradually advancing," Rahman said when asked about the progress of the commission's activities.

Commenting on the students' participation in the investigation process, he said, "The response from the students is very low. They did not turn up either for fear or for other reasons."

He, however, hoped that students' response would increase substantially when the university reopens.

DU Pro Vice-chancellor (VC) AFM Yusuf Haider Chowdhury, National University VC Syed Rashedul Haque, DU former vice-chancellor AK Azad Chowdhury, Treasurer of Dhaka University Teachers' Association GM Chowdhury and Assistant Registrar Sheikh Md Shah Newaz gave their statements before the commission yesterday.

Seven persons including a student gave their statements in the first three working days of the commission.

Meanwhile, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) yesterday called upon the city-dwellers to assist them by providing information about the persons involved in the violence.

The DMP said identities of the information providers would be kept secret.

Interested people can contact: Intelligence and Crime Information Department, Dhaka Metropolitan Police, 36, Minto Road, Ramna, Dhaka. Phone: 8331685, 8332406, 9337361. Fax: 9335866, 9336494. Mobile: 01711-883713, 01713-373193, 01711-605148, 01711-605147, 01711-883714, 01711-605144, 01711-368065. Email: jcdmp@police.gov.bd.

### DU provosts

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recent demonstrations at the varsity while he was abroad. They advised the VC to meet Chief Adviser Fakhrudin Ahmed to discuss the matter.

Faiz will sit with all department chairs and faculty deans today.

"We all feel insecure and everyone of the university family is devastated, anxious and afraid," Zahur Haq Hall Provost Zahidul Islam told reporters after the meeting.

Former Dhaka University Teachers' Association president AAMF Arefin Siddique told the reporters that they have demanded the release of their detained colleagues--Prof Anwar Hossain, general secretary of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta), and Prof Harun-or-Rashid, dean of the Social Science Faculty.

On August 22, the government closed the DU and other universities for an indefinite period and also ordered vacating the dormitories in the wake of violent incidents on the campuses.

Later, a one-member judicial inquiry commission with Justice Habibur Rahman was formed to investigate the incidents.

Referring to the judicial commission to investigate the demonstrations, Arefin said that the university's residential halls should be reopened, at least partially, to assist the investigation, otherwise the probe would remain incomplete.

The families of two detained DU teachers also met Faiz yesterday. The VC assured them of his full support and said that he would take up the matter with the high-ups in government.

### RMG export

FROM PAGE 1

"As China and India do not get the generalised system of preference facility in European countries, some companies of the two countries try to export products using fake GSP certificates," a member of the investigation team said preferring anonymity.

Bangladeshi companies failed to utilise the whole GSP facilities due to stringent rules of origin set by the EC, he said.

Commerce ministry sources said the government is going to take stern action against the officials and businessmen who have helped issuing fake GSP certificates to foreign companies.

The investigation team is supposed to prepare a full list of authorised offices and officials who have been designated to issue GSP certificates.

The team will advise the government to introduce the technology (ASYCUD+) that is being used by the National Board of Revenue (NBR) for issuance of customs clearance.

The team has prepared a list of complaints made by European Union about the exports using fake GSP certificates.

The team is also considering how the previous governments took action against the officials and companies who had been involved with the forgery.

The EU's GSP offers lower tariffs or duty-free access for imports from 178 developing countries and territories into the EU market.

In 2002, EU imports worth 53 billion euros were made under GSP.

The European Community first implemented a GSP scheme in 1971. General guidelines are drawn up for ten-year cycles for implementation of EU's GSP. Guidelines for the years 2006-2015 were adopted in 2004.

For products imported from GSP beneficiary countries, the EU's GSP grants either duty-free access or a tariff reduction, depending on which of the GSP arrangements a country enjoys.

### Foreign adviser

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our manufacturers. It is a very important source of food grains, fertiliser and energy. The intellectual and cultural connections between our two peoples go back centuries and there is a great possibility of converting these linkages to mutual economic and political benefits," Iftekhar added.

A foreign ministry handout said the Dhaka-Moscow relationship has remained in the backburner and the visit aims to 'reinvigorate' the relations as "Today Russia is fast evolving as a power in political and economic arena and is once again poised to play a key role."

During his visit, Iftekhar will hold bilateral talks with Lavrov, and call on Prime Minister in-charge SE Narayshkin.

He will also hold meetings with acting Industry and Energy Minister IS Matherov, and St. Petersburg Governor Valentina Matviienko.

As mandated by the Advisors Council of the caretaker government, Iftekhar will also sign a Consular Convention to codify consular practices by mutual consent, and the privileges and immunities of consular officers and offices from the laws of the "receiving State".

### VCs to meet

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I am not in a position to make any straight comment about the reopening of the university and its dormitories. I was abroad during the incidents. Let me first know about the incidents in detail."

The VC met the hall provosts on Friday to know their opinions about the reopening of the dormitories. He will meet the chairpersons of the departments and directors of the institutes at the university's Senate building at 3:30pm today.

Campus sources said the protests in the meeting urged the VC to take proper steps to reopen the dormitories immediately.

Meanwhile, a group of teachers yesterday met the DU vice-chancellor and placed their demand for release of their two detained colleagues--Prof Anwar Hossain, general secretary of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta), and Prof Harun-or-Rashid, dean of the Social Science Faculty.

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Later, a one-member judicial inquiry commission with Justice Habibur Rahman was formed to investigate the incidents.

Foreign direct investment (FDI)

inflow to Bangladesh declined in the past year and the country is falling behind compared to other developing countries in terms of attracting FDI. "Diversifying the FDI basket is also emerging as a major challenge," Mahbubur Rahman said.

He also suggested that the Board of Investment should change its decision-making procedures and take quick decisions. Otherwise, whatever worthwhile proposals are in the basket will be rejected to other countries, he said.

The meeting was apprised of the post-flood agricultural development activities, according to Chief Advisor's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munain.

Members of the Advisory Council, the cabinet secretary and the secretaries concerned attended the meeting at the Chief Advisor's Office.

Office timing

FROM PAGE 1

Authority Act 2001 and asked the information ministry to submit it after re-examination.

Chaired by Chief Advisor Fakhrudin Ahmed, the meeting approved a proposal for ratifying the agreement to set up South Asian University.

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## Benazir's party

FROM PAGE 16

in the Pakistani capital, although he refused to confirm whether government representatives were meeting with Benazir this weekend.

But a Cabinet minister and a senior figure in the Pakistan People's Party in Islamabad said associates of Musharraf were in London for talks with Benazir's side. Both spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue and said they had no details of the discussions, whose outcome remained uncertain.

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