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133 constituency boundaries changed, Dhaka gets 20 seats

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday unveiled a draft list of parliamentary seats with their boundaries redrawn district-wise.

Of the 300 constituencies, 133 have seen changes in boundaries and the rest remained intact.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda presented the list of redefined electoral districts at a press conference at the EC Secretariat's conference room.

According to the catalogue, seats representing 17 districts in parliament have either increased or decreased.

After massive delineation of boundaries, seven new seats have

been added to Dhaka district. Metropolitan areas with high density of population won all the seven additions.

The number of constituencies in the capital now stands at 15, up from eight, while that in Dhaka district at 20, rising from 13.

Dohar and Nawabganj upazilas in Dhaka have been allocated only one seat against their previous two. Some unions of Nawabganj and Keraniganj have been combined to form a new constituency, raising the number of seats in Keraniganj to two, up from one.

The remainder of the 133 redrawn seats however did not witness much change in their boundaries. In their case, the EC has either added or taken away

upazilas or unions between neighbouring seats to bring balance in their sizes in terms of electorate.

According to a calculation of the EC Secretariat, 32 constituencies have gone through minor changes. While 39 have been reconstituted with areas from one or more bordering seats added to them, 42 have been subjected to 'other types of changes'.

The EC, which yesterday published the gazette notification of freshly demarcated parliamentary seats, plans to finalise the list within June.

After 24 long years, it moved to delimit the boundaries of constituencies on a large scale, ignoring objections of the major political parties.

The last time the EC carried out a major demarcation was in 1984. Then in 1995, it brought some minor changes in the electoral boundaries.

Due to the long gap, disproportion grew in the sizes of constituencies population-wise.

According to the voter list prepared in 2001, each of 17 constituencies had voters below two lakh, each of six had voters over six lakh, seven had between five and six lakh while the number of voters in each of 19 constituencies ranged between four and five lakh.

The rest of the constituencies however were medium-sized in terms of voters.

Interestingly, the ceiling on

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Advisers place report today to CA on informal talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The five advisers who wrapped up their pre-dialogue talks with political parties, business community and civil society on Monday will submit their report to the chief adviser today.

The informal talks were held in the run up to formal dialogue between the caretaker government and political parties.

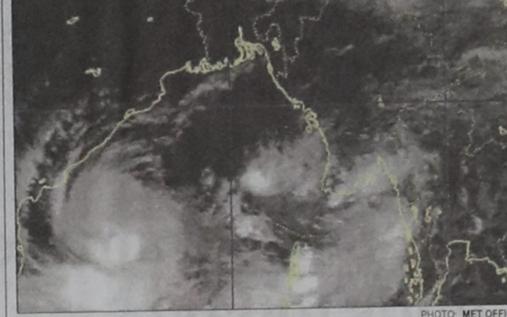
The advisers are now preparing the report containing their recommendations.

"As you know, the pre-dialogue talks ended yesterday (Monday). We are now holding meetings to prepare a synthesis of the topics that came up during the pre-dialogue talks," Commerce Adviser

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Nargis gathers strength, moves slowly

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



This satellite image shows Nargis hovering near southwest Bay of Bengal yesterday.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Almost stationary in the Bay, cyclone Nargis has gathered more strength, intensifying into a "severe cyclonic storm", and is moving north very slowly. It may hit the Bangladesh-Myanmar coast.

A Met Office special bulletin said yesterday evening that Nargis was lying over west central Bay and adjoining southwest Bay 1,155km from Chittagong coast, 1090km away from Cox's Bazar and 1,030km from Mongla coast with minimum sustained wind speed between 90kmph and 120kmph within the 54km radius of its centre.

The first cyclonic storm since the deadly Sidr, Nargis is likely to intensify further.

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50 hurt in student-cop clash at Dhaka College

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More than 50 people including students, teachers and police were injured in a three-hour clash between Dhaka College students and the law enforcers on and around the campus yesterday.

Earlier, the students got infuriated after some street hawkers and shopkeepers had handed over a college student to police after a beating, when he and some of his college mates were beating a human hauler driver. The students chased and caught the driver at Nilkhet intersection after he had refused to pick them up from across the campus, as there is no stoppage for the public transportation.

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PHOTO: STAR

Students of Dhaka College torch furniture of roadside tea stalls and pelt police with brickbats near the college as they clashed with shop keepers of New Market and law enforcers yesterday.

Reformed AL, BNP best defence against extremism

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An international organisation focussed on preventing deadly conflicts in a report said that a reformed, secular Awami League and BNP that respect the democratic rules, both internally and externally, is the best hope for democracy in Bangladesh and the best defence against religious extremism.

Brussels-based International Crisis Group in its report on Bangladesh urged the caretaker government along with the international community to take

SEE PAGE 14 COL 3

Donor policies led to rice boom, doom

INAM AHMED

When Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Chief Jacques Diouf recently blamed the World Bank and the IMF policies for dismantling systems to protect farmers, he introduced a new chapter to the ongoing debate on rice crisis.

While it is true that the donor-led policies led to the rice production revolution, it is equally true that their later policy changes left governments like that of Bangladesh vulnerable to food shocks and incapable of acting fast in such a situation.

When the Green Revolution was introduced in late 1960s, a magic

thing happened. Farmers found their fields yielding as much as three times more. IRRI-8 and IRRI-20 (IRRI Shall) -- the wonder seeds for Boro and Aman -- soon IRRI became the other name for high yielding rice. Rice, that golden staple that took farmers back-breaking toil to produce soon became their darling.

But the wonder rice, also known as the high yielding variety (HYV) one, needed a lot of inputs -- water, fertiliser and pesticides.

"That needed a lot of money requiring credit and supportive investment from the government on flood control and irrigation which was poured in by the World

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Last two of eight cases against Tarique stayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday stayed the proceedings of two more extortion cases against Tarique Rahman, senior joint secretary general of BNP and elder son of detained former premier Khaleda Zia.

With yesterday's stay orders passed by an HC division bench, the proceedings of all eight cases against the detained BNP stalwart now came to a halt. Tarique is accused of extortion in seven of the cases while of corruption in the other case.

Following the announcement of the stay orders, Tarique's counsel Barrister Mahbubuddin Khokan

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Baghahat arson pre-planned, orchestrated

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Accord was signed to ensure peace in the region, but a section of the population there is always involved in terrorist activities in an effort to sabotage the areas development, said Army Chief Gen Moeen U Ahmed.

He urged the local administration to take actions against the 'terrorists'.

He made the comments yesterday while distributing relief materials in Gangaram Muk under Sajek union of Rangamati among the victims of April 20 arson attack in

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH Businesses, individuals deposit Tk 352cr

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

Eight businesses and five individuals voluntarily surrendered their illegally earned Tk 352 crore to the state exchequer between November 2007 and April 2008.

The business firms and the individuals deposited the money to the government in 70 separate pay orders after joint forces investigations detected their illegal earnings.

AB Bank Limited alone paid Tk 194.48 crore in seven pay orders -- Tk 68 crore in January, Tk 66 crore in February, Tk 44 crore in April and Tk 8.41 crore in November of 2007.

Among the businesses, Bashundhara Group paid Tk 68

crore, Elite Paints Tk 18.44 crore, Eastern Housing Tk 10 crore, Hosaf Group Tk 6 crore, Partex Group Tk 5 crore, Swadesh Properties Ltd Tk 2.5 crore and Amin Mohammad Group paid Tk 1.13 crore to the exchequer.

Among the individuals, Nurul Islam Babul paid Tk 15 crore, Nur Ali Tk 13.90 crore, Mr Manik Tk 4 crore, Parveen Sikdar Tk 3 crore and Abdul Awal Mintoo paid Tk 2.20 crore out of the money they made illegally.

The DGFI (Directorate General of Forces Intelligence) in three separate letters issued on April 23 and signed by Col M Afzal Naser Bhuiyan on behalf of Choudhury

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

Chevron resumes seismic survey at Lawachhara

UNB, Dhaka

International oil company Chevron yesterday resumed its 3D seismic survey at Lawachhara national forest under its Moulvibazar gas-field domain as an inquiry found no link between its works and the recent bushfire.

The survey activities were suspended on April 26 following the fire incident.

"Following an investigation into a fire incident which occurred on April 26 in the Lawachhara Reserve Forest, Chevron Bangladesh confirms that there was no connection between the fire and seismic-related works. Chevron is going to resume work on April 29," said the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Shafique elected SCBA president

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Barrister Shafique Ahmed has been elected president of the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA).

According to election results received till at 1:00am today, Shafique won 589 votes while Khandaker Mahub Hossain came closest with 431 votes.

Earlier, the two-day voting passed off peacefully marking a high turnout. Out of 1,780 votes, 1,532 were cast.

As of filing this report at 1:45am, the winner of secretary's post could not be declared as there was a recount going on following a close contest between M Nurul Islam Sujan and Abdullah Al Mamun.

Jannatul Nur Panna and

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20pc hike in govt staff salary on cards

Safety net programme funds to be increased

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON

The government is going to increase the salaries of its employees by around 20 percent in the next fiscal year considering the price hike of essentials.

It will also raise the funds for the safety net programmes for the poor to Tk 9,000 crore. The revised budget of the current fiscal year allocated around Tk 4,000 for this purpose.

However, officials said it is not yet certain whether the increase will be on the gross or the basic salary of the public servants.

"The preliminary estimation shows that the government will have to spend Tk 3,210 crore in addition to its current spending in the next budget for increased salaries of public sector employees," a finance ministry official told The Daily Star.

The current budget has allocated Tk 13,510 crore for the pay and allowances of government employees.

The plan to increase the salaries of the government employees can be seen as a result of the recent hike in prices of food and other

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

CA stresses more investment in agriculture

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday said the country's food security must be given due importance in the wake of the global food shortage.

"So, adequate investment will have to be made in agriculture sector, particularly in food grains sub-sector. Poverty alleviation is not possible without development of agriculture," he said.

The chief adviser was addressing an award distribution ceremony and concluding function of a five-day Microcredit Fair 2008 in the capital, organised by Palli

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