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SC critical of red tapes in getting staff in dist courts

UNB, Dhaka

The Supreme Court was yesterday critical of bureaucratic attitude in compliance with the highest court's orders for providing supporting staff, transport and other logistics for smooth running of the district-level judiciary magistracy.

The apex court's oblique remark came as it found "no material headway" in the government progress report submitted by the attorney general following the separation of the judiciary from the executive.

"Bureaucrats appear in testing the court orders like guinea pig before it comes into effect," Chief Justice M Ruhul Amin told the attorney general Fida M Kamal.

Reminding the bureaucrats of their duties and responsibilities, Chief Justice Amin said bureaucracy is for serving the people, not for themselves, as it runs with the money of taxpayers. "Why the

BIBIYANA POWER PLANT

Merger of bidders going to cut competition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bibiyana 450-megawatt independent power project is set to face lack of competition, as two of the four pre-qualified bidders are going to merge and bid as one consortium.

Korean power company Kepco and Malaysian Powertek along with its partner Siemens Project Ventures have informed the Power Cell of the power ministry on February 11 and 13 that they want to form a consortium.

The new consortium will put Powertek in the lead bidder's position. Powertek's parent company Tanjong Public Limited Company last year purchased the local Haripur 360mw, Meghnaghat 450mw and the NEPC 110mw power plants.

Two other pre-qualified bidders are US companies -- Chevron, which has discovered and developed Bibiyana gas field, and AES. Advised by International Finance Corporation (IFC), the government in October opened the pre-qualification process of Bibiyana power project.

Sources said Powertek and Kepco may also go for similar consortium in the upcoming bids for 450mw Sirajganj and 450mw Meghnaghat-3 projects.

According to sources, AES last week expressed its concern to the Power Cell about allowing two short-listed companies to merge. The Cell has however not responded to this concern. Later, the AES team left Bangladesh without visiting Bibiyana power plant site as arranged by the Power Cell.

Usually, pre-qualified bidders are not allowed to "get together" and submit a joint bid, after qualifying separately, as it limits competition.

A source said: "This is allowed only if the number of pre-qualified companies are many and a combination between the firms does not significantly reduce the number of potential bidders."

In this case, if the new consortium wins the bid amid little competition, Bangladesh will have to deal with a monopolistic situation in the private power sector.

"Earlier, local agents of one of the bidders campaigned hard against pre-qualification of the local Summit Group in partnership with British GE.

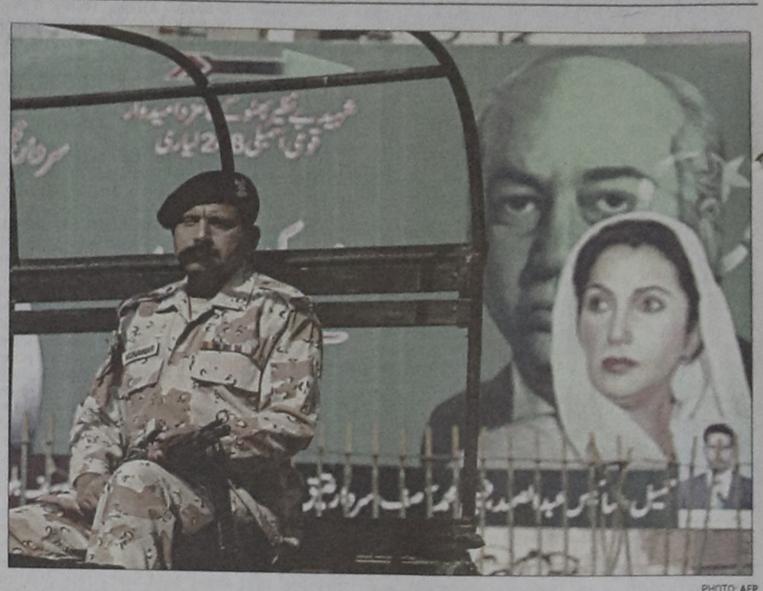
Summit has good track record that qualified it to participate in the bid, but there were some

Musharraf's top advisers expect hung parliament

HAMID MIR, from Islamabad

Top Musharraf advisers are expecting today a hung parliament, which will not survive for more than six months. One of the advisers never ruled out the possibility of a new election after six months. Some diplomats also fear that a hung parliament will not bring stability to Pakistan and the Bush administration will not achieve its goals in the war against terror before the US presidential election, to be held later this year.

The Bush administration has failed to convince Asif Ali Zardari to forge a coalition with the pro-Musharraf PML-Q after the February 18 elections. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice tried her level best to bridge the gap between Musharraf and the PPP leadership through some diplomats, but all these efforts proved



A Pakistani ranger patrols the streets of Karachi yesterday. Pakistan will hold the 10th election in its chequered 60-year history and the omens are bad for a poll that has already been dogged by violence and allegations of rigging.

MiG-29 case against Hasina resumes Feb 29

COURT CORRESPONDENT

After a hiatus of more than five years, hearing on MiG-29 corruption case against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and six other people will be held on February 29.

Judge Golam Mortuza Majumder of special court for Dhaka Division fixed the hearing date after getting the High Court's vacation order on stay order that the defence secured five years back.

The court directed the jail authorities to produce Hasina, now detained in a sub-jail at Sangsad Bhaban complex, on the scheduled date. The judge also served summons on the six other accused, now on bail, to show up on the same date.

The prosecution yesterday submitted a petition to start proceeding of the case.

The six other accused are former air force chief Jamaluddin



A policeman parks his motorbike on Topkhana Road in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday and then stops a bus in the middle of the road for violating traffic rules that caused tailbacks.

CEC criticises colleagues

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday said his two colleagues' occasional contradictory statements cause confusion among the people.

"Often, my two colleagues are speaking various things that create confusion... I don't know why they talk so... I don't like this," he told the news agency over telephone.

Asked, the poll chief declined to

EC sets woman post target for political parties

Says parties must have one-third women in top posts by 2020

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission (EC) has set 2020 as the deadline for political parties to have women in at least one-third of the party committee posts at all levels.

Many political parties during their September-November talks with the commission last year strongly objected to the EC proposal for making this provision effective from this year.

While reviewing the opinions of the political parties last week, the EC decided to relax the provision by inserting the 12-year timeframe for empowering women politically.

The EC, however, rejected a few parties' objections and decided to retain its proposal for banning political parties from having front organisations comprising students, teachers and workers. The commission also held on to its proposal to impose a ban on political parties to have overseas units, commission sources said.

According to the EC proposal, a political party intending to be registered with it will have to declare in their constitution that they will not have front organisations of students, teachers and workers, and overseas units.

Most political parties that participated in the first round electoral reforms talks with the EC opposed the commission's proposals on women's representation and

banning front organisations and overseas units.

The commission has been long criticising the "negative" activities of the front organisations and overseas units of the political parties, sources said.

Most political parties agreed on the EC proposal for reserving women's representation in the party committees but suggested its gradual implementation.

"It is not possible to implement the proposal right now. It would be implemented in phases," Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda told reporters on Thursday.

In the second round of the

Advisory council approves repeal of Gram Sarker Act, 2003

UNB, Dhaka

The much-debated Gram Sarker is going to be abolished as the caretaker government yesterday endorsed an ordinance to scrap the law that instituted the village-level local-government body.

During its weekly meeting yesterday, the Council of Advisers of the interim government approved in principle the Gram Sarker (Repeal) Ordinance, 2008 to annul the Gram Sarker Act, 2003.

The Gram Sarker Act, 2003, introduced by the BNP-led coalition government, was endorsed by the parliament. In 2003, a writ was filed with the High Court against the Gram Sarker Act. "The act was declared void by the court," according to an official.

The advisers' meeting, with Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in the chair, also approved with

Blast during Afghan dog fighting kills 80

AFP, Kandahar

A suicide blast tore through a crowd of men watching dog fighting in the southern Afghan city of Kandahar yesterday, killing 80 people and wounding dozens more, a provincial governor said.

The attack was the deadliest in Afghanistan since the 2001 fall of the Taliban regime, after a suicide bombing in the north in November last year killed 79 people -- most of them school children.

Officials blamed Taliban insurgents for Sunday's blast, which reverberated across the city, but the extremist group did not immediately claim responsibility.

Bodies and limbs lay among bloodied boots, clothes and mobile phones -- some of them ringing -- after the explosion, an AFP reporter

ZIA MEDICAL COLLEGE

Tk 30cr medical equipment lying idle for months

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

Medical equipment worth around Tk 30 crore has been lying idle at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Bogra for months due to structural problems of the hospital building, and unavailability of technicians and chemicals.

A modern radiotherapy machine procured at a cost of Tk 19.68 crore remains unused for the last six months as the room it was installed in started leaking radiation.

Brigadier General Golam Mustafa, director of the hospital, admitted that the radiotherapy machine is not working but said pieces of equipment like the MRI and CT-Scan are working properly.

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Prayer Timing
February 18

	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-20	5-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-03	6-07
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation