

Nat'l policy

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elaborate the point on control over property and say anything specifically about inherited property.

Rasheda Choudhury said legal experts who will deal with the matter would have to consider the issue not only for Muslim women but also those of other religions.

Also aimed at ensuring women's security at national, social and family levels, and empowerment in political, social and economic sectors, the policy advocates ensuring women's participation in bodies to be formed to formulate new laws and amend the existing ones.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed formally unveiled the policy on Saturday while addressing a function marking the International Women's Day.

Asked about the timeframe for implementation of the policy, Rasheda Choudhury said, "It is not said there in the policy. There have been confusions regarding the policy for a long time and we have tried to remove them."

"There are some short-term steps, some mid-term and some long-term ones. We will immediately initiate the short-term steps while the next governments will have to take strong mechanism to implement the long-term policies," she said.

A clause on ensuring women's active and equal participation in all economic activities says women should be given equal opportunity to property, employment, market and business.

To achieve the goal of women's economic empowerment, necessary laws should be enacted to ensure equal opportunity to health, education, training, vocational training, information, income opportunity, property, debt, technology and market management and control over moveable and immovable property earned through market management, according to a related clause.

Besides suggesting one-third representation of women in parliament and direct election to those seats for women's political empowerment, the policy suggests increasing the number of the reserved seats to ensure women's increased participation in parliament.

"Increasing the number of reserved seats and direct voting is already under consideration of the government," reads the policy, which also advocates steps to increase reserved seats in all tiers of the local government system.

It suggests that the political parties should encourage more women to join active politics to pave the way for participation of more and more women in national and local body elections. It also suggests making women aware of their voting rights.

The policy also suggests appointment of adequate number of women, if necessary, under related sections of the constitution to the highest level of the cabinet division and the policy-making level of the administration.

The policy advocates establishment of women's human rights, their salvation from the vicious circle of poverty, elimination of discrimination against girls, ensuring adequate nutrition for them and providing enough support to help bloom their aptitudes and talents.

It suggests equal participation of women in every national economic activity beside their male counterparts and proper reflection of women's household works in national statistics.

The policy also advocates constitutional provisions, if necessary, for appointing women in policymaking bodies in the administration, especially at the highest cabinet level.

There should be effective measures so that women can be appointed in foreign missions, universities, the University Grants Commission, the planning ministry and higher positions in the judiciary.

Stressing the need for addressing matters related to women's health, nutrition, environment and participation in the mass media, the policy suggests that special attention should be paid to the unfortunate women victims of circumstances.

It also suggests that the government make coordinated efforts at the national, district and grassroots levels and work with national and

Dr Kamal

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He said it has been proved that a stable democracy and sustainable development of our country can be ensured by transfer of power to a government elected through a free and fair election, and through accountability and transparency of the government.

Separation and independence of the judiciary from the executive would be helpful and meaningful for ensuring the rule of law after sufficient number of courts is set up and judges are appointed in a transparent way.

He also expressed solidarity with the demand for setting up branches of High Court at divisional headquarters, saying it would save justice-seeking people's time and cost.

Barisal Bar Association President Abdul Mannan Akon presided over the meeting. Local lawyers also took part in the discussion.

international non-government organisations to implement it.

Asked about the discriminatory laws, Rasheda Choudhury referred to the Citizen's Act that has several rules that discriminate against women who marry foreigners.

"There were also discriminations against women in case of distribution of khas land," she added.

Ain O Salish Kendra Executive Director Advocate Sultana Kamal said nothing has been mentioned clearly about three issues related to women's rights—full ratification of CEDAW, uniform family code and equal right to inherit property.

She said as per the constitution and civil laws, all men and women are entitled to have equal rights, but in practice there are a lot of discriminations, which could be reduced greatly by having these three issues in place.

Sultana Kamal, also a former adviser to a caretaker government, said the issues of private or personal matters are said to be dealt by family laws that are actually influenced by religions.

"Women in different religions get different shares of properties—equal in some religions and less in others. Our demand was to formulate a uniform family code giving women equal rights. The issue was not made clear in the policy," she told The Daily Star.

Women's movement leader Maleka Begum, who was involved in preparing the Women Development Policy 1997, said the newly declared policy does not say anything about the formation of a national women commission proposed for implementing the policy.

She said besides family laws, there are many other laws like the citizenship law, guardianship law and the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act that have discriminatory clauses.

Although female workers, especially those in the garment sector, play a very vital role in the country's economy, they are not given due salaries, promotion and maternity leave and are treated in discriminating ways at workplace, she said.

The policy suggests raising allocation for women in the national budget to meet all their needs including food, clothes, housing, treatment and education.

The first women development policy adopted in 1997 had advocated direct voting to the reserved seats in parliament and equal opportunity and share to property, employment, market and business.

But the BNP-led coalition government made some amendments to the policy in 2004.

After expiry of the tenure of the coalition government, women and rights organisations demanded reinstating the provision of direct election to the reserved seats and protested insertion of "constitutional rights" in place of "equal rights" in the policy.

Emon

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Babul stabbed him (Emon) during a fight in Hazaribagh as he refused to let Babul have his motorbike, Emon said adding that he killed Babul in 1993 in Dhanmondi, a year after the brawl.

A few days later, Babul's friend Rafiq and his gang shot dead Sumon, the younger brother of Emon, in reprisal, he said.

The CID (Criminal Investigation Department) formed a seven-member team yesterday for interrogating him and Ishaq Ali, another criminal deported from India along with him on Friday.

The others who fell victim to Emon's wrath are Bangladesh Chhatra League leader Ashru in 2002, Titu in 1993 in Khilkhet, Himel of Mohamadpur, Freedom Party leader Mohiuddin, Awlad Hossain at Rayerbazar and Faridpur BNP leader Liakat Hossain at a community centre at Dhanmondi.

Besides, members of his gang shot dead film actor Sohel Chowdhury at a Gulshan bar in 1998, although he was not present there at the time, Emon said.

"He has almost willingly admitted to us of having connections in seven killings in the city," said a CID official wishing not to be named.

The top-listed criminal also said that his main income was from extortion in different parts of the city, particularly from Hazaribagh, Dhanmondi and Elephant Road areas. His accomplices used to send him the extorted money to India through hundi, he added.

Emon said that he had carried out the criminal activities, including extortion, in close cooperation with Monir Hussain, younger brother of former BNP lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu.

He earlier admitted that it was Pintu who had introduced him to the underworld of Dhaka.

Earlier in July 2007, Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd purchased an Airbus A-310 from US-based Crane International at \$12.4 million.

The 220-seater, now considered to be the backbone of the Biman fleet, was earlier leased to Biman on October 22, 2003 for four years.

Biman had to pay Crane International \$0.25 million a month for the aircraft at that time.

St Martin's Island

FROM PAGE 16
natural biodiversity, the government in a gazette notification declared St Martin's an EGA on April 19, 1999.

As part of establishing a marine park there, the government on July 29 issued another gazette notification prohibiting activities destructive to the flora and fauna of the island.

Extraction of coral, seashell and conch, cutting trees and building structures were also restricted in the gazette.

The government later undertook a project to conserve the biodiversity, establish a marine park and develop ecotourism facilities on the island. The project expired in June last year and since then no government agency is taking care of the island's ecology.

"The government is planning to extend the project for another five years," said one of the former project directors.

The hotels and restaurants are being operated on the island without official approval and they are contributing to destroying ecology over the years.

The government is however turning a blind eye to the situation.

As many as 33 privately owned hotels and restaurants are currently doing business on St Martin's, a 3.34-square-kilometre island with only 5,000 inhabitants and another 1,000 illegal Rohingyas.

Most of these businesses were launched in the last eight years soon after the government decided to establish a marine park there.

Thousands of tourists visit the St Martin's every year for its crystal clear blue seawaters, scenic beauty, corals, shells, conch and giant crabs.

According to Saint Martin's Hotel Owners' Association sources, no less than 60,000 tourists visited the island last year. Every year the number of tourists is increasing.

Janakantha editor

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Later, the name of Rajuk employee Abdul Latif was dropped from the charge sheet.

The Janakantha editor has been accused in seven other cases including three for building design fraud. He was jailed for seven years on March 6 on charges of fraud in another case.

The joint forces arrested Masud on March 7, 2007 at Janakantha building in the capital's Eskaton. He has been in custody since then.

Asaduzzaman, who is on the run, was tried in absentia.

According to case statement, Masud submitted the design of a 10-storey building to Rajuk for approval on March 6, 2000. Rajuk gave approval for constructing a six-storey building on Mirpur road.

Later, Rajuk officials SM Asaduzzaman and Abdul Latif prepared fake documents stating that Rajuk had given approval for constructing 10-storey building.

ACC Deputy Assistant Director Abul Kashem submitted the charge sheet to the court.

CEC

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has already announced holding of expired city corporation and municipality polls.

"Discussions with the political parties were held and they have no objection in this regard. They might have reservations about holding of the upazila polls. But the Election Commission has not yet taken any decision on the upazila elections. The government did not send any letter in this regard. We'll consider it after getting letter from the government," he said.

He said discussions are being held about upazila elections in May. The commission will take decision whether to hold national and upazila elections together or separately after getting letter from the government, he added.

The CEC said the commission has been reviewing the electoral reform proposals. It will be finalised after holding dialogue with the BNP.

Election commissioners Sohul Hossain and Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hossain and secretary of the Election Commission secretary Humayun Kabir were present.

Biman

FROM PAGE 1
Biman will have to pay \$5,300 to Kabo Air Ltd for per block hour (every flying hour from take-off to landing)," a Biman official said.

"We have sought overly permission from Chad, Sudan, Eritrea, Yemen and India as the leased aircraft will have to use the skies of those countries to land at ZIA," the Biman official said adding that rest of the formalities is already completed.

Set up in February 1980, Kabo Air Ltd started operations in April 1981, shows its profile.

Biman currently owns three types of aircraft—four DC10-30s, four F28s, and three A310-300s.

Of those, only four or five can fly every day, while the rest are grounded due to technical glitches.

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Hasina stands in dock

FROM PAGE 1
yet complete examining the evidence.

The judge said last time the hearing was deferred on condition that it would not be repeated since there is a deadline to complete the trial.

Regarding her health, the court said if she was not feeling well she might leave, but the hearing must begin and go on.

The prosecution said the proceedings must begin as they have enough evidence in hand to prove the charges.

In their submissions, they said Hasina awarded Wartsila, Power Development Ltd the contract for setting up a 100-MW barge-mounted power plant in Khulna for a bribe of Tk 3 crore. In doing so, she and the other accused deprived the lowest bidder New England Power Company (NEPC).

According to the prosecution, her co-accused former energy secretary Dr Toufiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury and the then Power Development Board chairman Nur Uddin Mahmud Kamal brokered the deal with Wartsila.

The kickbacks were paid between October 24, 1996 and November 24, 1997 through eight pay orders of American Express, Standard Chartered, Arab-Bangladesh, and ANZ Grindlays banks.

On October 8, 1997, Hasina, then the prime minister, bought a two-storey building on a 19-kha land on Dhanmondi Road No. 32 in the name of Bangabandhu Memorial Trust (BMT).

Summit Group and United Group—the local partners of

Wartsila, paid the land owner Tk 1.45 crore on October 7 and Tk 55 lakh the following day, the prosecution said.

Hasina approved the project summary on October 11.

A power purchase and implementation agreement was signed between Khulna Power Company Limited (KPCL) and PDB on October 16 the same year, the prosecution said.

Wartsila had the United Group and Summit Group in forming the KPCL.

The owner of the land was paid another Tk 1 crore on November 24.

THE CASE
ACC Deputy Director Sabbir Hasan lodged the case with Tejgaon Police Station on September 2 last year, accusing Hasina and six others of abusing power to help a foreign company and its local partners win the deal for setting up a barge-mounted power plant.

Former energy secretary Dr Toufiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, former PDB chairman Noor Uddin Mahmud Kamal, Managing Director of Summit Industries and Mercantile Corporation Private Ltd Aziz Khan, its Director Farid Khan, United Group Chairman Hasan Mahmud Raja, and its Director Abul Kamal Azad are the other accused.

Morshed Alam, deputy director of the ACC, submitted charge sheet on January 10, including BMT Curator Siddique Rahman as another accused.

The victims made a six-point demand including a judicial probe into the fraudulent activities by some suddenly sprouted NGOs, which have vanished with around Tk 500 crore.

Their other demands include immediate arrest and punishment to swindle NGO owners and those among local administration and people's representatives who assisted them, and arrangements for returning the swindled money.

The victims from greater Rajshahi districts started gathering in front of the Sadar upazila nirbahi officer's office in the morning. As the police dispersed them several times due to the state of emergency, they marched towards the DC office at around 12 noon.

A group of seven of the victims entered the DC office to submit their memorandum. The protesters later marched to Natore helipad field and held a rally.

The speakers said a number of police as well as administrative officials and people's representatives assisted the fraud NGOs to disappear with public money.

They also demanded financial relief for one year for paying off debts to other NGOs from where they had taken loans to invest with the fraud NGOs.

They alleged they have been roaming around for the last several days but the local administration is still silent on the issue.

Pak parties agree
FROM PAGE 16
He denied accusations that he was delaying calling the new parliament, and said Friday the new assemblies would be convened within 10 days.

Zardari said they had nothing personal against the embattled Musharraf.

"We don't believe in personal agenda... We are hoping that everybody will work together in harmony in strengthening democracy," he said.

But Sharif, a former prime minister, said they considered him to be an unconstitutional president.

"I don't think we have recognised Musharraf's existence, we consider him unconstitutional and illegal president and would not like our sacrifices that we made during last eight years to go down the drain," said Sharif, who was ousted when Musharraf seized power in a bloodless coup in 1999.

Sharif and his party have been outspoken in their calls for him to quit.

However Bhutto's PPP which is more moderate than Sharif's party, has said it has no immediate plans to seek his removal.

Meanwhile police fired teargas at supporters of Chaudhry protesting outside his residence in Islamabad, witnesses said.

Lawyers are observing a "black flag week" to press for the reinstatement of Chaudhry and other judges whom Musharraf sacked on November 3.

Khulna mayor
FROM PAGE 16
Moshiozzaman, Kamrul Islam and Bule—are on the run.

Businessman Ali Abdullah Elin of Jaipur village in Khulna filed a first information report (FIR) with Khulna Police Station against the KCC mayor and seven others on November 3 last year.

He said Taybeur and seven others received Taka 4.5 lakh from him promising to provide his nephews Nurul Huda and Jahangir with jobs in the city corporation. But the mayor neither gave them job nor returned the money.

Sub-inspector Tipu Sultan of Khulna Police Station, also the investigation officer of the case, submitted charge sheet to the court on December 24 last year.

Make 'crossfire'

FROM PAGE 16
Procedure Code (CrPC). They said detention under the Special Powers Act violates the basic rights of the people guaranteed by the constitution.

They lauded the government move to reform the age-old police law and called for making the police force friendly to the people.

Rajshahi poultry

FROM PAGE 16
since it was the first case in the country where the patient was from an infected farm, we gave it a top priority," he said.

The specimens were then sent to the virology department of ICDDR,B for real-time polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test and the results were negative for H5 virus.

Ashraf Hossain, a poultry farmer of Terokhadia Paschimpara in the city, had been taken to RMCH on March 5 and quarantined the next day on suspicion of being infected with the avian influenza H5N1 virus.

The surveillance physician of the RMCH influenza surveillance informed the IEDCR of the matter.

On February 20, some 100 chickens of his farm died and he buried those without taking any protective measures. Two days later, the district livestock department confirmed the presence of bird flu virus at the farm and culled 600 chickens.

NGO victims

FROM PAGE 16
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Rupali sale deal

FROM PAGE 1
served a legal notice on the Saudi prince in December 2007, asking him to deposit \$458 million within December 26 as per its tender participation rules for taking over Rupali Bank.

But the prince did not reply to the commission.

The commission in a letter had earlier informed the chief adviser that after the two-week period of the notice the prince will be liable to forfeit \$100,000 in security money paid to it.

The commission wasted over Tk 17 crore of public money violating privatisation regulations in the process of making the now uncertain deal of Rupali Bank sale to the prince.

The government had earlier decided to privatise Rupali Bank as part of the financial reforms and banking sector modernisation.

The commission had also invited bids from seven selected organisations listed through a scrutiny from among those interested, both from home and abroad.

MPs' influence

FROM PAGE 1
upazila parishads when the government suggests.

"Some are saying that it can be held along with the national elections and some are in favour of holding the upazila elections in segments. The decision has not been made yet," the CEC told reporter at the EC Secretariat.

The EC in its electoral roadmap announced on July 15 last year said the long overdue elections to upazila parishads will be held between November and December this year.

Today the council of advisers is likely to discuss ways to ensure environment conducive to holding polls to four city corporations and seven municipalities at the end of April or early May, sources said.

The EC had earlier asked the caretaker government to create the environment for holding polls to city corporations and municipalities either by lifting or relaxing the state of emergency in the areas.

AMENDMENT TO UPZILA PARISHAD ACT
The council of advisers on January 27 this year approved a proposition for amending the current Upazila Parishad Act, 1998 repealing a provision that allows local representatives to the parliament to interfere in the activities of upazila parishads.

Section 25 of the current law empowers lawmakers to become

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