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Release Khaleda, Hasina to create political mood

Demands Delwar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Secretary General of pro-Khaleda faction of BNP Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday said the state of emergency should be lifted and Khaleda Zia and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina should be released to create a "political environment".

He also demanded the release of all political leaders.

Power should be handed over to the winners elected in a neutral election contested by all political parties, he said while talking to reporters at his Nam flat in the capital.

On the trial of political leaders being held under the Emergency Power Rules, he said people have

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JAMAAT LEADERS

Hearing on govt nod to sedition case tomorrow

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court hears tomorrow the matters related to the government approval for registering a sedition case against two Jamaat-e-Islami leaders and the ex-chairman of Islami Bank as a regular one.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Emran Hossain Chowdhury yesterday fixed the date and asked the complainant to be present. The court also asked

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6th Wage Board Award rejected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sangbadik Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad (SSKOP) yesterday expressed its grief and disapproval over the gazette notification of the Sixth Wage Board, saying that it has curtailed salaries and other benefits of journalists and press workers.

SSKOP in an emergency meeting at the National Press Club called upon the caretaker government to declare an amended gazette notification soon, ensuring expected salaries and other benefits.

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Cabinet okays law to form National HR Commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The council of advisers yesterday approved the National Human Rights Commission Ordinance 2007, a day before World Human Rights Day today.

The cabinet, at its weekly meeting, approved the ordinance to set up the long-awaited National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), which can investigate human rights violations but is empowered to only settle issues or refer them to the court.

The NHRC will comprise a chairman and two members, handpicked by a six-member selection committee. The list of names will then be passed on to the President for final approval, the

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim told a press briefing yesterday.

The NHRC chair and members would have to be between the ages of 50 and 72 and would be selected from among eminent personalities who have made a contribution to social welfare, law and human rights in the country.

At least one of them is likely to be a retired Supreme Court judge. The chairman's term can be no longer than three years and his tenure cannot extend beyond two terms.

The six-member selection committee would consist of an appellate division judge - chosen by the Supreme Court Chief Justice, the cabinet secretary, attorney general, comptroller and auditor

general, public service commission chair, and the law secretary.

The NHRC would be empowered to investigate particular human rights violation allegations brought forward by citizens or discovered through their own monitoring.

If a human rights violation has been proved, the NHRC can either settle the matter or pass it on to the court or relevant authorities.

The NHRC draft had been sitting with the state for 12 years. The then Awami League government commissioned an assessment for the Commission.

In the meantime several drafts have been discussed and approved in principle by the cabinet, the latest of which was by the present government on September 8, 2007.

Mauritius gets Saarc observer status

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign ministers of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) have decided to give observer status to African country Mauritius in the regional forum.

The decision was made at the meeting of the council of ministers of Saarc which ended in New Delhi on Saturday, said Foreign Adviser Iftikhar A Chowdhury at a briefing at the foreign ministry in Dhaka yesterday.

The region's environment ministers will come to Dhaka after the UN climate change conference in Bali to discuss the effects of global warming in South Asia.

"Saarc is an emerging power

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They kill flies, work their way out of jails

KAILASH SARKAR

All they do is kill flies.

The task might sound a bit odd even outright ridiculous, but that is what many convicts in the prisons of the country do as part of their rigorous imprisonment.

That does not mean that they get off with light punishments instead of their real sentences. The jail authorities have the discretion to appoint the comparatively lighter task of killing flies to those prisoners who were sentenced to rigorous imprisonment but are unable to carry out heavier tasks for reasons of ill health or old age.

Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG-Prisons) Major Shamsul Haider Siddique told The Daily Star that all the convicts,

sentenced to rigorous imprisonment, have to work in jails but those unable to do many harder jobs are assigned to less rigorous duties.

There are over 84,000 prisoners in 67 jails across the country, 22,000 of whom are convicts. There are at least 600 convicts in the country who are killing flies in the prisons they live in.

In every jail, there are fly killers numbering between 10 and 60.

Jail sources said every fly killer has to kill the insects for four to six hours a day, except for Fridays. They are assigned to the duty at different spots of a jail, like at a hospital corner, the dining hall, food storage, kitchen, or in the larger wards of a jail.

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Saudi prince now slashes offer to buy Rupali Bank

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

The Saudi prince who agreed to buy Rupali Bank has slashed more than US \$270 million off the amount he is willing to pay for the state-owned enterprise, claiming he was misled about the size of the bad debts held by the bank.

Prince Bandar Bin Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al-Saud said he is now willing to pay only \$185 million instead of the \$456 million he offered last year, but insists he wants to take over the bank 'immediately'.

The prince made his fresh proposal in a letter to General Moeen U Ahmed, chief of Army Staff, in which he also heavily attacked the conduct of the Privatization Commission and the finance ministry during the sale process that he said had 'been riddled with discrepancies and insidious undercurrents'.

FULL STORY: STAR BUSINESS, PAGE 8

Breakthrough sought at global climate talks

AFP, Nissa Dua

Climate change campaigners called yesterday for greater effort in the fight against global warming, saying the world was waiting for a crunch UN conference in Bali to produce a breakthrough.

Prominent figures including Nobel-winning former US vice president Al Gore and UN chief Ban Ki-moon are due to arrive on the Indonesian resort island in the coming days as the climate change summit enters its crucial final week.

"The whole year has been pointing at the Bali process," said John Coequet, a climate campaigner from Greenpeace.

"We have been here for a week now and there is not a lot of difference in discussion, tone and energy from previous summits. Things are going to have to change when ministers get here."

Government delegates from about 190 nations are here for the 11-day summit under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Their goal is to lay the groundwork for a new international initiative that will help combat the threat posed by climate change after the current phase of the existing treaty, the Kyoto Protocol, expires in 2012.

Scientists earlier this year delivered their starkest warning yet -- that without action, global warming could have an irreversible impact on the world, bringing hunger, floods, drought and the extinction of many plants and animal species in its wake.

"I will say (to ministers), the world is waiting -- what is your political answer to what science is telling you?" said Yvo de Boer, executive secretary of the UNFCCC.

He has warned that the number of issues for ministers to discuss when they start meeting on Wednesday could clog up talks, and said countries should focus on finalising a timetable for further negotiations up to 2009, when they need to begin ratifying any agreement.

A key question is how much rich countries -- which leading experts say are historically responsible for most of the carbon emissions blamed for warming the planet -- should commit to slashing their output.

Europe and developing countries led by China want industrialised nations to set a binding target to cut such emissions by between 25 to 40 percent by 2020 over their 1990 levels.

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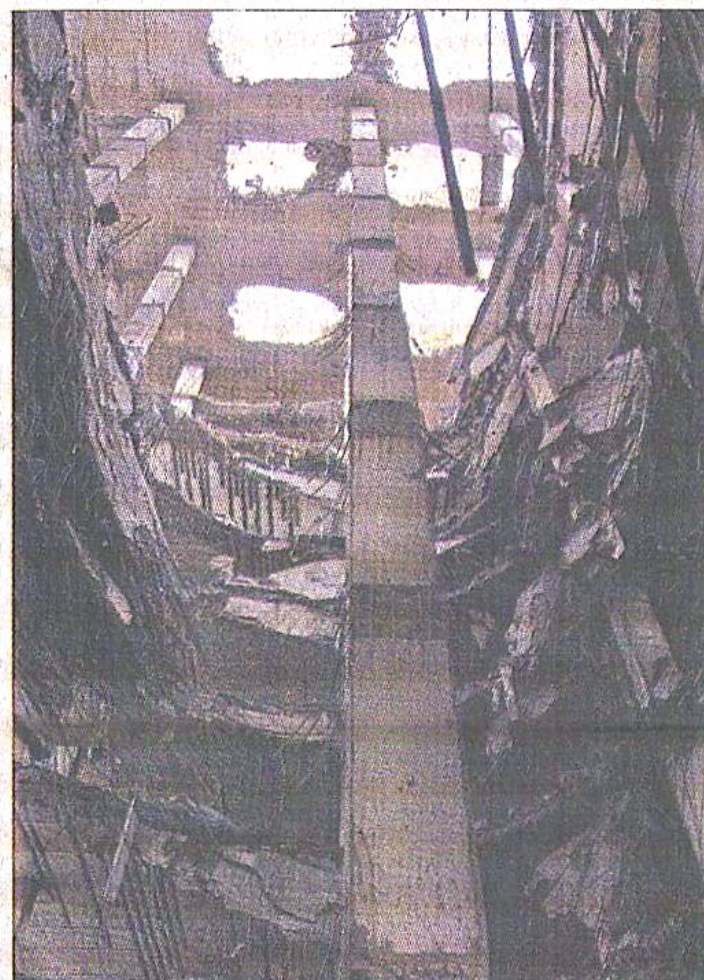


PHOTO: STAR

The huge hole left behind after several floors of the Rangs Bhaban collapsed Saturday night. Story on page 1.

Suicide car bomber kills 8 in Pakistan

Rockets fired at Pak base, girls' school bombed

AP, AFP, Islamabad

A suicide bomber rammed an explosives-laden car into a police outpost yesterday, killing eight people in an area where the military has been battling Islamic militants loyal to a fugitive cleric, an official said.

Five civilians including two children and three policemen died in the attack at the Nimgole post, the headquarters of pro-Taliban cleric Maulana Fazlullah, said chief military spokesman Maj. Gen. Arshad Waheed. Several others were wounded.

The outpost is near Imam Dheri, the headquarters of pro-Taliban cleric Maulana Fazlullah that troops captured Thursday.

"There's nothing we could say about the perpetrators before investigating, but involvement by remnants of Fazlullah's militants can't be ruled out," said Arshad Iqbal, a spokesman for the Swat military command center.

The attack occurred a day after the commander of military operations in Swat said insurgents in the area were on the run but remained

dangerous.

Security forces have been the target of a series of suicide attacks this year.

Waheed said militants were trying to strike back while on the run.

"Suicide attacks are something that is hard to avoid, but security forces in Swat are in control of the region," Waheed said.

Militants seized tracts of the Swat valley, a former tourist destination 100 miles from Islamabad, this summer, raising concern about the spread of Islamic militancy from the Pakistan-Afghan border.

Followers of Fazlullah had fended off security forces sent to reinforce the area's beleaguered police since July, but have been scattered by a major army operation launched last month.

Maj Gen Nasser Janjua said Saturday his 20,000-strong force has retaken all the towns seized by the militants, killing 290 of them and capturing 140, while driving a hard-core group of some 400-500 into the Ptochar side valley.

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STAFF'S RELEASE

Brac chief grateful for Afghan help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brac Chairperson Fazle Hasan Abed has expressed satisfaction at the release of the organisation's Area Manager Md Noor Islam, kidnapped in Afghanistan on 16 September.

He thanked Afghan Minister Mohammad Ehsan Zia of rural rehabilitation and development (MRRD) ministry and other high-ups, for their cooperation in this regard.

Abed said he was happy that Noor was released unharmed and they are working to expedite his return to Bangladesh, said a press release yesterday.

He expressed his gratitude to Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, and Foreign Affairs Adviser Dr

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Prayer Timing

December 10

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-15	5-50
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-19	5-22
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

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