

Norway to grant \$1m for voter roll project

UNB, Dhaka

In support of government effort to hold free, fair and credible elections, Norway will provide \$1 million for the "Preparation of Electoral Roll with Photographs (PERP)" project.

Norwegian Ambassador to Bangladesh Ingebjorg Stofring and UNDP Resident Representative Renata Dessimall yesterday signed an agreement under which UNDP undertakes to coordinate donor support for the project.

Under the PERP, the personal data of all eligible voters will be recorded and stored electronically.

The methodology was developed by the Election Commission (EC) with support from a team of both national and international consultants who worked in close consultation with the EC.

"Creating a digital voter roll with photographs comprising around 90 million voters in only 18 months is an enormously challenging task," said ambassador Stofring.

"However, the importance of a comprehensive and accurate voter roll for holding credible elections cannot be overestimated. We believe Bangladesh can accomplish this task successfully and we are pleased to be able to support this important work financially," said the envoy.

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Sending 189 artefacts to France stalled by HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday stalled the sending of 189 archaeological artefacts to France, as the court found irregularities in the agreement between the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the government of France to send the invaluable Bangladeshi items to an exhibition at a French museum.

Intelligence agencies had intervened in preventing the artefacts from being flown out, when they stopped consignment at Zia International Airport on September 15.

The HC yesterday issued a stay order on a writ petition filed by MA Kamal Yuree on September 16.

The court asked the government to produce necessary documents in support of its decision to sign the agreement with the French government on July 31.

Under the agreement, signed by the cultural ministry's secretary

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BSF take 25 Bangladeshi fishermen to India

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) abducted 25 Bangladeshi fishermen yesterday from Ichhamati river at Town Sreepur under Debhata upazila of the district.

The whereabouts of the fishermen could not be known immediately.

BSF sources said BSF personnel of Kalu Pota Camp under Basirha Police Station of 24 Parganas district in West Bengal, India kidnapped the fishermen while they were catching fish.

Major Kamrul Hasan, operations officer of 41 Rifles Battalion, confirmed the incident.

Get Prayer times from Warid Menu

Iftaar Sehri
6.03 PM 4.26 AM

WARID

Sehri, Iftar timing

Ramadan	Sep	Sehri	Iftar
5	18		6-03
6	19	4-26	6-02
7	20	4-27	6-00

Prayer Timing

September 18

Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-26 4-36
Zohr	12-45 1-15
Asr	4-30 4-45
Maghrib	6-03 6-18
Esha	7-45 8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation

Public support, political stability key to economic prospects: ADB

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The country's economic prospects will depend on the caretaker government's success in maintaining political stability and broad public support until the elections are held, said Asian Development Bank (ADB) yesterday.

"Any material setback on the political front would undermine business confidence and negatively affect investment and growth," said the bank's Asian Development Outlook-2007 Update, released here yesterday.

The ADB outlook said the government's recent administrative measures to rein in inflation have created uncertainty in the business

environment rather than checking it.

Bangladesh faces various risks that could derail economic projections. Political uncertainty is the key of those risks, said the outlook.

In the updated forecast for FY2007, ADB said the GDP growth will reach 6.5 percent and inflation rate will stand at 7 percent in the current fiscal.

Bangladesh faces various risks that could derail the earlier projections on some selected economic indicators including economic growth, inflation, and current account balance.

Growth in gross domestic products (GDP), inflation, and the current account surplus of FY2007,

which ended on June 30, came close to the projections made in March this year. For FY2008, the update slightly revises the earlier projection on GDP growth, but foresees higher inflation and a slightly wider current account surplus.

The caretaker government appointed in January 2007 has enjoyed widespread public support for its anti-corruption campaign as well as for its efforts to strengthen the electoral process, and advances made in previously stalled economic reforms, the updated outlook said.

The government has indicated its commitment to completing

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People go over a barbed wire fence to cross Mirpur Road near New Market in the capital yesterday even though there is a foot-over-bridge for pedestrians.

ASSAULT OF LEADERS AL probe body interviews 8

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) probe body yesterday interviewed eight witnesses about the incident of abuse of four senior leaders by some agitating workers outside the party's Dhamondi office.

AL presidium member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, the sole member of the probe committee, took the interviews at AL Dhamondi office from 10:00am to 12:00noon on the first day of the investigation.

On September 12, AL Acting General Secretary Mukul Bose, Organising Secretary Abdul Mannan, AL leaders AKM Jahangir Hossain and Prof Abu Sayeed were abused by some party activists before and after the AL Central Working Committee (ALCW) meeting.

Talking to the reporters at the Dhamondi office, Sajeda observed that it is their duty to maintain the unity of the party.

"There is no division in Awami

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Biman turns to Phuket to tackle flight shortage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Biman Airlines Ltd has leased an aircraft of Thailand-based Phuket Air to ease the pressure of thousands of overseas-bound workers who remain stranded due to shortage of flights.

A Boeing-747 aircraft with a capacity of 34 first class and 430 economic class passengers, is scheduled to arrive Dhaka today, said IPSSL Group, the local agent of Phuket Air in Dhaka, in a press release.

"Phuket Air will not charge any advance rent. It will charge only US\$5750 for each block hour (when it stays out of the airport in Bangladesh). This will significantly reduce the pressure of the Bangladeshi workers who will go abroad, especially to Malaysia and Middle East," it said.

A recent statistics of Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training said about 1.4 lakh workers remain stuck due to shortage of flights while 2,000 more are getting added to the total every day posing a risk for the overseas-bound workers of losing their jobs due to expiry of visa.

DEFAMATION CASE
Arrest warrant issued against Prothom Alo editor, publisher

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The chief metropolitan magistrate's (CMM) court in Rajshahi yesterday issued arrest warrants against Bangla daily Prothom Alo's Editor Matiur Rahman, and its Publisher and also The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam in a defamation case filed by Rajshahi Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu.

The court also issued arrest warrant against Prothom Alo Reporter Kamrul Hasan, also an accused in the case.

CMM Afzal Hossain said the accused did not appear before the court though summonses were

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Police on guard in front of a bank at Tejgaon yesterday as security has been stepped up across the city in the month of Ramadan.

SUFFERINGS OF BANGLADESHI WORKERS

Rights body blames HC in KL for abuse

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh high commission in Kuala Lumpur must be held accountable for the abuse and deplorable conditions suffered by its own citizens, said Tenaganita, a migrants and women rights organisation in Malaysia.

Condemning the September 15 assault on Bangladeshi workers on the premises of Bangladesh high commission in Kuala Lumpur, Tenaganita in a statement signed by its Director Dr Irene Fernandez yesterday said more than 10

recruiting agency personnel with the connivance of the high commission staff beat up the workers.

Meanwhile, several migrants

and human rights organisations in a

press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday condemned the attack on the workers in Malaysia and demanded exemplary punishment to those responsible following a judicial probe into the incident.

The Tenaganita statement said while the Bangladeshi workers, 110 in total, were on hunger strike for the 5th day demanding the high commission's intervention over the collection of their six months' overdue wages, they came under attack inside their own high commission

and were forcefully sent to an unknown destination in two buses.

Following the immediate intervention of Tenaganita, the police brought the workers back and requested Tenaganita to take the workers in its custody.

Tenaganita expressed deep concern over the assault on the workers by the recruiting agents, an assault aided by their own high commission staff. "Why did the high commission allow the agents to beat up the workers?" Tenaganita said.

"Yet the Labour Attaché [of Bangladesh high commission] denies this stark reality. The state of

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Bangladesh play Sri Lanka today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will look forward to stage another upset in the ICC World Twenty20 Championship when they face mighty Sri Lanka in a Super Eights match at Johannesburg tonight.

The match will start at 10pm Bangladesh time with satellite TV channel ESPN showing live coverage.

Meanwhile, Pakistan lost two early wickets after being put in to bat by Sri Lanka in their opening Super Eights match at the Wanderers in Johannesburg last night.

The new ball pair of Dilhara Fernando and Chaminda Vaas removed Salman Butt (12) and Imran Nazir (7) to leave Pakistan floundering on 32-2 off 5 overs.

Sri Lanka have made quite an impression in the shortest version of the game and Bangladesh will have their work cut out at the batting paradise of Wanderers, where the

Tigers just recently got the better of the West Indies. Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful believes they have the potential to repeat their performance against the Caribbeans although they showed almost no resistance against the Proteas and the Aussies in their last two games.

Bangladesh must win their remaining matches -- the other game on September 20 against Pakistan -- to keep their hopes alive for a semifinals place and given the nature of this particular version of the game, the Tigers would be buoyed by the thought that 'almost anything is possible'.

Bangladesh are expected to bring two changes to strengthen their batting, dropping out-of-form Alok Kapali and Forhad Reza for Mahmudullah Riyad and Nadir Chowdhury.

In other matches today, New Zealand face England at Durban while Australia take on Pakistan at Johannesburg.

HC rule on why govt shouldn't be asked to stop deal with IMF

UNB, Dhaka

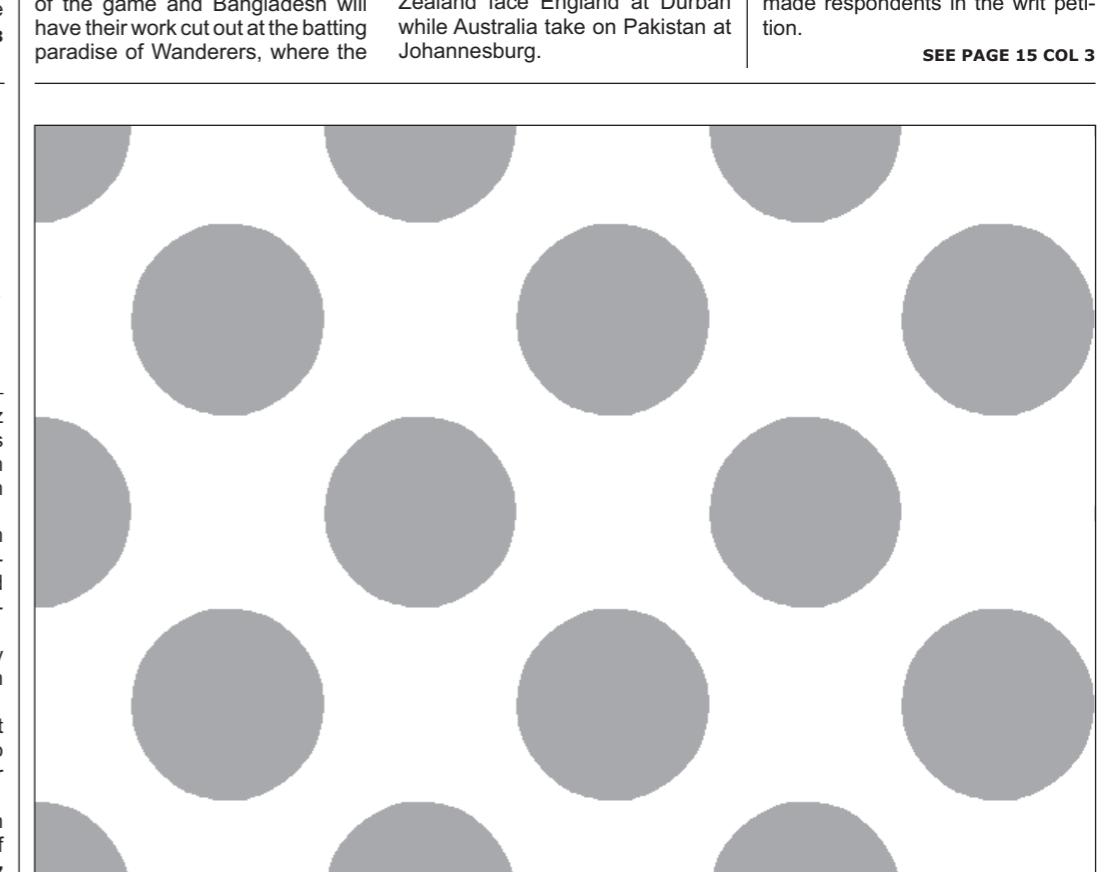
The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule asking the government to explain why it should not be directed to refrain from negotiating with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) a major deal styled Policy Support Instrument (PSI) agreement.

A division bench comprising Justice Nazmunn Ara Sultana and Justice M Abu Tariq passed the order on a writ petition filed by Advocate M Mesbahul Islam.

"The rule is made returnable in two weeks," says the court order, which incidentally came in the wake of appeals from different quarters to the caretaker government for not signing such an open-ended policy deal with the multilateral donor agency.

Principal secretary to the chief adviser, the cabinet secretary and the finance secretary have been made respondents in the writ petition.

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Outlaw killed in 'crossfire'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A member of outlawed New Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP) was killed yesterday in a "shootout" between police and his cohorts at Uthi village in Kushtia.

The dead was identified as Abu Taleb (40), of Uthi village under Khosha upazila.

Acting on a tip-off, police cordoned off the Uthi bridge area where members of NBCP were holding a secret meeting at about 4:45 am.

Sensing the presence of the law enforcers, NBCP members fired on them prompting the policemen to retaliate.

Taleb received bullets during the "shootout" while his accomplices managed to flee.

He was taken to Khosha upazila health complex where the on-duty doctor declared him dead.

Police recovered a country-made rifle and 25 rounds of bullet from the spot.

Source: Islamic Foundation

Musharraf to 'quit as army chief'

Court hears challenges to Pak president

AFP, BBC Online, Islamabad

Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf plans to stand down as army chief by 15 November, an official from the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (PML) says.

Gen Musharraf will resign from the powerful post after the presidential elections, said Mushahid Hussain Sayeed, the PML's secretary general.

He is seeking re-election by parliament before its term expires in mid-October.

Pakistan's Supreme Court meanwhile is debating his right to remain army chief if he stands for president again.

There has been no confirmation from Gen Musharraf himself

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