

Govt says US HR report lacks balance

STAR REPORT

The government yesterday termed the US state department's Human Rights Practices Report 2007 on Bangladesh disappointing for its "lack of balance" in presenting the country's ground realities.

Reacting to the report released in Washington Tuesday saying the caretaker government's human rights record worsened in part due to the state of emergency and postponement of elections, the foreign ministry said Bangladesh is committed to upholding human rights of all its citizens in

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100 UPAZILAS Publication of draft voter list this month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) plans to start publishing draft voter lists with photographs of around 100 upazilas this month and finalise those in May.

As per the plan, the EC Secretariat drafted a schedule for publication of draft voter lists of 11 upazilas on March 16 to finalise those by mid-April, sources in the

EC Secretariat said.

The 11 upazilas are Bogra Sadar, Chapainawabganj Sadar, Comilla Sadar South, Rouzan and Sitakunda of Chittagong district, Jessore Sadar, Rupsha of Khulna district, Poba and Putia of Rajshahi district, Rangpur Sadar, Gongachara of Rangpur district.

The EC plans to direct field-level election offices to begin publication of draft voter lists of the rest of the upazilas where the voter registration work is complete.

If everything goes smoothly and according to the plan, the voter lists of at least 100 upazilas will be ready by next May, officials at the EC Secretariat added.

Elections to these upazilas can be held after two months of finalising the voter list, if the EC decides to hold elections to those upazila

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NIKO CASE Probe report on Khaleda placed before ACC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The investigation report in the Niko graft case against former premier Khaleda Zia and four others was submitted to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday with a proposal for indicting nine more persons.

Meanwhile, the ACC also issued an official letter yesterday to another detained former premier Sheikh Hasina, asking her to

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HC VERDICT ON HASINA'S WEALTH STATEMENT CANCELLED SC says ACC notice legal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday cancelled the High Court verdict that declared illegal issuance of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) notice asking former premier and Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina to submit her wealth statement.

Following the SC decision the ACC notice issued on Hasina became valid.

Also cancels stay orders on notices to Khaleda, Sajeda, Naziur, Taimur

Meanwhile, the SC also cancelled the HC order of staying operation of similar ACC notices to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, AL presidium member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Bangladesh Janata Party Chairman Naziur Rahman Manju and ex-BRTC chairman Taimur Alam Khandaker.

With the apex court's decision ACC can now advance with its proceedings regarding the notices to Hasina, Khaleda, Sajeda, Naziur and Taimur.

The seven-member full bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Mohammad Ruhul Amin delivered the verdict following an appeal by ACC.

The same court also cancelled the stay on operation of ACC notices to Khaleda, Sajeda, Naziur and Taimur following the anti-graft watchdog's leave to appeal against the HC interim orders.

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GAS CRISIS, WARMING WEATHER Load-shedding creeps up to 500MW

SHARIER KHAN

A shortfall in gas supply coupled with rising demand for power with the arrival of warmer weather is causing daily official load shedding of 400MW-500MW.

According to Power Development Board (PDB), problems in gas supply caused 554MW less power generation yesterday.

In addition, power generation at a few power plants that have a capacity to produce more than 200MW electricity has remained suspended for maintenance work.

The power plants that run on natural gas have a daily demand for around 800 million cubic feet gas a day (mmcf), but these are pres-

ently getting around 642 mmcf of gas.

"But we are hoping the situation will ease up from Saturday," said a PDB official, adding, "A 110MW coal-fired power unit of Barapukuria that was shut down several days ago will begin operation from Saturday."

Presently gas companies under Petrobangla are able to supply around 1,700 mmcf of gas.

Gas supply to Chittagong has been declining for the last few years because of nose-diving gas production from the Sangu gas field. Chittagong is experiencing a shortage of around 100 mmcf of gas supply, for which gas-fired power

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Indigenous people perform after completing a procession celebrating the Adivashi Sangskritik Utsab 2008 at Shilpakala Academy in the city yesterday.

WOMEN'S STATUS, GENDER EQUALITY Bangladesh outshines India, Pakistan

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh outperforms India and Pakistan in many areas concerning women's status and gender equality, though the picture of their access to reproductive health services, labour markets and decision-making is still bleak, said a World Bank report.

The report said Bangladesh stands out as a shining new example in South Asia achieving impressive gains in gender equality despite being a poor country.

After Sri Lanka and the Indian state of Kerala, Bangladesh dwarfs Pakistan and India in many areas, said the WB report titled "Whispers to Voices: Gender and Social

Order for return of Hasina's passport stayed

Matin terms her doctors 'partisan'

STAR REPORT

A Dhaka court that had ordered the government Wednesday to return detained Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina her seized passport stayed the order yesterday until March 31.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Golam Rabbani issued the stay order following a prayer by the state side that termed Wednesday's court order unilateral.

Meanwhile, Home Adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) MA Matin yesterday termed the doctors "partisan" who recommended sending the

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