

4-party

FROM PAGE 1
the parliamentary election first and asked the government to create an atmosphere conducive to free and fair polls by lifting the state of emergency and releasing all political leaders behind bars.

The meeting held at the Baridhara residence of Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) Chairman Andaleeb Rahman Partho was presided over by Delwar and attended by senior leaders of BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, BJP and Islami Oikya Jote.

Asked about the decision on local elections, the BJP chairman told The Daily Star last night that lifting emergency is a must for any election to go ahead.

"Why worry about participation of the political parties if the local body polls are non-political?" he questioned.

Queried what would be their final decision when the closing date (July 3) for submitting nominations is approaching fast, the BNP secretary general said, "We will consider contesting the polls only if our demands are met, and the time has not yet run out."

Asked about the party leaders preparing for the local polls, he said, "It would be solely their responsibility if they choose to run for the polls while the party would decide on its own whether to participate or not."

Criticising Awami League (AL) for its decision to participate in the polls, Delwar said, "It shows that the present government came to power with the connivance of Awami League."

He said AL says it's joining the elections to restore democracy, but people know how it had destroyed

democracy after independence and also became party to a rigged election in 1986.

"Some countries and quarters who are the brains behind this government want to stay longer in power, and they have chosen Awami League and some other parties to implement their plans," he observed.

Addressing AL, he said, "Refrain from participating in the elections for temporary gains and at the expense of independence and sovereignty of the country."

Calling on the authorities to send BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's detained sons Tarique Rahman and Arifat Rahman Koko abroad for treatment, he said, "What they [government] are bargaining for anyway? BNP won't trade the interests of people for anything."

Delwar also demanded release of all political leaders and mentioned the names of Khaleda Zia, Motiur Rahman Nizami, Khondaker Mosharraf Hossain, Moudud Ahmed, Tariqul Islam and MK Anwar.

Moments afterwards, he said, "You [journalists] might ask me if I'm demanding release of corruptionists. No, we don't want that. And neither do we accept politically motivated trials under the emergency powers rules."

The BNP secretary general said they would accept a judgment only if the case is tried by an independent court and the highest court upholds that decision.

The four-party alliance demanded cancellation of the polls schedule immediately after their announcement on June 20.

Cabinet okays

FROM PAGE 1
The government made a few adjustments to the proposed budget taking into consideration the reactions and recommendations made by different chambers, trade bodies, economists and individuals.

In the approved budget, the limit of tax-free income of an individual has been increased to Tk 1,65,000 from Tk 1,50,000.

For taxpayers who are female or aged over 70 years or disabled, the tax-free income limit has been raised to Tk 1,80,000 from the proposed Tk 1,65,000.

"Inclusion of the disabled in this group is in part their social recognition," said an official at National Board of Revenue (NBR).

However, people from different quarters had been urging the government to increase the ceiling of tax-free income to Tk 2,00,000 since day-to-day expenses of the middle class have increased significantly following inflation and spiralling prices of essentials.

The duty on printed paper has been reduced to 12 percent from 15 percent. In the proposed budget, however, the government had indicated that the duty would be set at 25 percent.

Customs duty on pictorial and drawing books used as educational material for children has also been reduced to 12 percent from existing 15 percent. Mirza Aziz earlier during his budgetary speech had proposed a 25-percent increase on the duty of the material, saying that the contents of the books are not in conformity with the values and culture of the country.

The duty on import of aircraft and their parts has been made zero to encourage the local airlines, sources said.

10 govt officials

FROM PAGE 16
The new secretaries are ATM Fazlul Karim posted to the Rural Development and Cooperatives Division, Mohammad Mosleh Uddin to the land ministry, Mohammad Ayub Miah to the water resources ministry, Mohammad Sarful Alam to the cultural affairs ministry, Iqbal Mahmood to the post and telecommunications ministry, CQK Mustafa Ahmed to the Bridge Division, Molla Waheduzzaman to the food and disaster management ministry, and Jamil Osman to the information ministry.

Mohammad Ashrafal Makbul has been made chairman of the Land Appeal Board while Syed Nakib Muslim has been made the chairman of Bangladesh Tariff Commission with the rank of a secretary.

Seven other government officials have been reshuffled at the level of joint secretaries.

Joint Secretary to the Land Ministry Nur Mohammad has been made a member of the Land Appeal Board, Officer-on-Special Duty (OSD) under the Establishment Ministry Abul Kalam Azad has been transferred to the land ministry, Assistant Director General of Water Development Board Saifuddin Ahmed has been transferred to water resource ministry, OSD under the Establishment Ministry Nasrin Akhter has been transferred to the Roads and Railways Division under the communications ministry.

Project Director of Female Secondary School Assistance Project (2nd phase) Mujibor Rahman has been made OSD under the establishment ministry, Project Director of Palli Progoti Project Kamrul Hasan has been made OSD under the establishment ministry, and Project Director of Comprehensive Ufisi Jute and Jute Seed Production Programme Mahfuzul Alam has been made OSD under the same ministry.

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Tarique's plea

FROM PAGE 16
Special Court-3 at the parliament building complex set the hearing date to July 6 following a prayer for time by the defence.

As the court went into session at 3:25pm yesterday, defence counsel Sanaullah Mia told the court that the hearing on the exemption petition should not go on as their senior advocate was absent.

The prosecution counsel Syed Shamim Ahsan Habib, however, did not oppose the defence plea.

On Wednesday, detained BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, son of former prime minister Khaleda Zia, through his lawyers filed the petition seeking exemption from appearing before the court during proceedings on health grounds.

The same day Khaleda's younger son Arifat Rahman Koko was exempted from appearing before the court in person in the Gatco corruption case.

However, defence lawyer Masud Ahmed Talukder while talking to the reporters yesterday said even though they were prepared for the hearing on the petition, they could not do so due to "untold reasons".

"Perhaps, the prosecution is not getting the green signal... the government will provide its decision about their [Tarique's and Koko's] overseas treatment through executive orders and the prosecution will be able to start hearings only after getting the green signal," he said.

Prosecution lawyer Syed Shamim said they did not know anything about the "untold reason". Rather it was the defence who might know something, he added.

Regarding the "green signal", he said, "We do not believe in any signals and even do not have any knowledge about any signals. We make decision based on matters presented before the court."

NASIM'S PETITION
The same court also deferred to July 6 the hearing on the petition of Mohammad Nasim for exempting him from appearing before the court during proceedings of a corruption case.

Judge Shahed Noor Uddin fixed the date following a prayer for time by Nasim's counsels. The defence sought the deferment saying they did not get medical reports and documents.

On Thursday, defence lawyer of Nasim, now undergoing treatment

at LabAid Specialised Hospital (LSH) in the city, filed the petition seeking exemption from personal appearance on health grounds in the case filed in connection with the illegal setting up of 300,000 digital telephone lines by Worldtel Holdings Ltd.

At the hearing, the court granted the petition and ordered that the hearing be postponed to July 6.

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Colombo

FROM PAGE 1
Foreign Adviser Iftekhhar Chowdhury said Bangladesh is looking forward to participating in the 15th summit to transform the regional forum into a "people's Saarc," adding that Saarc does not belong to the governments only.

Later in the day, Bogolagama handed over invitation to the 15th Saarc Summit to Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed on behalf of Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

Welcoming the Sri Lankan minister, the chief adviser asked Bogolagama to convey his thanks to President Rajapaksa for inviting him to the upcoming summit.

Saying the Saarc is a catalyst for regional cooperation, sustainable development and social uplift in the region, Fakhruddin said, "Bangladesh attaches high importance to regional cooperation among the South Asian countries."

He appreciated the theme of this year's summit, saying partnership among Saarc member countries would benefit people of the region.

Appreciating the move to include food security and energy crisis in this year's Saarc agenda, the chief adviser told the Sri Lankan minister that member countries should follow up the decisions and agenda in between two summits, according to his Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim.

In this context, Fakhruddin underlined the need for follow-up action on Saarc Food Bank, which was adopted at the last summit in New Delhi.

Bogolagama informed the chief adviser that Australia and Myanmar have applied for observer status to which Fakhruddin said, "It's good as all can share resources, ideas, knowledge and experiences."

Foreign Adviser Iftekhhar Ahmed Chowdhury and Sri Lankan High Commissioner in Dhaka V Krishnamoorthy were also present at the time.

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Non-urea fertiliser

FROM PAGE 16
Agriculture Development Corporation (ADC) to speed up the import process of urea.

Usually, the government itself imports urea from international market while non-urea fertilisers like Murate of Potash (MOP), Diammonium Phosphate (DAP) and Triple Super Phosphate (TSP) are imported mostly by the private traders.

"The prices of the non-urea fertilisers are very high. This means, the amount of the government subsidy on them will also increase. Therefore, the government is trying to import these fertilisers at the lowest possible price under state arrangements," Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam said.

Talking to reporters after the meeting at the ministry, he said, "We also want to make sure that the fertiliser is supplied to the farmers on time."

During his recent visit to Italy, Agriculture Adviser Dr CS Karim discussed import of fertiliser with Morocco, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, the finance adviser added.

According to an industries ministry proposal placed before yesterday's meeting, the price of TSP is \$1030 to \$1050 per metric tonne (MT) in June, whereas it was only \$350 to \$385 per MT last July.

Per MT DAP price now stands between \$1150 to \$1190, which was \$815 to \$835 last July.

Meanwhile, each MT MOP price is now \$500 to \$900, which was \$190 to \$230 last year, the proposal noted.

For 2008-09 fiscal year, the government has set the demand of TSP at 5 lakh metric tonnes, DAP at 2 lakh metric tonnes and MOP at 4 lakh metric tonnes, according to agriculture ministry.

Of the 5 lakh metric tonnes TSP, only 50,000 metric tonnes are produced locally by Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) and of 2 lakh metric tonnes of DAP, BCIC can produce only 1 lakh metric tonne.

The entire demand of MOP is met through importing from the international markets.

The government would also discuss importing non-urea fertiliser with Russia and Tunisia, sources said.

Belarus has already committed to export 2.55 lakh MT MOP and it may increase the amount, they added.

Special anti-crime

FROM PAGE 16
Against them, around 300 were arrested in connection with cases filed under the Arms Act and Explosive Substances Act while about 16,000 were arrested on various other charges including murder.

Inspector General of Police Nur Mohammad, during a news briefing held at the police headquarters recently, said the special drive was launched following a number of sensational murders in the capital and robbing of police firearms in Rajshahi and Gazipur in May.

Chowdhury Alam

FROM PAGE 16
and concealing wealth information from the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

Judge Kiron Shankar Halder of the First Joint Sessions Judge's Court handed down the sentence in presence of the convict at a packed courtroom yesterday.

The court fined Alam Tk 2 lakh, in default of which he has to suffer two more years of RI. The court sentenced Rahamat Ali to five years RI for committing the same offences.

One of Alam's accomplices, Haji Jamal Uddin, was acquitted, as his involvement with the extortion was not proved.

Earlier, the prosecution and defence completed their arguments and the court recorded statements of 61 prosecution witnesses.

According to the prosecution, Alam, also president of Bangabazar Complex, and his accomplices stopped the 2370 shop owners from depositing their trade licence fees and rents to the authorities. He demanded Tk 1.01 lakh from each shop.

The shop owners paid a total of Tk 23.93 crore to Alam on different dates between 2003 and 2005.

After the caretaker government came to power, Mohammad Shahjahan, another president of Bangabazar complex, filed the case against Alam and others with Shahbagh Police Station on May 1 last year.

The investigation officer pressed charges against Alam and two others on July 11 the same year.

Alam, an accused in a dozen other criminal cases, was sent to jail after he surrendered before the court on February 22 last year in connection with a criminal case filed with Paltan Police Station.

IG Shahidullah

FROM PAGE 16
the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises also fined Shahidullah Tk 10 lakh in default of which he will have to spend one more year in jail.

Masuda was fined Tk 5 lakh in default of which she has to suffer six more months in prison.

The court also ordered the authorities concerned to confiscate Shahidullah's ill-gotten wealth worth Tk 1.24 crore.

Since the couple is on the run, their sentences will come into effect the day of their arrest or surrender.

ACC Assistant Director Towfiqul Islam filed the case with Tejaogon Police Station against the couple on October 24 last year for amassing Tk 5,766,450 illegally and concealing information about their wealth worth Tk 6,721,500 in the wealth statements submitted to the commission.

Euro glory for Spain

FROM PAGE 1
start, made himself known to the German defence in the 20th minute with a looping header which went high.

On 23 minutes Sergio Ramos cut in from the right and crossed to the back post where Liverpool striker Torres climbed above the considerably taller Per Mertesacker; his downward header beat Lehmann but unfortunately for Spain not the base of the post.

Up the other end Spain's slightly suspect defence was struggling to cope with the direct running of Bastian Schweinsteiger and Lukas Podolski but Germany created little despite captain Michael Ballack's volley being blocked by Sergio Ramos.

Then in the 33rd minute Torres put Spain ahead with a moment of sublime quality. He latched onto a piercing through ball from Xavi, outpaced Philipp Lahm and chipped the ball over the advancing Lehmann with a flicked shot that could have threaded the eye of a needle.

It was his 17th international goal in 53 appearances for Spain.

Spain were suddenly rampant and Iniesta crossed to the back post where the unmarked David Silva had a rush of blood to the head and lashed a volley wildly over.

Spain seemed brimming with confidence at the start of the second period and both Xavi and Silva went close with long range efforts before Torres again outpaced the German defence but could not quite reach the ball before Lehmann came out to smother.