

Advisory Council okays open sky policy for three months

BSS, Dhaka

The Council of Advisers yesterday at a meeting approved open sky policy for three airports of the country for the next three months with a view to ease the air travel problems of Bangladesh nationals.

The Zia International Airport, Shah Amanat International Airport and Osmani International Airport will come under the policy from October to December next.

After the meeting, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim told journalists that under the open sky policy all designated international airlines would be able to operate their flights in these three airports as per availability of the passengers.

The meeting observed that open sky policy will help solve the present problems of different sections of outgoing passengers including labourers, students, businessmen and other professionals.

He said the Hajj flights will remain excluded from this policy.

Chaired by Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, the meeting reviewed the draft of the National Constitutional Council Ordinance-2007 to expedite formation of a committee to select appropriate persons for the constitutional posts.

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US backs reforms, poll roadmap

Gastright tells CA, meets army chief

STAR REPORT

The US government fully supports the electoral roadmap of the Election Commission (EC) and the reform steps taken by the caretaker government, said visiting US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs John A. Gastright yesterday while making a courtesy call on Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed.

Gastright had meetings with the chief adviser (CA), foreign adviser, chief election commissioner (CEC), the army chief, leaders of the business community, civil society members, and political parties in the last two days, discussing the current political situation in Bangladesh, reported BSS and UNB.

CA Fakhruddin welcomed Gastright in his office in the capital and reiterated that the government will try to arrange the upcoming election, if possible, earlier than the set time of up to December 2008, while simultaneously establishing the rule of law and good governance.

"A number of political parties are

going to undergo reforms within themselves," Fakhruddin told Gastright adding that registration and financial transparency of political parties are public demands.

Referring to his visit to the EC Secretariat, Gastright told journalists he is impressed by the progress

of the commission's activities for holding the election on time, and the EC's five-point plan.

Referring to the huge task of bringing electoral reforms and holding the election on time, the US deputy assistant secretary said the caretaker government needs

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PHOTO: PID

Visiting US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs John A. Gastright calls on Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed at his office yesterday.

Dhaka seeks US help for release of Brac staff

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh yesterday sought US assistance for release of Brac employee Nurul Islam kidnapped in Afghanistan five days ago.

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury made the request during a meeting with US Deputy Assistant Secretary John Gastright at the foreign ministry.

Brac officials yesterday said they did not receive any updates of rescue operation or investigation into Nurul Islam's abduction.

Quoting Afghan police, BBC on Tuesday reported that they arrested three men in connection with the Brac employee's kidnap. The kidnappers were common criminals, Afghan police said.

Meantime, the body of another Brac employee Abdul Alim, shot dead in Afghanistan on September 12, was buried in Tangail yesterday.

Talking to the reporters after the meeting with the US deputy assistant secretary, Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury said, "I have requested him (Gastright) to see whether it will be possible for the US authorities to help securing the release of Nurul Islam."

He said the government has initiated a four-pronged initiative

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Traders tell joint forces prices won't rise further

Ministry might be asked to waive Jamuna bridge tolls for trucks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Traders of kitchen markets in the capital yesterday assured that prices of essentials would not increase further during Ramadan.

The assurance came at a meeting with the joint forces at the BDR headquarters.

Meantime, the government monitoring committee on curbing price hike decided to ask the communications ministry to exempt essential goods carrying trucks from paying tolls at Jamuna Bridge.

The meeting between traders and the joint forces decided that from now on association leaders will put up price charts of essentials at kitchen markets every day, and retailers will be bound to sell goods at these prices.

Presidents and general secretaries of different wholesale and retail kitchen market associations attended the meeting chaired by Col Abdul Halim, chief coordinator of Trade and Commerce Monitoring Cell (TCMC), BDR.

The meeting also decided to fix the commission of agents (middlemen between wholesalers and

retailers).

Proper action would be taken if any traders are found involved in manipulation of market prices, the meeting was told.

Meanwhile, the joint forces have already opened monitoring cells at five wholesale markets at Karwan Bazar, Shyampur, Jatrabari, Mirpur and Tongi. Wholesalers will have to inform the joint forces about their daily sale of goods.

An army major is heading each monitoring cell, and any customer can make complaints there.

Traders body leaders present at yesterday's meeting urged that no trader should be harassed unnecessarily.

Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) dealers are selling soybean and lentil in Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Rajshahi. This will continue during Ramadan

INTER-MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE

As part of the government's effort to curb spiraling prices of essentials the inter-ministerial monitoring committee on the matter yesterday decided to ask the communications ministry to exempt essential goods

carrying trucks from paying tolls at Jamuna Multi-purpose Bridge.

The decision was taken yesterday at a routine meeting of the committee held at the secretariat of the commerce ministry with its chairman, Additional Commerce Secretary Golam Mostakim, in the chair.

"If the trucks are exempted from paying tolls it will be an incentive to the essential goods traders for curbing exorbitant prices," Mostakim said.

The committee requested the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) to submit production and demand estimates of essentials for 2007-'08 fiscal in the next meeting.

"The government may take policy decisions for bringing equilibrium to the supply-demand situation of essentials if it has in hands the projections of production and demand in advance," Mostakim said.

He told journalists after the meeting that the government will hold a high level meeting with the

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PHOTO: STAR

Dolls adorned with local sarees are placed in front of Bailey Road shops in the capital to woo customers ahead of the Eid.

EXTORTION CHARGE Court now to decide on trial of case against Hasina Oct 4

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday re-fixed October 4 for order whether to accept the charge sheet of the Tk 3 crore extortion case against Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina, her sister Sheikh Rehana and their cousin Sheikh Fazlul Karim.

Meanwhile, Hasina was shown arrested yesterday in a Tk 3 crore graft case filed with Tejgaon Police Station against her and six others on September 2.

EXTORTION CASE Metropolitan Magistrate KM Ruhul Amin set the date for order on acceptance of the charge sheet following a time petition by the defence lawyers.

In the petition, advocate Syed Rezaul Rahman and Firozur Rahman Montu mentioned that they had earlier submitted a writ petition to the High Court (HC) challenging the legality of the case. After the hearing, the court granted ad interim bail to Hasina in the two cases filed with the Gulshan and

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Legal trouble for tax evasion cases

Experts say NBR followed law partially

EMRAN HOSSAIN

The tax evasion cases of National Board of Revenue (NBR) are facing challenges as the High Court (HC) recently stayed proceedings of two cases after petitions were filed saying the cases were filed without maintaining proper procedure and ignoring the provisions of law.

Legal experts said while filing the cases the NBR has applied the Emergency Power Rules for offences committed before the declaration of the state of emergency, which is absolutely illegal. They said the bureau has also followed the Income Tax Ordinance partially, which has deprived the accused of opportunities ensured by the ordinance.

They feared this type of criminal cases may have an adverse impact on the country's economy as businessmen, who constitute a major part of the taxpayers, are becoming reluctant to continue business fearing harassment with such cases.

"The tax evasion cases were

filed with partial application of the Income Tax Ordinance 1984 depriving the taxpayers of opportunities ensured by the ordinance," said advocate Shah Zikrul Ahmed, former president of Tax Bar Association.

The experts said before filing a criminal case a deputy commissioner of taxes may issue a notice if anyone conceals particulars of their income or furnishes inaccurate particulars or omits or fails to disclose all material facts in the statement to the NBR.

The taxpayer then may submit a revised return to the NBR or file a writ petition to the NBR tribunal if they do not agree with the NBR notice. The NBR authorities can go for criminal case if the tribunal rejects the petition, the experts said.

Under section 170 of the Income Tax Ordinance the NBR can even compound offences before or after filing a case and dissolve the issue on compromise, they added.

The NBR has also limitations for

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Writ petition soon against placing Khaleda's case under EPR

UNB, Dhaka

A group of lawyers are soon going to file a writ petition with the High Court challenging the legality of placing the corruption case against detained former prime minister Khaleda Zia, her younger son Arafat Rahman Koko and the co-accused under the Emergency Power Rules.

"When the case was filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission, it was an ordinary case. There is no element for which it can be placed under the Emergency Power Rules. Our senior lawyers are consulting this matter," her counsel Advocate Ahmed Azam told reporters yesterday at a press briefing at his Purana Paltan chamber.

The press briefing was arranged as the Anti-Corruption Commission Secretary Mukhles-ur-Rahman said on September 17 that the case against Khaleda Zia and Arafat had been placed under the EPR.

He had further stated that they would file a corruption case against Tarique Rahman, Khaleda's elder

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ATTEMPTED MURDER Court frames charges against ex-MP Pintu

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against detained former BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu in connection with an attempted murder case.

Judgement of a money laundering case against Harris Chowdhury, former political secretary to former premier Khaleda Zia, will be delivered on October 4.

Arrest warrants were issued against four Dhaka City

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Police get fund to probe cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will grant police Tk 18 crore in the 2007-'08 fiscal year to meet the cost of investigation of cases.

Investigators of cases earlier used to manage the cost of their investigation through illegal means, which resulted in submission of biased probe reports.

The government will also provide all traffic police with an allowance of 30 percent of their basic salary, but not exceeding Tk 2,500, top police officials said at a press briefing at the police headquarters yesterday.

The government will have to spend Tk 7.3 crore for this allowance to 6,172 policemen in the

traffic department, they said, adding that the allowance will be effective from September 15, the day the government approved it.

From now on investigation officers will get Tk 3,000 for the investigation cost of each murder and dacoity case, Tk 2,000 for robbery and unnatural death case, Tk 1,000 for women and children repression related case, Tk 2,500 for abduction case, Tk 1,000 for law and order related cases and Tk 1,000 for investigation of other offences.

The police headquarters had calculated the sector-wise expenditures for investigation of different cases and submitted a proposal to the home ministry seeking alloca-

tion of Tk 32.65 crore as investigation cost.

The proposal projected investigation cost of each murder and dacoity case at Tk 5,000, robbery case at Tk 3,000, women and children repression case at Tk 3,000, abduction case at Tk 4,000, law and order related case at Tk 2,000, unnatural death case at Tk 3,000 and other offences at Tk 2,000.

"Investigations will be fair now and general people will get justice," said Additional Inspector General of Police (Training) SM Sazzad Ali.

He said the police headquarters are now working to find out ways to ensure smooth handover of the

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SALE OF 18 RAJUK HOUSES ACC submits charge sheet against 25 today

UNB, Dhaka

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) will submit a charge sheet today against 25 individuals, including two former ministers and three former secretaries and Rajuk officials, in a case filed for selling 18 Rajuk houses in the city's posh areas at very low prices.

"The commission approved the submission of the charge sheet against 25 individuals on Tuesday. It's being prepared and will be submitted tomorrow," a competent ACC source told the news agency

yesterday. ACC Deputy Assistant Director Rezaul Haque Tarafder will submit the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's court.

"Yes, the commission has approved the submission of charge sheet in the case for selling 18 Rajuk houses at low prices. The charge sheet will be submitted very soon...Within this week," ACC secretary Mokhles ur Rahman told reporters in the afternoon.

ACC Assistant Director Shahidul Alam on March 29 filed a first

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Ajker Kagoj shut down

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Publication of Ajker Kagoj, a Bangla daily newspaper, has been stopped by its authorities yesterday.

In a press release issued yesterday, the authorities said, "The organisation can no longer continue publication of the newspaper due to financial crisis."

Kazi Sahid Ahmed is the editor of Ajker Kagoj that came into being 17 years ago, in 1991. Before closing, the newspaper had around 225 employees.

"The authorities have made arrangements to disburse due payments to all employees including journalists and officials in a short time," said the press release.

The disbursement will start from Sunday, journalists of the newspaper said.



PHOTO: STAR

Floodwaters inundate low-lying areas in the capital as rivers around it are swelling again. The photo was taken from Manda area.

City's low-lying areas inundated afresh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rivers around the capital are flowing anew above the danger mark, inundating the city's low-lying areas again though overall flood situation across the country is slowly improving.

Meantime, sixteen more flood-related deaths were reported in 24 hours till yesterday morning, raising the death toll to 970, UNB reported.

A Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) bulletin said rivers around the capital would keep the surge till next 72 hours but played down the possibility of yet another flooding in the city.

The rise in water level has already inundated some of the city's low-lying areas -- Manda, Basabo, Nandipara, Trimohini and Keraniganj, marooning thousands of people.

Many people, especially those living in shanties, have taken shelter at different educational institutions and other buildings.

The FFWC said rivers are flowing above the danger mark at 17 monitoring points, adding that seven have swollen above the danger level while the rest have remained steady or are slowly receding.

Most of the rivers in the Brahmaputra, Ganges, Meghna and south-eastern hill basins have observed a decrease, it said.

The bulletin predicted that the Brahmaputra-Jamuna would

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