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HRC yet to come into being 7 months after ordinance okayed

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The government has yet to set up the long-sought human rights commission though seven months have passed since it approved an ordinance to that end. Meanwhile, rights activists and legal experts have observed that the government should seek opinions from the human rights organisations and jurists to form a competent and independent commission.

Talking to The Daily Star recently, former adviser to caretaker government Sultana Kamal said a participatory process should be employed to set up the body.

She said, "We want the human rights situation here to improve. It

will be in the best interests of the nation if the government forms the commission in consultation with the rights organisations that have many suggestions in this regard."

She said the commission must not be dependent on the bureaucracy. It should have the authority to function independently.

According to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Ordinance-2007 that awaits promulgation after being okayed by the advisory council on December 9 last year, the commission will mainly investigate allegations of human rights violations brought forward by citizens or discovered in its own monitoring.

If a case of violation is proved, it will either settle the matter or refer

it to the relevant court or authorities.

As per rules of the ordinance, the NHRC will be comprised of a chairman and two members hand-picked by a six-member selection committee. The names will then be passed on to the president for final approval.

The selection committee will consist of an appellate division judge chosen by the chief justice, the cabinet secretary, attorney general, comptroller and auditor general, public service commission chairman, and the law secretary.

About the recruiting body, Sultana Kamal said, "Their backgrounds and track records must be

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Rathajatra celebrated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hindu devotees yesterday celebrated the annual Jagannath Rathajatra (chariot procession), one of the biggest religious festivals of the Hindus, amid religious fervour and festivity across the country.

The country's biggest Rathajatra started from International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) temple in the capital's Swambagh seeking divine blessings for universal peace and harmony.

The procession brought out at 4:30pm marched different streets in the capital and ended at Dhakeshwari National Temple. The Rath will be returned to the ISKCON temple from Dhakeshwari temple on July 12.

The Dhamrai Rathajatra was brought out at 3:00pm at Dhamrai, Dhaka with participation of thousands of devotees.

Processions were also brought out in Sylhet, Chittagong, Comilla, Chandpur, Noakhali, Habiganj,

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The colourful Rathajatra in the capital yesterday. The photo of one of the biggest Hindu festivals was taken at Paltan.



Landslide triggered by incessant rain crushed five houses at Sholoshahar in Chittagong early yesterday. Two people were injured in the incident.

Ctg landslide crushes 5 houses: Two injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Five houses were crushed under mud and two people injured in the early hours yesterday during a landslide triggered by incessant rainfall over the last three days.

Some locals however allege that indiscriminate cutting of a large hill for construction of a resort by a private company caused the landslide.

Witnesses said bulks of earth broke down and fell from the Fata Pahar hill at Nasirabad Ruby Cement Gate area adjoining the Hill View Residential Area during the landslide at around 2:30 am.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Historic China flight lands in Taiwan after 60 years

AFP, Taipei

The inaugural flight of the first regular direct service between mainland China and Taiwan in almost six decades landed here yesterday, underscoring a dramatic recent thawing of ties.

A group of 100 Chinese tourists were among 258 passengers, piloted by company chairman Liu Shaoyong, on the China Southern Airlines flight, which touched down at 8:05 am (0005 GMT) from Guangzhou.

The charter service, a key component of a campaign promise made by new Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou to quickly improve relations with Beijing, is the first since the two sides split in 1949 at

the end of a civil war.

"This is a sacred moment. The two sides of the strait are like members in one family. Flying over the strait to Taiwan is like coming home. It feels good," Liu told reporters after landing.

Taiwanese authorities rolled out the red carpet for the mainland tour group, who were accompanied on the flight by Chinese and Taiwanese business people, students and other travellers.

A traditional lion dance and a "water sprinkling ceremony," where fire trucks hosed the plane in a traditional greeting, will be followed by a lavish gala banquet.

"I have been expecting to visit Taiwan, the Treasure Island, and my dream will finally come true

today," tourist Shi Anwei told China's official Xinhua news agency.

"I was too excited to sleep last night."

More than 700 Chinese nationals will travel on Friday to the self-ruled island from Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and two other cities.

Meanwhile, a Taiwan-based China Airlines jet carrying 297 Taiwanese tourists left Taoyuan airport for Shanghai at 7:30 am. Eight other flights from various airports in Taiwan will fly to Beijing, Guangzhou and Xiamen Friday.

"I am thrilled to take this new mainland-bound flight in this new charter service," said Zhou

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Oil remains at \$145.80

AFP, London

Oil prices fell yesterday on profit-taking, a day after surging to record highs on the back of a weak dollar and concerns over tight supplies, traders said.

Brent North Sea oil for August delivery slid 80 cents to 145.80 dollars a barrel in electronic deals.

New York's main oil contract, light sweet crude for August delivery, shed one dollar to 144.29 dollars.

On Thursday, Brent soared to a life-time peak of 146.69 dollars a barrel. New York crude leapt to an all-time pinnacle of 145.85 dollars on Thursday.

"I think the uptrend is intact and supply-side concerns will really drive pricing in the coming weeks," said Victor Shum, of Purvin and Gertz international energy consultancy.

Robber killed in 'shootout'

UNB, Feni

A robber was killed during a "shootout" between his cohorts and members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Modhupur area of Feni town early yesterday.

He was identified as Nizamuddin alias Nizam 'Dak', 38, hailed from Chhagalnaiya upazila of the district.

Rab said Nizam was wanted in 23 cases, including four for murder, filed with Feni, Fulgazi and Chhagalnaiya police stations of Feni district and Mirersarai police Station of Chittagong district.

Rab arrested Nizam at a house in Halisahar area of Chittagong on Wednesday. According to his confessional statement, the elite force, taking Nizam with them, set out for Modhupur area to recover

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100 checkpoints in city to intercept criminals

Cannabis, gold chains seized on first day

KAILASH SARKAR

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) launched a special programme yesterday to intercept criminals through putting up 100 checkpoints across the city within minutes on information.

"The new initiative is part of the capacity building and capacity increase programme of the DMP to curb criminal activities by intercepting the criminals," DMP Commissioner Naim Ahmed told The Daily Star.

About seven hundred police personnel, in cooperation with the police stations and police zones concerned, would man the programme.

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ASIA CUP Pakistan rout Bangladesh

AFP, Karachi

Pakistan crushed a hapless Bangladesh by ten wickets in the inconsequential last Super League match in the Asia Cup after pace-keeper Abdul Rauf took a career-best 3-24 at National Stadium here on Friday.

The 29-year-old rattled Bangladesh's top order to help Pakistan bowl out the visitors for just 115 in 38.2 overs after the tourists won the toss and elected to bat in overcast conditions.

Pakistan opener Nasir Jamshed scored 52 not out and Salman Butt made an unbeaten 56 to see the home team through at a canter.

The paltry target proved no obstacle whatsoever for the home

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TRIBUTES TO SAM MANEKSHAW 'Anti-liberation forces must be resisted by all means'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Participants at a memorial for Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw paid glowing tributes to the great Indian warrior and said that his contribution, and Indian role, during the war of 1971 cannot be forgotten.

At the same time, speakers reminded the people that those who opposed the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 still exist and they should be resisted and brought to trial by all means.

The remarks came at a memorial meeting on Indian Field Marshal Manekshaw who led the Bangladesh-India Joint Forces

during the liberation war in 1971.

Forum for Secular Bangladesh and Trial of War Criminals of 1971 organised the discussion at the Women's Volunteers Association auditorium in the capital where participants paid a rich tribute to Manekshaw, saying that he played a leading role in achieving the liberation of Bangladesh and must always be remembered.

Acting President of Forum for Secular Bangladesh Shahriar Kabir proposed that roads should be named in Bangladesh in honour of Indira Gandhi, then prime minister of India, Field Marshal Manekshaw and General Jagjit Singh Arora who

played leading roles to help us achieve our freedom.

He also proposed constructing a memorial for Indians who were martyred during the war.

Sector Commanders Forum (SCF) President Air Vice Marshal (ret'd) AK Khandkar yesterday called upon the people to reject the anti-liberation forces who run the elections.

"Millions of people sacrificed their lives to liberate Bangladesh. And those who actually opposed our liberation and disregarded our flag now fly the same flag in their cars. We cannot allow these people

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Prayer Timing		
July 5		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-55	7-00
Esha	8-17	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

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Severe erosion by the Kushiara at Shenpotir Chawk point in Sylhet. Bangladesh loses thousands acres of land in the process to India as the other side of the river automatically turns into its (Indian) territory.

Bangladesh loses land due to erosion by Sylhet border rivers

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

The erosion of the Surma and Kushiara along the Sylhet border is pushing the Bangladesh border inward, already resulting in the loss of thousands of acres of land to India in last few years.

According to the 1974 Mujib-Indira Border Treaty, midstream of border rivers defines the boundaries of the two countries.

"We have been losing our land as frontier rivers Surma and Kushiara continue to change their directions due to severe erosion, changing the original border," Md Shafiqul Islam, executive engineer of Water Development Board (WDB) in Sylhet, told The Daily Star.

Official sources said more than 3000 acres of Bangladesh territory have already gone to India due to the erosion of the two rivers only. Locals, however, estimate that the loss is no less than 4,000 acres.

About a thousand acres of land in Majorgaon, Amolshid, Lakshimbazar, Sultanpur, Senapatirchak and Manikpur in

Zakiganj upazila are now part of the Indian state of Assam due to the erosion of the Kushiara. Two hundred and fifty acres of land in Ballah, Uttarkul, Munshibazar, Rosulpur and Dighli on the Surma banks in the upazila have also washed away into India.

River erosion on the Bangladesh side continues unabated as dams and groynes upstream in India are causing the rivers breaking into Bangladesh territory as embankments along the Sylhet borders are mostly unprotected.

While the erosion is getting worse day by day, the Border River Protection and Development Project that plans protective works along nine kilometres on the Kushiara banks has been awaiting approval for the last three years.

The Indian side of the rivers, however, is well bulwarked against erosion.

The Indian authorities in 2005 had agreed to allow the Joint Rivers Commission to conduct study on the Surma, Kushiara and Barak.

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