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Unite within 72 hours for talks with EC

BNP groups get ultimatum; Khaleda loyals agree to sit together with Saifur faction if Delwar invited by EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) in an unprecedented move yesterday asked the BNP factions to be reconciled within the next 72 hours to participate in the dialogue on electoral reforms proposals.

In response, the ones loyal to Khaleda Zia demanded that the EC first send a formal invitation to their Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain. They said within 72 hours after the receipt of an

invite they would patch up differences with the pro-reform leaders and take part in the talks together.

"We have asked them to come together for discussions on electoral reforms. We've given them the next two to three days to be united. We can't wait any longer," Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda told reporters after meeting the two groups separately yesterday.

He said both the factions have assured the commission that they

would unite again. "We want to sit with a united BNP. We can't handle this faction thing," he added.

Talking to newsmen, BNP chairperson's Adviser Brig Gen (retd) Hannan Shah said they have asked the EC for an invitation letter to Khandaker Delwar, secretary general appointed by the chairperson.

"We have assured the CEC and the other two election commissioners that we would participate in the talks together within 72 hours after receiving a formal

invitation," he continued. "We hope the commission will consider our proposal."

Since independence, no EC had to mediate internal dispute of a political party. But, officials at the EC Secretariat observed, the present one is compelled to intervene as the leadership row within BNP threatens to undermine its electoral roadmap.

At the meetings with the factions, the commission said it wants

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

invite the pro-reform leaders to sit together with the Khaleda faction.

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SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

HASINA TRIAL
Proceedings stop for 2 hours over cop excesses

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Proceedings of the barge-mounted power plant graft case against detained Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina remained adjourned for the first two hours yesterday as the lawyers protested against rude behaviour by a police officer to journalists.

As the journalists continued their courtroom boycott for the second day yesterday, the former premier expressed suspicion that she might be put on a "camera trial" in absence of the press.

The journalists, however, called off their programme at 1:30pm after DC (prosecution) Akkas Uddin Bhuiyan and Additional

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Saifur admitted to hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Acting chairperson of the pro-reforms BNP faction M Saifur Rahman was admitted to Apollo Hospitals in the city yesterday afternoon.

He was being treated by Dr Azizul Hasan, consultant of the internal medicine department, for a drop in mineral level in his body.

He was, however, out of danger, hospital sources said.

Khaleda loyals sit with govt today

Delwar claims of positive nod from detained chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The pro-Khaleda faction of BNP yesterday decided to join the pre-dialogue talks, to be held any time today, with advisers of the government.

A text message from Education and Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman was sent yesterday

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

ACC forms task force to probe graft at BSMMU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday said a three-member task force has been formed to look into institutional corruption in Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

The team will investigate the irregularities in the purchase and supply of equipment to BSMMU and in the tender processes to determine the loss caused by graft.

"The task force will begin its

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

work on May 15," said Md Nuruddin, acting khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque who headed the review committee.

"A woman cannot enjoy rights equal to a man's because a woman is not equal to a man by birth. Can

there be two prime ministers—one male and one female—in a country at the same time?" Nuruddin told The Daily Star after submitting the seven-page report to Law and Religious Affairs Adviser AF Hassan Arif yesterday.

The 20-member committee asked the government to clarify the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

NATIONAL WOMEN DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Review body opposes equal rights for women

Recommends deletion of 6 provisions, change in 15

STAR REPORT

The ulema committee formed to review the National Women Development Policy has strongly opposed equal rights to women, recommending deletion of six sections of the policy and amending 15 others as they said these sections "clash" with the provi-

sions of the Quran and Sunnah.

There are several sections in the policy which are "very objectionable", said Mufti Mohammad Nuruddin, acting khatib of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque who headed the review committee.

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SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

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SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

DU teachers wear black badge to demand lifting of emergency

DU CORRESPONDENT

A large number of Dhaka University (DU) teachers yesterday wore black ribbons to classes and examination halls demanding immediate withdrawal of the state of emergency.

Teachers of the pro-Awami League Blue Panel and pro-BNP-Jamaat White Panel were seen wearing black ribbons at classes in Arts building and Business Studies faculty and other institutions of the university.

Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) on April 13 decided on this protest programme during a general meeting held at the association's club.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



PHOTO: STAR

1

Rice supply for OMS increased

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The almost unmanageable rush to buy rice from Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) outlets in the capital is now under control as the number of outlets increased and people's fear of not getting rice in future died down.

Meanwhile, the government decided to increase the amount of rice for open market sale (OMS) dealers.

BDR Task Force Commander Col Md Mujibul Hoque yesterday said, "The rush for rice has died down. People who were scared are now calm finding rice available."

He was speaking at a views-exchange meeting at the BDR Headquarters yesterday.

"During the last few days,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Tofail sees no alternative to movement if Hasina not freed now

UNB, Dhaka

called for any time to free Hasina. The Awami Juba League (AL) presidium member Tofail Ahmed yesterday warned that there would be no alternative to waging movement if former prime minister Sheikh Hasina is not released from jail immediately.

Tofail said the country is now going through a critical time and Hasina's release is the only way to overcome it.

He demanded that the government hold parliamentary elections

Treatment of Hasina abroad not in govt's mind: Matin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Adviser Maj Gen (retd) MA Matin yesterday said right now the government is not considering the issue of sending detained former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina abroad for treatment.

"Since hearing of the cases against Sheikh Hasina is going on, the government is not considering the matter of sending her abroad for treatment," Matin told the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

WOMEN POLICY

Govt to take tough stance on violence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government would take a tough stance against any further violence centring the National Women Development Policy.

"We have shown enough tolerance since religious sentiment is linked with it. But, it would be wrong if anyone considered it as a weakness of the government...We will become tough if needed," Home Adviser Maj Gen (retd) MA Matin said at a press briefing last night.

"We will try to prevent any violence the next time. After all the emergency is there," Matin said, revealing the government's stance on the issue following last week's

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH

Ex-PSC member Prof Mahfuz gets 13yrs

Tk 5cr property to be confiscated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

the Special Court-10, set up on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises for dealing with corruption cases, delivered the judgment.

Prof Mahfuzur Rahman was tried in absentia. The punishment will come into effect from the day of his arrest or surrender, the verdict said.

The court sentenced him to three years jail for concealing information about wealth worth Tk 1,82,000 in the wealth statement and 10 years rigorous imprisonment for amassing wealth worth Tk 5.02 crore beyond his known sources of income.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

11 JMB men get life for sedition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A Rajshahi divisional court yesterday awarded life terms to all 11 militants of Jama'atul Mujahidin, Bangladesh (JMB) in a sedition case filed for taking combat training to fight against the state in 2005.

Judge M Sajedul Karim of the first court of Rajshahi divisional special judge also fined the accused Tk 20,000 each, in default of which they are to spend two more years in jail.

The convicts include Enamul Haque and Golamur Rahman alias Golam Mostafa, both regional JMB commanders and followers of executed militant leader Siddikul Islam Bangla Bhai and arrested militant kingpin Asadullah Al Galib respectively.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

NIKO GRAFT CASE
Ex-secretary Shahidul held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law enforcers arrested former acting energy secretary Khandaker Shahidul Islam last night in connection with the Niko corruption case filed on December 9 last year.

Sources said a team comprising members of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police arrested Shahidul at his Dhamondi-27 residence at about 8:00pm.

Shahidul was handed over to Dhamondi police at about 8:30pm.

The ACC filed the case with

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Correction

In the report titled "Stinky flows the river" published in The Daily Star yesterday the name of Mark Wash and Dyeing Ltd was mistakenly mentioned as one of the polluting industries.

Actually, the liquid discharging drain of the industry is not connected to the underground pipe that centrally discharge toxic wastes from different industries into the Labandha river.

In a statement, Mark Wash and Dyeing Ltd authorities said they have been treating their wastewater regularly through their Effluent Treatment Plant since the beginning of their operation. They said they drain the treated water into a pond and subsequently into the nearby river, never polluting the environment.



PHOTO: STAR



Leaders of pro-Khaleda faction of BNP, top, and pro-reforms faction, bottom, meet election commissioners at separate dialogue preparatory meetings at the EC Secretariat yesterday following invitations of the Election Commission.



Mr. Mahiuddin Faruqui, Managing Director, Multifabs Limited is receiving a Crest of Janata Bank Limited from Mr. Suhel Ahmed Choudhury, Chairman, Board of Directors Janata Bank Limited in recognition of their receipt of National Export Trophy (Gold) for the year 2004-2005. Mr. S M Aminur Rahman, CEO and Managing Director of Janata Bank Limited was also present on the occasion.