

EC electoral talks

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on the committee.

Later, a party press release revealed names of 16 leaders instead of 15.

Since then a few party leaders expressed resentment as their names were not included in the committee and started mounting pressure on the party's Acting President Zillur Rahman.

Sources said Zillur was forced to nominate five low profile leaders-- Advocate Shahara Khatun, Dr Hasan Mahmud, Abdel Mannan Khan, Prof Abu Sayeed and Raziuddin Ahmed Razu--for the committee.

Most committee members opposed the decision, saying if these five leaders have really been included in the committee, then half of the party's Central Working Committee members staying in Dhaka now are going to represent the AL at the EC dialogue.

An angered AL leader said, "As the party will hold a highly professional and technical discussion with the Election Commission, the committee should be small in size."

Sources also said some of the committee members will give their reaction at a meeting of the committee today. A few even told The Daily Star that they might not join the talks at the EC although they will work for preparing the party's statement to be placed before the commission.

"We wanted to keep the committee confined to the members of the party presidium and advisory council so that the committee has some dignity," said a committee member.

"But with the expansion of the committee, everything will be funny... as if we are going for a football match with the Election Commission. There will be no fruitful discussion if 21 members go for dialogue with the commission," the AL leader told The Daily Star prefer-

ring not to be named.

A few AL leaders believe that the fresh names have been included to keep a balance between the pro-Sheikh Hasina and the dissident reformist blocks within the party.

The committee will sit today at the political office of detained AL President Sheikh Hasina at Dhanmondi at 11:00am to review the EC's draft of reform proposals and prepare a set of recommendations.

AL Acting General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam is the member secretary of the committee. The other members are Suranjit Sengupta, Motia Chowdhury, Abul Mal Abdul Muhith, Advocate Rahmat Ali, Mukul Bose, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Abdul Mannan, Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Akhtaruzzaman, Sultan Mohammad Mansur Ahmed, Abdur Rahman, Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Abdul Latif Siddiqui, and AKM Jahangir Hossain.

Govt official

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officers who had political connections, managed to grab key positions in the administration although some of them had corruption charges against them.

The last BNP-led alliance government put officers of choice at the filed administration, allegedly to get advantages in the now-postponed general elections.

Political influence on civil servants threw the administration's chain of command into disarray at the end of the BNP regime and during President Iajuddin Ahmed's caretaker government.

A group of government officials met secretly at Uttara late last year, purportedly to devise election win for the BNP making the administration shaky, sources added.

SC asked

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any obstruction before separation of the judiciary from the executive on November 1 as slated," the SC registrar told The Daily Star last night.

Mainul sought cooperation from all quarters so that the separation can be done smoothly.

During a seminar on Sunday, administrative officials from across the country urged the government to return some judicial power to them so that they can initiate legal proceedings, order investigation into cognisable cases, maintain law and order, run mobile courts and inspect examination halls.

After holding negotiations with Bangladesh Administrative Service Association the following day, the government on Tuesday announced of giving the executive magistrates some judicial power.

However, some legal experts voiced strong opposition to the government decision, saying that giving judicial power to the executive conflicts with the spirit of separation of the judiciary from the executive.

Home ministers

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Technical and Economic Cooperation (Bimstec) in January.

Dhaka has been prevaricating around the bilateral treaty with India, which has been sitting with Bangladesh since 2003, despite several approaches from New Delhi since June 2003 because of the extradition clause.

In its present shape, the draft recommends sharing information and evidence on suspects and instruments of terrorism.

If signed, the deal will also make detained suspects available for investigators across borders, request for search and seizure of instruments and proceeds of crimes and reining in money laundering that has link with terrorist activities within the Saarc states.

Both Dhaka and New Delhi announced in June that they would share information regarding terrorism, but no details on the nature of the information were released.

Experts from the eight Saarc states met in Colombo last month to discuss the MLAT draft.

India and Sri Lanka broke the treaty in an experts group meeting in March that was followed by substantial talks during the 14th Saarc summit in New Delhi in April.

As of now, India has failed to secure bilateral mechanisms with other Saarc nations to cooperate in this area even though it has similar agreements with 25 other countries. HOME SECYS FIRM ON CHECKING TERRORISM

Home secretaries of Saarc countries have expressed their determination to strengthen mutual assistance to check terrorism and trans-border crimes, reports our correspondent from New Delhi.

They also stressed the need for better cooperation among police organisations of member countries yesterday, the second day of the three-day Saarc Home Ministers' conference in New Delhi.

The need for strengthening Saarc Terrorism Offence Monitoring Desk and Saarc Drug Offences Monitoring Desk in Sri Lanka was also discussed at the meeting.

The meeting also reviewed the progress in implementing the decisions of the first meeting of Saarc home ministers held in Dhaka in May last year.

Meanwhile, police chiefs of Saarc countries mooted the creation of a database to help security agencies of member nations combat terrorism, drug smuggling and cyber crime on Tuesday, the first day of the three-day meeting of home ministers and senior officials of Saarc nations.

Representatives from eight member countries stressed the need for an effective institutional mechanism for greater coordination and agreed on sharing information among police organisations to check trans-border crimes.

Police suspect the rickshaw puller was killed due to previous enmity.

Meanwhile, unconscious body of Zamuluddin was recovered from a wholesale market for fish at Jatrabari.

Employees of the market rushed him to the DMCH at 1:30pm where the on duty doctors pronounced him dead.

Relatives of the victim suspect 'ogyan party' members might feed him something to snatch his valuables.

Turkish

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met amid new international appeals for restraint and signs that Baghdad might hand some rebels over to prevent a Turkish military strike.

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani told Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan in Baghdad on Tuesday that he "did not exclude the possibility" of extraditing PKK militants, a Turkish government source said.

Babacan said Iraq should hand over about 100 PKK members whose names are on a list sent to Baghdad earlier this year, the source said, adding that the matter would be discussed during talks here Thursday with a visiting Iraqi delegation.

President Abdullah Gul chaired the National Security Council meeting of top officers and senior ministers to discuss options for tackling the PKK, which has been fighting for self-rule in southeast Turkey since 1984.

Ankara says it will not flinch from military action if Iraq and the United States fail to clamp down on PKK bases in northern Iraq.

Officials also raised the possibility of economic sanctions against Iraq.

"We are the country with which Iraq has the largest trade. But this has now become meaningless," Foreign Trade Minister Kurat Tuzmen said. "We are keeping all our options open."

Hearing on Koko

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Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Deputy Director Johirul Huda, investigation officer of the graft case, on October 22 placed the remand prayer before the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka.

Earlier on September 3, Koko was placed on a seven-day remand for interrogation. But he was sent to jail before completion of the remand due to his illness.

The ACC filed the case on September 2 against 13 people including Khaleda and Koko.

Khaleda was questioned on October 11. Six former ministers of her cabinet, bureaucrats and officials of Chittagong Port Authority, Kamalapur ICD yard and Global Agro Trade (Pvt) Co Ltd (Gatco) were also questioned.

The team investigating the case comprises taskforce members Shamimur Rahman, Deputy Commissioner of National Board of Revenue Major Mustafa Kamal, CID Inspector Nurul Islam and ACC Deputy Director Johirul Huda. They also examined the way a contractor conducts container handling at the yard.

HARRIS CHOWDHURY
Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque of the Court of Metropolitan Sessions Judge closed deposition of witnesses in the graft case against him.

After recording statements of the investigation officer (IO), the court set October 27 for hearing on arguments of the case. Earlier, the court recorded statements of 16 prosecution witnesses, including the complainant of the case.

On July 22, Monayem Hossain, ACC assistant director and IO of the case, submitted the charge sheet against Harris and Amin Badal, one

of Harris' accomplices.

Harris is on the run since joint forces started clamping down on the alleged corrupt bigwigs.

The proceeding of the case against Badal was earlier stayed on an order from the High Court.

The case was filed on March 25, as Harris, allegedly through abuse of power, got a hold of a government automobile belonging to National Tea Company and later handed it over to Badal.

Harris was earlier convicted for three years in connection with a case filed for not submitting his wealth statement to the ACC within the deadline.

He was also handed down three years' simple imprisonment for possessing illegal foreign and local currencies at his Gulshan residence. BABAR CASE

Judgement of an arms case against detained former state minister for home affairs Lutfozzaman Babar will be delivered on October 30.

On completion of arguments from the prosecution and the defence on October 23, Judge Sayed Jahed Mansur of the Metropolitan Special Tribunal-9 set the date for verdict.

CU reopens

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"Our effort to bring back congenial academic atmosphere on the university campus will continue," he said.

The university authorities reopened the dormitories on Monday.

The university was closed following a government order to shut down all the public universities on August 22.

BSF chief in city

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other's territory through negotiation between the two frontier forces.

BDR has included on the agenda provocative gunshots and barbaric attacks on innocent Bangladeshis by BSF and Indian nationals, intrusion of BSF and Indian nationals, and attempts of so-called "push-in" of Bangla-speaking Indian nationals into Bangladesh.

The BDR officials said they would raise the issues of activities of Bangladeshi crime suspects from Indian territory, cross-border smuggling of Indian drugs, weapons and explosives, and "concerted campaign" against the Bangladesh border guards in Indian media during the meeting.

Installation of permanent border demarcation pillars, BSF's obstruction of installing and repairing structures and roads, cultivation inside Bangladesh territory, the Indian side's construction of military installations and erection of barbed-wire fencing within 150 yards of the border will also surface at the talks.

The Indian delegation also handed over a proposed agenda that include alleged intrusion and criminal activities of Bangladeshis into Indian territory, border violations by BDR soldiers, activities of Bangladeshi extreme rightwing elements and terrorists inside India and intervention in India's natural resources by Bangladeshi nationals, the BDR officials said.

Other issues of the BSF agenda include smuggling of Indian currency and livestock, alleged refuge of Indian separatist elements

inside Bangladesh and smuggling of weapons to Indian territory through Bangladesh.

The agenda of the two forces also feature counter allegations of non-response to offer for flag meetings, refusal of proposed joint inspection of border pillars.

The two sides are likely to propose initiatives for building friendly relations through sports and cultural activities.

Yaba tablets

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credit cards, a passport and Tk 2000 fake currency.

Anisur and Prema admitted to reporters at Rab-1 office in Uttara that they just work as carriers, while Al Amin said he is a Yaba addict.

Baby who claims to be third among Waliur's three wives said she does not know anything about drugs trade. However, Rab officials said Baby and Al Amin are Yaba dealers.

With the latest arrests, Rab and Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) have so far arrested 16 people who include private university students and a music video model since October 18.

Members of different intelligence agencies' started quizzing the six youths at the TFI yesterday to learn every detail of the drugs business, a top official of Rab said, asking not to be named.

Rab sources said the youths are being interrogated carefully as they seemed to be ill.

Dayee Khan Beer alias Chiku, Mushfikur Rahman Tamal, Sheikh Ahmed Shafiq, Salman Rahim Juardar, Altaf Akmal Kollol and Mahmud Al Jubereee alias Shanon are now on a three-day remand.

Arrest warrant

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mentioned that they had earlier submitted a writ petition to the High Court (HC) challenging the legality of the case.

They added that the court, after hearing, granted ad interim bail to Hasina in two cases filed with Gulshan and Tejoa police stations and also issued a rule upon the government.

But the Supreme Court stayed the HC order following a government appeal and directed the HC to dispose of the matter, said the defence adding that the matter was now on the HC's cause list.

They appealed the court not to pass any judgment on whether to accept the charge sheet until the HC disposes of the matter.

Opposing the defence plea, the prosecution prayed for acceptance of the charge sheet as the higher court had not pass any order barring the acceptance of the charge sheet.

Upon scrutinising the case docket, the court rejected the petition submitted by the defence lawyers and issued the arrest warrant against Rehana and ordered attachment of her properties.

The court also directed the authorities concerned to send a copy of the arrest warrant and the order of property attachment to the officer in charge (OC) of Gulshan Police Station for implementation of its order.

On July 24, Gulshan Police Station OC Obaidul Haque, also the IO of the case, submitted the charge sheet against Hasina, Rehana and Selim to the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate,

No more govt

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and this strengthens our resolve for a democratic and prosperous Bangladesh."

The CA said his government deeply appreciates the response they have got from the UN system towards consolidating the country's democracy.

He mentioned with happiness that UNDP came forward to support the government's effort to prepare a new voter roll with photos.

The CA reaffirmed that Bangladesh remained avowedly committed to the principles of the United Nations. "We are among the first few countries whose constitution makes an explicit reference to UN Charter."

During the 36 years of Bangladesh statehood, the country never has deviated from the commitments made in the constitution, he informed the function.

He said Bangladesh's position on the issues of rights to self-determination and peaceful resolution of conflicts has remained steadfast.

"Nowhere is our commitment to multilateralism more apparent than our consistent presence in the UN peacekeeping operations. Since 1988, Bangladesh has participated in over 30 peace missions in over 36 countries," he said.

"In cumulative terms we are the world's largest peacekeepers - a status that stands apart from other members of the United Nations."

Advisers to the caretaker government, diplomats, some political leaders, representatives of UN organisations and distinguished personalities attended the UN Day function.

Two songs were rendered on the occasion.

Rokon Ud-Doula

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reasons of their complaint and taken initiatives to uphold their dignity.

"I believe that the BCS admin cadres and magistrates will have no discontent now," said Rokon.

"Whatever responsibility I am entrusted with, I shall work with 100 percent honesty and sincerity for the government and the country," he added.

Asked if he has received any contempt notice from Supreme Court lawyer ZI Khan Panna, Rokon said he received an envelope but had not yet opened it.

"I hope that the issue will be settled through dialogue as I have already apologised to the chief justice and the government," he said.

Meanwhile, Panna's counsel Advocate Asaduzzaman told the UNB that he had heard about Rokon's apology but is not aware of the nature of the apology.

Asaduzzaman said although Rokon complied with one term of the contempt petition, the condition for seeking apology to the chief justice in writing has not yet been done.

Voter listing

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that academic activity is not hampered.

EC Deputy Commissioner Biswas Lufur Rahman said the voter registration with ID cards in the capital will begin on December 1 and continue until January 31.

"Four hundred educational institutions in the capital will be used as voter registration centres. The list of voter registration centres will be announced tomorrow [today] and the respective schools and colleges will also be informed then," he told reporters.

Besides this, 33 server centres will be opened with Mahanagar Natta Mancha as the main server centre, he added.

Mujumdar said the school annual examinations will be held between November 24 to December 4. Some of the schools will have to change their annual examination schedules as all institutions are not used as registration centre and the process is not held simultaneously.

He also said the ministry asked the EC to postpone the voter registration task on December 10-11 as juniors scholarship examinations are set to be held then.

Among others, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education Director General Prof Nazim Uddin and headmasters and principals of different institutions in the capital were present.

High profile

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January can be completed before the polls.

Whether the government will allow people on corrupt suspects' list to take part in the city corporation elections, Matin said, "It's a policy decision. I don't know what the government will decide."

Regarding publication of 35 corrupt suspects in the fourth list though the newspapers earlier published 80 names which Matin said was "almost correct", the NCC chief said, "This was part one of the list which was published on the basis of merit of the allegations."

Asked when the second part may come out, he said "We can't say it at the moment. We're much more concerned about disposing of the allegations we have in our hands at the moment."

Matin replied in the negative when he was asked whether there would be any change in the list of 80.

Asked to comment on presence of task force members at different service providing institutions like Rajuk, DCC and National Housing Authority Bhaban, he said, "The task force members are doing whatever they need to do for the sake of inquiry and investigation."

Detective quits probe into Benazir blast

AP, Karachi

The senior detective leading the investigation into the suicide attack on Benazir Bhutto withdrew from the case after the opposition leader accused him of involvement in the torture of her husband, a senior official said Wednesday.

Ghulam Muhammad Mohtarem, the home secretary of Sindh province, said the government would assemble a new team of investigators for the October 18 attack in Karachi by two suicide bombers on a truck carrying Bhutto through a sea of more than 150,000 supporters welcoming her back from more than eight years in exile.

At least 136 people were killed, raising doubts about Pakistan's stability as it heads toward crucial elections.

The government is battling militants based in the northwest, where it sent 2,500 troops into a remote valley Wednesday to combat followers of a militant cleric calling for Taliban-style rule. But the cleric, Maulana Fazlullah, appeared to be unruffled, and thousands of his supporters gathered to hear him speak just a few miles from where the soldiers were deployed.

Authorities have accused Fazlullah of links to Islamabad's radical Red Mosque, which was stormed by army commandos in July in an operation that left more than 100 people dead.

That incident and the deployment of army reinforcements to Swat and the North Waziristan region touched off a wave of violence that has left more than 1,000 people dead.

Bhutto has blamed militants for the attack on her but accused elements in the government and security services of complicity and called for international experts to help in the investigation.

She specifically objected to Manzar Mughal, a senior investigator in the Sindh province police force, claiming he had been present while her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, was tortured in custody on corruption charges in 1999.

"The investigation team will be formed anew after Manzar Mughal disassociated himself from the investigation in view of the objections raised by Benazir Bhutto on the chief investigator's credentials," Mohtarem said.

Mohtarem said the provincial government had no doubt about Mughal's competency and professionalism, but said he had decided to withdraw to protect the investigation from accusations of bias.

Government officials insist Pakistani authorities can conduct a thorough investigation without outside help. Police said investigators have held at least 15 people for questioning.

Some of those held were wounded in the attack on Bhutto's homecoming procession and were picked up from local hospitals. None are currently being treated as suspects, a police investigator told The Associated Press.

The investigator, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media, said around 15 or 16 people were being held. He would not say exactly where or share information about their identities.

A second police investigator confirmed that a number of people were being questioned.

Authorities have said the attack was likely carried out by two suicide bombers. They have released a picture showing the head of one of the attackers but have yet to identify him.

Security in the city remains high after Bhutto claimed on Tuesday that she had received a new death threat. She said her lawyer received a letter from an unidentified "friend of al-Qaeda" threatening to slaughter her "like a goat."

The authenticity of the letter could not be confirmed. Bhutto said the writer claimed to be the leader of the suicide bombers "and a friend of al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden."

Speaking at her heavily guarded Karachi residence, Bhutto said her opponents "are petrified that the Pakistan People's Party will return (to power), and that democracy will return."

Bhutto, whose two governments between 1988 and 1996 were toppled amid allegations of corruption and mismanagement, has returned to contest parliamentary elections due in January after months of talks with President Gen. Pervez Musharraf that could see them working side-by-side in the next government.

With encouragement from Washington, both are urging voters to support moderates willing to battle rising religious extremism.

The troops sent to the northwest to combat followers of Fazlullah were setting up checkpoints across Swat, a mountain valley popular with tourists until violence flared there this summer, army spokesman Maj. Gen. Waheed Arshad said.

Militants responded by detonating a remote-controlled bomb near a convoy heading into the valley late Tuesday. Arshad said four soldiers were lightly wounded and security forces had detained seven suspects.

Some 6,000 of Fazlullah's supporters, many carrying weapons, poured Wednesday into a schoolyard less than six miles from where the soldiers were deployed, vowing to back the cleric.

Fazlullah, wearing a black turban and with long, flowing hair, addressed the crowd from the back of a truck, a dozen armed men deployed around him as bodyguards.

"The government has made a declaration of war," he said, according to a local journalist who witnessed the scene. "It is a crime to sit in the home of Allah and to study the Quran."

Fazlullah is the leader of Tehrik Nifaz-e-Sharia Mohammed, or TNSM, a pro-Taliban militant group

that sent thousands of volunteers to Afghanistan to during the U.S.-led invasion in 2001.

Pakistan banned the group and jailed TNSM's founder, Sufi Muhammad, who is also Fazlullah's father-in-law, in 2002.

However, the group has re-emerged this year in Swat and Malakand, another impoverished, conservative region next to the Afghan border where the government provides few services.

As well as marshaling a band of armed militants, Fazlullah has reportedly used an FM radio station to campaign against girls education and denounce a recent polio vaccination as Western plot to sterilize Muslim children.

Govt approves

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After the meeting, Mainul told reporters that there will be no crisis of urea in the country and that if there is any problem in distribution, the government will take necessary steps.

Additional Secretary of the industries ministry Ayub Mia said, "We need to import nine lakh tonnes of urea to meet the demand of the coming crop season. We have already imported two lakh tonnes while import of another two lakh is in the pipeline."

He said a process to import more urea very soon is also underway.

The central bank issued the circular to all commercial banks following a request of the agriculture ministry. The circular said the recent flood damaged a huge agricultural product and it is urgent to recover the loss by increasing production in the Irr-Boro season.

The BB requested the banks to cooperate with fertiliser traders, considering their business relations with the banks, in opening letters of credit (LC) for importing TSP and MOP.

Gen Moeen

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When Joy asked Moeen whether it was possible or acceptable to bring reforms in politics without politicians, the Army chief replied, "The Election Commission has initiated political reforms to strengthen and stabilise the foundations of democracy." Leaders of various political parties have supported the reform initiative as it is a need of changing times, Moeen added.

Responding to another query by Joy on elections, Moeen said the Election Commission is responsible for holding elections and he was confident that the elections would be held in time as the project for preparing voter ID cards is already underway.