

## UN commends peacekeeping role of Dhaka

UNB, Dhaka

United Nations (UN) Assistant Secretary General Jane Holl Lute yesterday appreciated the contribution of Bangladesh in UN peacekeeping mission.

Lute, officer-in-charge of the Department of Field Support created recently at the UN, made the appreciation at a meeting with Foreign Adviser Dr Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury at his office.

She also thanked the adviser for the support the UN has been receiving consistently from Bangladesh.

Lute conveyed deep sympathy to the foreign adviser on behalf of the UN for the heavy losses due to Cyclone 'Sidr'.

She praised the 'resilience' of the Bangladeshi people in facing calamity of such magnitude and moving forward.

She also reported on her visit to the affected areas, said a foreign ministry press release.

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## Transparent ballot box likely for next polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) is likely to introduce transparent ballot boxes in the next parliamentary election responding to a demand of most political parties it sat in electoral reform dialogues with.

The EC however will take a formal decision on the matter this month since it will require seven to eight months to receive the boxes from abroad if it decides to introduce them, sources in the EC Secretariat said.

"We don't want to give any scope to any losing party to denounce the election with the excuse of not having transparent ballot boxes in the polls. So, we are thinking of introducing transparent ballot boxes," Chief Election

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Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda said yesterday during the commission's electoral reform dialogue with Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB).

"We will do it despite waste of 4 million US dollars since most of the political parties want transparent ballot boxes," the CEC said referring to the approximate cost of purchasing the boxes.

The EC was against introduction of transparent ballot boxes due to complexities of using them, instead it was in favour of using the traditional steel ballot boxes made of steel, which the commission already have in its hands.

Referring to the round of electoral reform talks, the CEC said most of the political parties including Awami League, the Communist

## ILLEGAL APPOINTMENT 431 staffs of Sylhet City Corp sacked

UNB, Dhaka

The caretaker government has ordered that 431 officials and employees of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) be sacked on grounds that they were appointed "illegally".

"The decision to terminate them was taken as allegations of irregularities in their appointment were proved following an investigation conducted by Sylhet divisional commissioner," an official announcement said yesterday.

In the big band of SCC staffers who got their marching orders there is one first-class officer, 15 second-class employees, 222 third-class and 193 fourth-class employees.

In a notification, the Local Government Division of the LGRD ministry has instructed the SCC chief executive officer to submit a report after cancelling the appointments as well as taking "legal actions" against those involved in the appointment process.

## CA pledges all-out support to legitimate commerce

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed reiterated yesterday his government's all-out support and priority-based cooperation in expanding competitive and legitimate commercial activities in the country.

"The trend of international market is now oriented towards globalisation. Foreign trade is now more competitive and is based on knowledge and policy guidelines than any other time in the past.

We'll have to turn this challenge into opportunity through pragmatic strategy and combined efforts," he said.

Fakhruddin was addressing the inaugural function of the three-day Third Bangladesh Knitwear Exhibition 2007 at Hotel Dhaka Sheraton, organised by Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers' and

Exporters' Association (BKMEA).

The chief adviser said partnership and combined efforts of the government and private sector would have to be further strengthened in the future for the sake of the country's march toward development.

He said the government has been implementing various measures in line with the guidelines in the country's export policy for exploring new export market.

For diversification of products by reducing dependence on limited number of goods, the government in its export policy has given highest priority to IT, software, agriculture and agro products, light engineering, leather products, pharmaceutical industry and higher value-added readymade garments, Fakhruddin said.

He said the government is

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## EXTORTION CASE

## Trial of Hasina starts today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The trial of an extortion case against detained Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina and two others begins today at a Special Court in the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban complex.

Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque of Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Court will begin the hearing on charge-framing against Sheikh Hasina, her sister Sheikh Rehana and cousin Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim at 9:30am, court sources said.

Earlier on November 28, the court directed the jail authorities to produce Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim before the court today.

The trial against Sheikh Rehana will be held in her absence, as she has not surrendered before the court.

The government on November

25 decided to hold the trial of the Tk 2.99 crore extortion case at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban instead of Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court on grounds of security.

The law ministry issued a gazette notification under section 9(2) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) on November 26 about the pending case. Acting Law Secretary Kazi Habibul Awal sent the notification to the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court appointing five public prosecutors to move on behalf of the state.

Azam I Chowdhury, managing director of Eastcoast Trading Pvt Ltd, filed the case against Hasina and Selim with Gulshan Police Station on June 13 last, accusing them of extorting Tk 2.99 crore from him.

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## Regulatory reforms body to place recommendations today to CA

UNB, Dhaka

The Regulatory Reforms Commission (RRRC) will submit two recommendations to Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed today as part of its efforts to guide the government to update the old regulations.

One of the recommendations is to disseminate information to elicit public opinion on any regulation before its formulation and another is to post any government decision on website, RRC Chairman Dr Akbar Ali Khan told reporters yesterday.

"Delegated legislation affects the rights of the people... hurts business confidence," he said explaining the importance of the recommendations.

The recommendations would be the first after the government formed the 17-member commission on October 30.

Dr Akbar was talking to reporters at the Planning Ministry after a meeting with Finance and Planning Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam in his office.

Dr Akbar accompanied Dr Ehsanur Rahman, former president of Bangladesh Medical Association of North America, who

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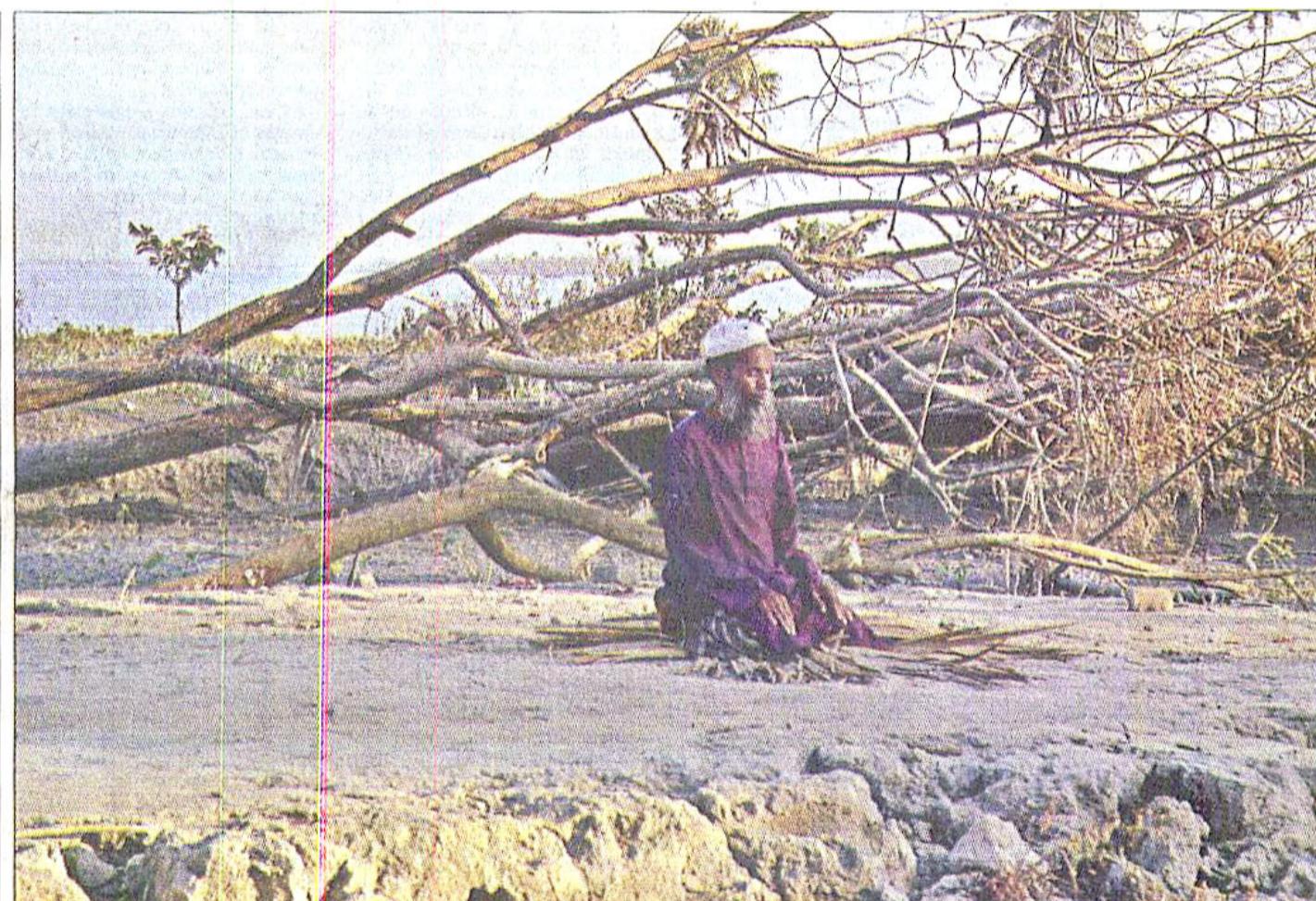


PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Muhammad Aleem says prayers on a stretch of bare land where his house once stood before Sidr destroyed the locality near the Baleshwar river at Dakkhin Southkhali, Bagerhat. Living in a nearby cyclone shelter now, the elderly man returns to this place at prayer times every day.

## MAKING EC INDEPENDENT Advisers want more scrutiny of law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The council of advisers to the caretaker government yesterday sent back the Independent Election Commission (IEC) Secretariat Ordinance-2007 to the law ministry for further scrutiny for ensuring full independence of the commission.

The law ministry will place the ordinance to the council as soon as possible after review," Syed Fahim Munain, press secretary to the chief adviser (CA), told reporters at a news briefing in the CA's office following a meeting of the council.

He also said it is yet to be finalized with which government

## Naser Rahman's wife sent to jail Graft charges pressed against ex-state minister Salahuddin, wife

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Detained former BNP lawmaker M Naser Rahman's wife Rezina Naser was sent to jail yesterday in a case filed against her for amassing wealth through illegal means.

Meanwhile, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) pressed charges against detained former state minister for communications Salahuddin Ahmed and his wife Hasina Ahmed in connection with a corruption case.

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