

War criminals

FROM PAGE 1
to the government for trying them," CECATM Shamsul Huda said yesterday during the second round of electoral reform talks initiated by the commission.

The CEC also suggested the political parties to raise the issues strongly with the caretaker government during their proposed dialogues with it. "I think, the government will begin the dialogues with political parties next month and it will invite the same parties that we invited," said the CEC.

The CEC told the dialoguing parties that the EC will also make recommendations to the government regarding some other crucial issues including article 70 of the constitution which has long been blamed for preventing lawmakers from playing their roles freely in the parliament, an increase in the number of parliamentary seats, and introduction of a bicameral parliament.

About the EC's jurisdiction to make such recommendations, the CEC said the commission has the right to make recommendations to the government, being a constitutional body for holding free and fair elections to sustain democracy.

"Wrapping up the talks with the parties, we will prepare a comprehensive report summarising the outcomes of the talks. We will incorporate our recommendations in the report," Huda said adding, "I think, the government will consider the recommendations in due time."

In the first round of talks which was held between September and November of last year, most of the participating political parties demanded disqualification of war criminals from contesting in polls.

Apart from the political parties, veteran freedom fighters, family members of martyrs, and a large number of conscious citizens also have been urging the caretaker government, through the year of its stay in power, to try the war criminals.

In response to the rising demand, the CEC on September 16 of last year at a meeting with a political party said although the war criminals should have been tried immediately after the country's independence, all successive governments refrained from trying the anti-liberation forces.

The current caretaker government also seems to follow the footsteps of the previous governments regarding the issue although the chief adviser earlier said the war criminals' contest in elections will be unwanted.

PARTIES' RECOMMENDATIONS
On the first day of the second round of electoral reform talks, the EC yesterday sat with Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh, Samyabadi Dal, and the Workers Party of Bangladesh, separately in the EC Secretariat conference room.

Participating in the talks, Workers Party and Samyabadi Dal urged the EC to announce a specific date for the parliamentary election after wrapping up the talks, and not to hold polls to any local government before the national election.

Both the parties also urged the government to lift the state of emergency immediately and to try the war criminals in special tribunals.

About trials of the war criminals, Workers Party President Rashed

Khan Menon, who led the party delegation to the talks, said the proposal of the commission for barring war criminals from contesting in polls will remain on papers only, if the government does not start trying them.

Samayabadi Badi Dal (M-L) chief Dilip Barua, who led his party's delegation to the talks, urged the EC not to register any political party as a parliamentary party if it has war criminals in its leadership.

Earlier in the day, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh placed a set of recommendations to the EC for reducing poll expenditures.

EC'S REPLIES
Accompanied by two other election commissioners -- Muhammad Sohul Hussain and Brig Gen (ret) M Sakawat Hussain -- the CEC explained the commission's positions on different issues raised by the parties at the talks.

Informing the parties about the progress of voter listing, CEC Huda said half of the task of preparing a voter list with photographs is scheduled to be completed by the 28th of this month.

"Registration of eight crore voters will be completed by February 28. We are now confident that the voter list will be ready by October," the CEC assured the political parties, reiterating that the stalled parliamentary election will be held before the year end.

Saying that the voter list will be ready by October, the CEC sought opinions from the parties regarding a timetable for holding the stalled ninth parliamentary election.

In response, Samyabadi Dal and Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh said the poll should be held in early December. Workers Party however said they want the poll as soon as possible.

Responding to the political parties' demand for lifting the state of emergency, the CEC reiterated that the government must lift or relax the emergency regime to create an environment conducive to holding the polls. "We already asked the chief adviser to create an atmosphere where candidates may campaign for votes freely," he added.

In defence of the EC's plan to hold the polls to four city corporations and seven municipalities in April, the CEC said the commission decided to hold polls to some local government bodies as a pilot project, hoping that will boost its confidence.

"But the polls to those local government bodies will in no way hamper the preparations for holding the parliamentary election on time," the CEC said.

Responding to the parties' claim that in the past when democracy was suspended in the country, erstwhile military governments tended to hold local government elections prior to parliamentary elections in a bid to ensure their cohorts' majority in the parliament, Brig Gen (ret) M Sakawat Hussain said, "If the midnight riders lay a siege to us, then we won't be able to do anything!"

Awami League, Jatiya Party (Ershad), and the Communist Party of Bangladesh are scheduled to hold talks with the EC today.

Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-N party responded to the Taliban statement by saying that military solutions alone would not end Pakistan's problems with extremism.

"We hope that we have a new chance and new opportunities now... There has to be a political solution coupled with social and economic uplift," party spokesman Ahsan Iqbal told AFP.

"Our stance is that General Musharraf has mishandled the situation to stay in power. We feel that if Musharraf steps down, half of the terrorism would end."

If a PPP-led coalition manages to muster a two-thirds majority in parliament, it could seek to remove Musharraf, either by impeaching him or having his election as president last year declared illegal.

The PPP said Sunday it was considering working with the Karachi-based Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), which was part of the pro-Musharraf coalition that ruled from 2002 to 2007 and enjoys large support in southern Sindh province, a traditional PPP stronghold.

"The Pakistan People's Party wants to take all political forces along to form the government and is discussing the possibility of cooperating with the MQM," PPP spokesman Farhatullah Babar said.

"Consultations are going on within the party and there are different opinions about whether to cooperate with MQM or not, but nothing has been finalised," Babar said.

But while Sharif has been pressing for Musharraf's ouster, the PPP is more coy on its plans for the president, whose popularity has slumped as basic commodity prices soar and Islamist violence intensifies.

"You cannot impeach him right now because you don't have two-thirds majority in the National Assembly and the Senate. Since we cannot do it now, there is no need to say anything about it," Babar said.

Omar said the opposition victory was also thanks to the Taliban's activities "by giving their blood and as a result of which people rejected US and Musharraf policies and gave victory to their opposing political forces."

Omar sporadically speaks to journalists by telephone saying he is a spokesman for Islamist Taliban groups operating in the region. There is no way to independently verify his claim.

Criminal courts

FROM PAGE 1
district and sessions judge's courts in the region, but that has yet to be implemented.

Meanwhile, the High Court yesterday directed the government to set up civil and criminal courts run by judicial officers in the CHT within a year to implement the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2003.

It also ordered the government to establish tribunals for preventing repression on women and children in the three hill districts within the same period.

The judgment came in response to a public interest litigation filed by Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust and three lawyers.

The sessions courts, once off to a start, will spare the locals the trouble of trekking all the way to Chittagong for trial.

Currently, the Chittagong divisional commissioner discharges the judicial functions of sessions courts in CHT, home to 11 indigenous communities -- Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Tongchonga, Mro, Bawm, Chak, Khumi, Pankhua, Lusa and Khiaing.

Talking to The Daily Star Saturday, the SC Registrar said the divisional commissioner's serving as a judicial officer contravenes the CrPC (Code of Criminal Procedure).

He added that they are planning three judges will hold sessions courts in the three districts once a week, and no amendments needed for that to happen.

"Later, judges will be appointed to run sessions courts there on a permanent basis," he headed.

Once the apex court is ready to start the CHT sessions courts, a notification will be issued to that end, the SC Registrar said.

In most cases, people want to avoid hassles of travelling to Chittagong to seek justice and so many offences go unnoticed, said locals.

Around 3,500 criminal cases filed by hills people since independence till 2006 remain pending with the Chittagong courts, said sources.

In the CHT Regulation 1900, a three-tier social court headed by three hill circle chiefs (or king) and their subordinate headman and Karbari is mandated to resolve only some family conflicts in the ethnic communities.

Locals have to go to Chittagong also to appeal the DCS' judgments.

"A person from Chhoto Harina (in Borkol upazila) in Rangamati needs at least five days to return home after attending a hearing in the Divisional Commissioner's court in Chittagong," said Pampu Protim Roy, president of Rangamati Bar Association.

The person might need to stay even longer in the port city if the court concerned for some reasons fails to sit on schedule.

People have been calling for the governments to introduce civil and sessions courts to the region.

"Running the judiciary with executive officials goes against the spirit of the judgment in the historic judicial separation case," said Pampu, going on to term it contemptuous.

Mizanur Rahman, a law professor at Dhaka University, observed that the practices run counter to the 1997 CHT peace treaty as well.

At the Wednesday's meeting, Hassan Arif told the CHT lawyers that the government would act to have necessary amendments to the law to introduce civil courts, Pampu said.

"Though the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2003 has a provision of introducing district judge, it does not say who will be the appellate and revision authority," he said.

The section (of the 2003 amendment) that says the government shall appoint judges too needs to be amended, he noted.

The same day the SC registrar spoke of the temporary arrangement when the delegation met him at his office.

Price control

FROM PAGE 16
be rational," the commerce adviser said.

He said he was trying to set up a 'dedicated price monitoring cell' under the commerce ministry as soon as possible.

The government would try to make a move to rationalise the prices of nine essential items in the 'core food basket' through discussion with the importers and traders and they convened today's meeting for the purpose, he added.

National Board of Revenue Chairman Mohammed Abdul Mazid, Bangladesh

Bank Deputy Governor Ziaul Hassan Siddiqui and Bangladesh Rifles Director General Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed, among others, were present.

Sloan

FROM PAGE 16
attended dinner with lawyers, gave interviews to private media and also held meetings with politicians as well as university teachers though he was asked not to engage in such activities," said the release.

A foreign tourist could deliver speech on a country's political and sub judice matters. "For that reason, the government did not allow Sloan to arrange press conference on February 22 at Sonargaon Hotel."

During his visit, the HR jurist had spoken about the political detainees here, including former prime ministers Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia.

Job remains half-done

FROM PAGE 16
pending with either finance or establishment ministries.

Of them, 157 were supposed to be recruited in the proposed Traffic, Driving and Peacekeeping School, 363 in Armed Police Battalion (APBn) and Specialised Training Centre and 283 in the Police Academy.

Of the 6,705 to be recruited in 2007-08 FY, files for recruiting 5,431 remained apparently unsubmitted in the establishment and finance ministries, the source added.

Referring to the finance division's inability to create the 157 posts on August 29 last year, a top police official commented: "It's audacity. Being a civil servant no-one can express inability to give approval to a government decision."

The official said the police headquarters in a letter raised an argument on the importance of the proposed school and made reply to some "wrong" arguments raised by the finance ministry in favour of its decision.

"The HQ also reminded the ministry that expressing inability to create necessary posts might go against the government decision. Even then it again expressed its inability," said the official.

The salient feature of the proposed organogram of police, made for restructuring the organisational structure of Bangladesh police, was presented at the 36th cabinet committee meeting on law and order on May 22, 2006.

The secretaries of all ministries concerned attended the meeting as members of the committee.

In the meeting a proposal was placed for increasing manpower on various posts in police units. After elaborate discussion the organogram committee decided in principle to create 30,459 posts and recruit the personnel.

Asked whether the constitution permits formation of a government based on national consensus, Kamal kept mum.

Briefing reporters, PCJSS chief Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma (Shantu Larma) said democratic system has to be established in the country. He said a national unity is needed at present in the country so that all including them could play their role in establishing a meaningful democracy.

FROM PAGE 16
Assistant Director Aftab Uddin of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), who is also the IO of the case, submitted charge sheet against the three accused to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, showing 28 people as prosecution witnesses.

In the charge sheet, the IO prayed for issuance of arrest warrants against the three and orders to attach their properties. All the accused have been on the run since the filing of the case.

Sheikh Mesbahuddin, assistant director of the ACC, filed the case on September 27 last year with Gulshan Police Station on charges of concealing Tk 2,64,15,803 in their wealth statements and amassing Tk 46,18,502 beyond their known means of income.

Some EC rules

FROM PAGE 16
office of Socialist Party of Bangladesh in the capital.

Some of the rules proposed by the EC would not encourage honest and competent candidates to vie in the election, they said.

They urged the commission to withdraw the proposed rules which are undemocratic and create a proper atmosphere for a free, fair and credible election.

LDF Coordinator and Workers' Party General Secretary Saiful Haq presided over the meeting.

LDF leaders Khalequzzaman, Bazlur Rashid Firoy and Tipu Bishwas, among others, were present.

Kallis dashes hosts

FROM PAGE 1
4, only 27 runs away from their fifth Test victory against the Tigers.

Undoubtedly, the Tigers have already produced their best ever performance against the South Africans in their fifth appearance and they convened today's meeting for the purpose, he added.

National Board of Revenue Chairman Mohammed Abdul Mazid, Bangladesh

Bank Deputy Governor Ziaul Hassan Siddiqui and Bangladesh Rifles Director General Maj Gen Shakil Ahmed, among others, were present.

But Kallis dented the hopes of the home faithful with an inspiring eight-over spell to claim five wickets in Test match after four years.

He was supported ably by Dale Steyn who took the other wicket when Aftab Ahmed padded up to the right-arm quick to be declared leg before on 24 the very next over after his partner Zunaed's dismissal.

After that it was the turn of South African skipper Graeme Smith to lead from the front to make sure that his side would not face the same debacle as in the first innings.

The left-hander smashed 62 off 104 balls with the help of six boundaries before being trapped in front by ace left-arm spinner Mohammad Rafique, who captured another wicket when Hashim Amla was brilliantly caught at slip by Zunaed.

The ace left-arm spinner, Rafique, is now two-wickets shy of achieving the 100-mark.

The meeting also decided to implement the proposed organogram in next five fiscal years in phases. Against this backdrop, the police headquarters submitted a proposal outlining year-wise recruitment of 30,459 personnel.

The proposed organogram recommended increasing the post of additional inspector general from the existing eight to 15, deputy inspector general (DIG) to 49 from 24, additional DIG to 85 from 25, superintendent of police (SP) from existing 169 to 274, additional SP from present 187 to 485, senior ASP to 581 from 188, ASP to 1,954 from 768, inspector to 3,313 from 2,171, SI to 15,172 from 10,667, sergeant to 1,224 from 1,173, ASI to 10,497 from 6,314, head constable to 7,342 from 6,395, Nayek to 6,643 from 5,635, constable to 99,442 from 85,635 and non-police officials and employees working in the force from 5,736 to 8,478.

Dr Kamal

FROM PAGE 16
fair election as per the announced electoral roadmap so that people could elect honest and competent people.

Kamal said they held the meeting with PCJSS as part of his party's move to hold a "national dialogue" to form a national unity in order to establish a meaningful democracy to which the PCJSS could contribute.

He said a national unity is needed to face national challenges and such unity has been established against corruption, terrorism, militancy, and politicisation among other issues.

He underscored the need for dialogues within political parties, civil society, women's organisations, and people of all walks of life in order to move the country forward.

Asked whether the constitution permits formation of a government based on national consensus, Kamal kept mum.

Briefing reporters, PCJSS chief Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma (Shantu Larma) said democratic system has to be established in the country. He said a national unity is needed at present in the country so that all including them could play their role in establishing a meaningful democracy.

Mahbub Jamil

FROM PAGE 16
President of Foreign Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FICCI) Waliur Rahman Bhuiyan.

Biman's managing director and chief executive officer is also a member of the board as he automatically becomes a board member.

The previous Biman board comprised secretaries of the Cabinet Division and the ministries of energy, commerce, finance, civil aviation and foreign affairs.

The board failed to gather pace in their work due to negligence of a number of its members, Biman high officials told The Daily Star last night. Reconstitution of the Biman board was necessary to run the national flag carrier smoothly and efficiently, they added.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines on July 31 started its journey anew as a public limited company (PLC) named Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd with the signing of an agreement between Biman and the government.

The government took the initiative to turn Biman, a huge loss-making concern, into a PLC to make it a healthy commercial venture.

First innings hero Shahadat Hossain provided the first breakthrough when Neil McKenzie chased a short ball only to reach the safe hands of Habibul Bashar at shortleg.

Shahadat also provided the second and prized scalp of Kallis as fellow quick Mashrafe Bin Mortaza took a sharp catch at the deep square leg boundary to send back the right-hander for only seven.

South Africa went into tea comfortably placed at 99 for the loss of McKenzie's wicket but the home team suddenly bounced back into the match as the visitors lost three wickets within the span of 19 runs.

The sudden collapse also slowed down the chase to take the match into the fourth day morning. Ashwell Prince and AB de Villiers kept their nerves but it could have been a different story if the shoddy Mushfiqur Rahim had not missed a stumping chance off the bowling of Rafique.

Rahim was also the victim of Boucher's 417th world record, who regained it from the retired Australian ace Adam Gilchrist.

His dismissal though was a bit unlucky as Steve Bucknor's ruled him out caught behind even though his attempted leg glance took more air than leather a fact TV replays later confirmed.

JP (Manju)

FROM PAGE 16
professional bodies," Sheikh Shahidul Islam, secretary general of the party, said.

He was addressing a press briefing at a city hotel.

The JP secretary general said that they do not want Jamaat to be included in their proposed national government since they are anti-liberation war forces.

The leaders of the party observed that a national government is also necessary to run the country efficiently.

"Prices of essentials are very high at present, the government alone could not handle the situation," Shahidul Islam said, adding that a national government will be able to control the situation.

He also urged the Election Commission (EC) to declare a specific date for election and to clear people's confusion regarding the polls.

Shahidul Islam asked the government to lift ban on indoor politics and allow the political parties to finalise their reforms.

The JP secretary general also urged the EC to hold the elections to the city corporations, pourashavas and union parishads for creating the atmosphere for the national election.

The party will place its election-related demands to the EC during the dialogue with it on February 27.

JP presidium members Abdul Rahim, Shah Rafiqul Bari Chowdhury, Amena Bari, Col (ret) Abdul Latif Malik and Azam Khan were present at the press briefing among others.

Hannan Shah

FROM PAGE 16
return to the mainstream," he said.

When contacted pro-reformist leader Maj Gen (ret) ZA Khan, who is also an adviser to the BNP chairperson, said he would welcome and join Shah in his efforts for unity. Stepping several steps ahead towards unity Khan said the decisions of October 29 standing committee meeting chaired by Saifur Rahman at his house can be scrapped through discussion.

"We are ready to rescind any decision for the sake of unity. Let us sit first for talks. Everything can be decided through discussion," he said.

"I don't see unity as too difficult if we sit together. We want the unity as early as possible for we want to participate in the election unitedly," he added.

BNP was split when Chairperson Khaleda Zia sacked Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and appointed Khandaker Delwar Hossain as secretary general just before she was taken into custody in September last year. Her unilateral decision without consulting deepened the crisis in BNP.

BNP standing committee meeting on September 29 announced Saifur Rahman as acting chairperson and Maj (ret) Hafizuddin Ahmed as acting secretary general of the party.

This was not accepted by Khaleda Zia who remained firm in her decision of keeping Khandaker Delwar Hossain as secretary general.

Dhaka-Kolkata

FROM PAGE 1
may construct a box-type temporary fencing from zero point along the railway of the respective territories on a mutually agreed drawing and design."

It adds: "The arrangement made under the provision shall not be used or quoted as reference for any other situation of similar nature or other purposes, including strategic or defence."

The agreement on running passenger trains between Bangladesh and India was signed in July 2001 in Dhaka for three years. The agreement was not renewed on time, but later it was extended up to July 11, 2010.

Recently, two decorated trains from the two sides had moved across the border on inaugural run.

Gen Moeen

FROM PAGE 1
will call on West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee in Kolkata. He is scheduled to return on March 1.

Gen Moeen left Dhaka for New Delhi on board a Jet Air flight at 12:05 pm, nearly three hours behind the schedule as the aircraft landing was delayed at Zia International Airport.

The army chief was scheduled to visit India last year but had to postpone the trip due to domestic engagements.

Koreans plan

FROM PAGE 1
electricity," Sung said, adding that if there is not enough electricity, the KEPR will have to take extra initiatives.

The Youngone Group had recently set up a shoe factory in Chittagong EPZ successfully.

Between 1999 and 2003, Youngone invested about Tk 100 crore to procure 2,500 acres of land for the EPZ and develop it under the private EPZ law.

However, it could not open the zone as the BNP-led four-party alliance government declined to give it operating licence without any explicit reasons.

Youngone started its operation in Bangladesh back in 1978 and grew into a massive company with exports standing close to \$300 million a year.

Iran vows reprisals

FROM PAGE 16
baseless," ISNA news agency reported.

The UN watchdog said it had made "quite good progress" in its long-running probe into Iran's contested nuclear drive, but that Tehran was still defying UN demands to halt uranium enrichment.

The IAEA's report on Friday came amid a new push by Western powers for a third package of UN Security Council sanctions against Tehran, which diplomats in New York said could be agreed as early as next week.

The UN agency said it was still not in a position to determine the "full nature of Iran's nuclear programme" which the West fears could be cover for a drive to make nuclear weapons.

The UN ambassadors of Britain and France have formally introduced to the Security Council the draft of a new resolution imposing fresh sanctions.

The draft would impose a travel ban on officials involved in Tehran's nuclear and missile programmes and inspections of shipments to and from Iran if there are suspicions they may contain prohibited goods.

The draft text also calls "upon states to exercise vigilance in entering into new commitments for public-provided financial support for trade with Iran, including the granting of export credits, guarantees or insurance to their nationals involved in such trade."

Washington plans to host talks in the US capital on Monday with diplomats of the six powers -- the five veto-wielding Security Council permanent members plus Germany -- to review the draft.

But Iran's government spokesman Gholam Hossein Elham said it was "illegal and unjustifiable to keep Iran's nuclear case at the Security Council," vowing that "it will not affect the country's will" to pursue its nuclear programme.

Iran is already under two sets of UN Security Council sanctions for its failure to heed repeated Security Council ultimatums to suspend uranium enrichment.

It insists that as a signatory to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty it has a right to make enriched fuel to meet its population's growing energy needs.

The IAEA said nearly all of the key issues agreed in the so-called "work plan" drawn up by the UN watchdog and Tehran last autumn had been

resolved.

However, one crucial issue was still outstanding -- Iran's alleged work