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ELECTORAL REFORM DIALOGUE

AL, BNP factions, 11 other parties invited

AL readies 6-point demands; Nizami alleges govt not taking proper steps for talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government yesterday invited 13 more political parties including the Awami League (AL) and both the factions of BNP to the electoral reform dialogue, which will begin at the chief adviser's office from May 22.

Andolon (Hafezzihur), Khelafat Majlish of Shaikhul Hadith, Bangladesh Kalyan Party, and Progressive Democratic Party. The AL said yesterday that it would participate in the dialogue with party chief Sheikh Hasina freed.

Sources at the chief adviser's office said separate letters were sent to both Khandaker Delwar Hossain, BNP acting secretary general appointed by Chairperson Khaleda Zia, and Maj (ret) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, acting secretary general appointed by the party's standing committee.

Jamaat-e-Islami Amir Motiur Rahman Nizami meanwhile alleged that the caretaker government is not taking proper initiatives for the electoral reform dialogue.

Nizami sees move for depoliticisation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Amir Motiur Rahman Nizami yesterday alleged that the caretaker government is not taking proper initiatives for the electoral reform dialogue with political parties and is rather making a fresh move to arrest political leaders.

"There has been a move to create a vacuum in the country's leadership through depoliticisation," Nizami said yesterday—just a day after the Anti-Corruption Commission pressed charges against him and others in the Gato graft case.

He demanded release of all political leaders arrested since the declaration of the state of emergency, including Awami League



PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

A derailed section of Noakhali Express at Ashuganj train station after yesterday's collision with Sylhet bound Upaban Express.

Ex-state minister Omar, Mockbul's son jailed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday jailed former state minister for law barrister Shahjahan Omar for 13 years for amassing wealth illegally and concealing information in his wealth statement submitted to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

against him on charge of forging a Rajuk approval for a building design. The court also fined Atiqullah Tk 1,22,44,200 in default of which he would have to serve another year in jail.

Meanwhile, another court sentenced former AL lawmaker Mokbul Hossain's son Masudur Rahman to 13 years imprisonment for amassing wealth beyond his known sources of income and concealing information in his wealth statement.

The court dealing with graft cases also sentenced his wife Mehjabin Farjana Omar to three years imprisonment for abetting him and keeping the ill-gotten wealth in her possession.

Another special court yesterday sentenced detained Daily Janakantha Editor Atiqullah Khan Masud to seven years imprisonment in yet another case filed

The court however acquitted their son Adnan Omar as charges brought against him could not be proved.

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SC lawyers to stay away from court today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) lawyers are scheduled to refrain from attending the Appellate Division proceedings for two hours from 9:00am today, protesting a recent few judgments of the court.

Meanwhile, another group of lawyers led by Bangladesh Bar Council (BBC) Vice-chairman Advocate Khondker Mahub Hossain, who was appointed to the post by the military backed caretaker government, opposed the SCBA decision and decided to attend the court proceedings this morning standing against the protesters.

SCBA, on May 11, at an urgent general meeting decided to abstain from the proceedings in Appellate Division from 9:00am to 11:00am

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Law drafted for access to information

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The caretaker government has moved to ensure that people get information about functioning of local government bodies as part of efforts to establish accountability and transparency in their activities.

The LGRD ministry has drafted laws on different local government bodies incorporating provisions for people's access to information, and punishment for refusal to give information, sources said.

The council of advisers to the caretaker government has already finalised two draft ordinances on city corporations and municipalities which contain provisions allowing citizens to have information

through gazette notifications can classify these records and documents as notified ones in the interests of all concerned.

"A local government unit can ignore any demands for getting information contained in notified records or documents," one source said quoting the relevant provisions.

According to the proposed laws, the government can direct any local government institution to prepare a list of information to be made available to people.

The draft ordinances say, "Officials concerned in city corporations will be bound to give information within the specified time."

In the proposed ordinances on zila, upazila and union parishads, the LGRD ministry has incorporated a similar chapter titled 'right to information', detailing the procedure to get information, sources in the ministry said.

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A city in itself set to dot Dhaka horizon

Rajuk goes for ambitious residential project

PINAKI ROY

The northern horizon of Dhaka City is going to see a lot of changes as Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) is developing its most ambitious residential project yet in a nine-square-kilometre vast wetland in Uttara.

Once the project is fully implemented, commuters will also notice significant changes in the communication between the central and northern parts of the city.

Under the new project, 20km from the Zero Point of Dhaka City, vast wetland just behind the botanical garden beside the Mirpur flood protection embankment is being filled up dividing each residential sector into multiple blocks.

Rajuk authorities said almost 30 percent space is being reserved for road network while space is also being saved for various facilities needed in a modern satellite town-

schools, colleges and private universities, clinics and hospitals, shopping malls and kitchen markets, mosques, temples and churches, Eidgahs and graveyards.

Moreover, considering future development of Dhaka City, Rajuk has allocated land for underground railway, monorail and bus terminals. The authorities will construct a new major road to connect the northern and southern parts of the city as a substitute for the Airport Road.

"We are trying to build the area in a way so that people living there will not need to come to the main city often—they will get everything they need over there. We are careful so that our new project does not increase traffic congestion," said Nurul Islam, Uttara third phase project director.

"We are planning in a way so that the residential area does not turn into a commercial area in the future like Dhanmondi," he said.

Rajuk started the project beside the Uttara second phase in 1999, targeting a project cost of Tk 20,440 million. The authorities have already earned Tk 4,139 million by selling 922 five-katha plots at Tk 20 lakh each and 1,530 three-katha plots at Tk 15 lakh each.

A total of 8,285 plots were allocated in 2006 under the huge residential project.

However, allocation of 897 plots was stayed on the allegation of nepotism. Of them, the authorities have given back 300 plots to their allottees after clearance following taskforce investigation.

About 2,000 plots have been allotted to those whose land was acquired for the project while 20 percent plots (around 800) have been reserved for the housing and public works ministry and Rajuk officials and employees, said Rajuk sources.

Rajuk authorities estimated the

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CA to attend grand rally of farmers in Dinajpur today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed will attend a farmers' grand rally at Cheradangi High School ground, about four kilometres from Dinajpur district headquarters, this morning.

He will also inaugurate Boro harvest season of this region by cutting a sheaf of paddy on a land owned by farmer Year Muhammad at Cheradangi village.

Sources in the district administration said at least two farmers each from 63 districts and 100 farmers from Dinajpur district will

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Upaban driver, stationmaster blamed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The collision between two passenger trains at Ashuganj early yesterday took place due to violation of signal by the Sylhet-bound Upaban Express drivers and negligence on part of Ashuganj stationmaster, a top railway official said.

The accident killed eight people and injured about 100 others. Besides, the Bangladesh Railway incurred a loss of over Tk 2 crore as five compartments of the two trains and the engine of the Upaban Express were damaged and the Ashuganj terminal smashed.

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BNP factions reach consensus on unity

Prepare draft charter

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

Leaders of both factions in BNP in a crucial meeting yesterday reached a consensus and prepared a draft charter for reuniting the party, which will be made public soon, according to meeting sources.

The meeting reached a consensus that pro-Saifur faction will nullify the decisions made in the much disputed October 29, 2007 meeting of the so-called standing committee, where the clique was formed appointing Saifur Rahman

and Maj (ret) Hafizuddin Ahmed acting chairman and acting secretary general respectively.

The move will mean dissolution of pro-Saifur faction and merger of it with Khaleda loyalists currently led by the detained chairperson appointed Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain.

Pro-Saifur leaders will also take necessary steps so the party may use its central office, and will re-activate the party's bank account which they froze following the

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GATCO GRAFT Jail prepares for more VIPs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several rooms at Dhaka Central Jail have been kept ready for accommodating more high profile prisoners, jail sources said last night.

The prison authorities took this step sensing arrest of former ministers and top leaders against whom charges in the Gato graft case were pressed on Tuesday night.

"We are always ready. We are bound to accept (any prisoners) if court sends them to us," said Major Shamsul Haider Siddique, deputy

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Col (rtd) Shafique Ullah Bir Protik expired on 31st March

WE DEEPLY MOURN

Loss of our dear Treasurer and Member, Board of Governors

All his relatives, friends, colleagues and students are invited to join in the Challisha-cum-Civic Memorial Meeting on Friday, May 16, 2008 after Jumma at his village home, Kailine, Chandina, Comilla.

IUBAT Community and Family Members

Group Capt M S Zoha (rtd) Convener

Col (rtd) Md Shafique Ullah, Bir Protik Memorial Committee

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GRAFT CASE ACC submits charge sheet against Mirza Abbas, wife

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday pressed charges against detained former housing and public works minister Mirza Abbas and his wife Afroza Abbas in a case filed for amassing wealth through illegal means and providing false information about wealth to the commission.

ACC Assistant Director Khairul Huda, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court of Dhaka, showing 34 people as prosecution witnesses.

On August 16 last year, ACC Assistant Director Shaiful Alam filed the case with Ramna Police Station against the couple.

In the case statement, the complainant said that they had found

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