

EU MPs urge

FROM PAGE 1
Bernad Posselt, Eija-Riitta Korhola, Johan Van Hecke, Mariela Baeva and Marius Mantsakis, Roberto Musacchio, Jean Lambert and Jan Masiel, representing different groups in the parliament, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday.

The resolution calls on the European Commission and the Council to play a more "pro-active role and to impress on the Bangladesh government the need for a speedy and complete withdrawal of the state of emergency, and of all regulations adopted within its context."

It called for holding free and fair elections in accordance with international standards, with the participation of all parties. It also urged the EU election observation mission to resume its activities as soon as this is feasible and advisable.

The resolution called on EU member-states missions and the commission delegation in Bangladesh to monitor carefully the human rights and political situation in Bangladesh.

It welcomed the release of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina on humanitarian grounds.

The parliamentarians urged the government to make sure that members of Bangladesh's ethnic and religious minorities be in a position to freely cast their votes. It expressed concern about "press censorship" and calls for freedom of the press in the pre-electoral period.

The resolution urged the government to ensure that its new Anti-Terrorism Ordinance responds to internationally recognised legal standards on combating terrorism as recommended by the UN special rapporteur on counterterrorism and human rights.

It also called on the government to abolish the death-penalty law and

immediately put an end to what they called recent wave of "mass arbitrary arrests" and the "harassment" of political opponents or journalists under the state of emergency.

The EU Parliament members are deeply concerned by reports on torture by the authorities and urged the government to ensure the basic rights for a due process for all detainees and guarantee those charged to a fair trial.

The resolution urged the authorities that the thousands detained to be either charged on the basis of credible evidence or released.

It congratulated the caretaker government on its making progress in preparing for parliamentary elections and on making essential progress with the reform of the electoral process and the drawing up of an accurate electoral register by the authorities.

The resolution called on the Bangladesh government to provide maximum scope for a large-scale mobilisation of all sectors of society, environmental and other non-governmental organisations, journalists and scientists, in order to prepare the country for the upcoming climate change-induced disasters.

They consider the emergency rule as an "alarming obstacle" on the way to achieving this goal.

The EU Parliament members believe that the G8 Summit has an enormous responsibility to avert further acceleration of the climate change and catastrophes that threaten the lives of millions in Bangladesh and elsewhere by adopting effective and far-reaching measures to curb CO2 emissions.

The EU Parliament resolution instructed its president to forward this resolution to Council, the Commission, the Saarc member-states and the Bangladeshi government.

Court to decide

FROM PAGE 1
Bhaban complex set the date after completion of charge-framing hearing.

The same court deferred the hearing of a petition of Awami League leader Mohammad Nasim seeking exemption from court appearances in person in connection with a corruption case to July 14.

Pressing for framing charges against the accused in the bribery case, the Anti-Corruption Commission's prosecutor Syed Shamim Ahsan Habib said they were involved in giving and taking bribe in order to ensure that Shafiq Sobhan Sanvir, son of the Bashundhara Group chairman, did not face murder charges.

He said Babar took Tk 21 crore in bribe in return for the cover-up and gave Tarique Tk 1 crore of it, adding that charges should be framed against the accused as allegations against them were specific.

The defence, however, maintained that the case was politically motivated and that Tarique was not involved in the alleged crime.

They said Tarique's name was not even included in the first information report (FIR) and that only one witness out of 28 mentioned his name in connection with the crime.

On completion of the arguments, the judge set July 14 for judgment on whether to frame charges against the accused.

Tarique was spared from appearing at court hearings in person on health grounds on July 6. Babar and Abu Sufian, director of East West Property Development Ltd, a Bashundhara concern, were produced before the court.

Other accused-Bashundhara Group Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan alias Shah Alam, his two sons Shafiq Sobhan Sanvir and Sadaat Sobhan, Abu Sufian, and Tarique's personal secretary Mia Nur Uddin Apu--are in hiding.

On October 4 last year, the Anti-Corruption Commission's Deputy Assistant Director Abul Kashem filed the case with Ramna Police Station, accusing six persons including Babar.

The names of Tarique and former BNP lawmaker Qazi Saleemul Huq Kamal were included in the charge sheet after investigations found their involvement in the crime.

NASIM'S EXEMPTION PETITION
The court deferred the hearing after Nasim's counsels pressed for time, saying they did not yet get medical reports and other relevant documents to make out the case for the exemption of the former home minister from court hearings in person.

Nasim was sued on charges of financial anomalies in setting up 3,00,000 digital telephone lines during the Awami League government.

US warns Iran

FROM PAGE 16
bases in the Gulf, and eight other more medium range missiles.

The move caused major concern in Western governments which fear Iran's nuclear drive is aimed at making atomic weapons, a charge that Tehran vehemently denies.

Ex-MP Lobi

FROM PAGE 16
Police of Botiaghata thana in Khulna filed a case on July 1, 2007, against Lobi on charge of misappropriating this allocated for distribution as relief items.

Later, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) took up the case.

Lobi recently filed a petition with the HC to quash the case proceedings. Hearing of the petition was held yesterday.

Advocate Nazmul Huda appeared for the petitioner.

Ex-AL lawmaker

FROM PAGE 16
was given 10 years for accumulating illegal wealth and one year for concealment of wealth. The sentences, effective from the date of his arrest or surrender, will run concurrently, the judge said.

The court ordered the authorities concerned to confiscate the former MP's ill-gotten wealth.

Gen Moeen

FROM PAGE 16
Relief Fund after Sidr and the money is being distributed among the cyclone victims.

Under the Ashar Alo Dairy Farm and Biogas Energy Project, milk, biogas and energy will be produced by using cows. Each of 150 families under the self-help scheme can save Tk 25 everyday.

Around 13.5 cubic feet of biogas and 3-KV power will be produced under the project. Each member-family will be supplied an energy bulb to light their homes in the backwoods.

Grameen Shakti is providing biogas technology for the project and 20 local and foreign cows will be used to run the project. The total cost of the project is Tk 10 lakh.

Bagerhat Deputy Commissioner Shahidul Islam, Jessore Cantonment GOC Maj Gen Rafiqul Islam, 88 Brigade Commander Brig Gen Ehteshamul Haque, Bagerhat Army Camp Commander Lt Col Shahinul Haque, Khulna Rab-6 Commander Mestual Haque and Bagerhat Police Superintendent AKM Shahidur Rahman, among others, were present on the occasion.

The army chief later handed over deed of the project to Nahar Begum and Gobinda Lal, two of the cooperators under the project.

Final list of JS seats

FROM PAGE 1
The EC has redrawn the boundaries of the seats in line with the criteria set out in the delimitation ordinance. Besides making sure the administrative units remain intact, it considered density of population and administrative convenience in the demarcation.

Sources in the EC Secretariat say of the 133 seats, 90 witnessed some changes in boundaries as proposed in the April 29 draft list. In their case, EC has either added or taken away new areas between neighbouring seats to satisfy people's expectations by maintaining balance in their sizes in terms of electorate.

Another 10 seats witnessed changes in serial number of their areas that consisted the constituencies, the officials add.

After 24 long years, EC delimited the boundaries of constituencies on a large scale, ignoring objections of the major political parties.

The last time EC carried out a major demarcation was in 1984. 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, 17 constituencies had voters below two lakh each, six had voters over six lakh each, seven each had between five and six lakh, while the number of voters in 19 constituencies ranged between four to five lakh.

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

Intriguingly, the ceiling on election expenditure for all constituencies was same, regardless of the number of voters.

But after the fresh demarcation, there is no major inconsistency between constituencies, and it will be easy for EC to fix the ceiling of expenditure on the basis of voters' number.

In line with EC's decision, each of the three hill districts -- Khagrachhari, Bandarban and Rangamat -- was allocated one seat irrespective of their population.

Relatively small district Meherpur got two seats though it does not qualify for those.

INCREASE-DECREASE
The number of seats in Dhaka division has risen by only four to 94 from 90 as four of its districts -- Faridpur, Kishoreganj, Manikganj and Munshiganj -- each lost a constituency. Besides, a constituency lying between Mymensingh and Netrakona was deleted from the parliamentary map.

Apart from Dhaka, Netrakona and Gazipur districts have also got extra seat, each now having five instead of four.

Chittagong, Barisal and Khulna divisions -- all have seen a decrease in the number of constituencies.

In Chittagong division, each of Chandpur and Comilla has lost a seat, while Chittagong has gained one, raising the number of its seats to 16.

In Barisal division, Barguna lost a seat, while a constituency between Barisal and Pirojpur was deleted.

In Khulna division, only Satkhira lost a seat. The number of parliamentary slots in Sylhet (19 seats) and Rajshahi divisions (72 seats) remain unchanged. Sirajganj under Rajshahi division lost a seat to Rajshahi City Corporation area.

CHANGED BOUNDARIES
Constituencies with changed boundaries compared to the previous list are Kurigram-2, 3, Bogra-1, 4, 5, 6, 7, Rajshahi-2, 3, Sirajganj-1, 2, 5, 6, 7, Jessore-3, 4, 5, 6, Khulna-1, 2, 3, 6, Satkhira-3, 5, Barguna-1, 2, 3, Patuakhali-1, 2, Barisal-2, 3, 4, Barisal with Pirojpur, Pirojpur-1, 2, 3, Tangail-5, 6, Jamalpur-2, 3, 4, 7, Mymensingh-1, 2, 3, 4, 7, Mymensingh with Netrakona, Netrakona-1, Kishoreganj-1, 2, 3, Manikganj-1, 2, 3, 4, Munshiganj-1, 2, 3, 4, Dhaka-1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, Gazipur-1, 2, 3, 4, Narsingdi-1, 2, 3, 5, Narayanganj-2, 3, 4, 5, Faridpur-2, 3, 4, 5, Shariatpur-2,

3, Sunamganj-4, 5, Sylhet-1, 2, 3, 4, Moulvibazar-1, 2, 4, Habiganj-1, 4, Brahmanbaria-1, 2, 3, 5, 6, Comilla-1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 11, Chandpur-1, 2, 3, 4, 6, Feni-2, 3, Noakhali-1, 2, 3, Laxmipur-2, 3, and Chittagong-2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14.

31 rebels

FROM PAGE 16
In one particularly deadly fight in Vavuniya, troops captured a rebel bunker and killed eight guerrilla fighters after nine hours of clashes, the military said in a statement.

Others battles and ambushes along the civil war's front lines in the north killed 23 Tamil Tiger fighters and three soldiers, the military said.

Rebel spokesman Rasiah Ilanthirappoo could not be reached for comment. Each side commonly exaggerates its enemy's casualties while underreporting their own.

It is not possible to get independent accounts of the clashes because journalists are barred from the war zone. The rebels have been fighting since 1983 to create an independent state for ethnic minority Tamils, who have been marginalised by successive governments controlled by ethnic Sinhalese. More than 70,000 people have been killed in the conflict.

Meanwhile, another soldier was killed Wednesday near the eastern town of Trincomalee from injuries sustained in a wild elephant attack, the military said.

Shujan discussion

FROM PAGE 16
about the candidates, he said.

Asked whether he supports the upazila elections within the tenure of the present caretaker government, Muzaffer said there should not be any objection against it because the political governments in the past broke their promises and did not hold the upazila elections for their own interests.

Asked if the ongoing dialogue between the government and political parties is successful, he said, "For better results, the dialogues should've been held among the political parties."

Shujan Secretary Dr Badul Alam Majumder said the posting of the candidates' information on the EC website, as suggested by the EC, would not ensure all the voters' access to the candidates' information in time. "The purpose of the court order of providing candidates' information to people will thereby fail," he observed.

Asked for his comments about the political parties' apprehension that the local government elections will be "stage-managed", he said such elections would neither be acceptable nor possible.

Supreme Court advocate Dr Shahdeen Malik said due to lack of adequate publicity, not too many people are aware of the eligibility criteria for running in the polls and the media can play a crucial role by making the people aware of the criteria for candidacy.

As per the rules, business owners doing business with the government cannot take part in national elections due to conflict of interests, he noted.

Brotee Chief Executive Officer Sharmin Murshid and Shujan Chittagong District President Professor Sekandar Khan also spoke at the meeting.

Oil prices

FROM PAGE 16
This had no impact on the retail market as soya bean oil was selling between Tk 120 and Tk 124 and palm oil was selling between Tk 105 and Tk 110.

Prices of essentials are not at tolerable level. You know it and I also admit it," Shawkat said adding that the people in low-income bracket are suffering due to the price spiral of essentials.

He, however, claimed that people are not returning home without rice from the market despite its high prices.

When asked about government steps to control the price spiral of essentials, he said too much intervention on the market might have an adverse impact.

He said they are monitoring the market closely and the food ministry has taken up various programmes apart from the VGF VGD, Test Relief and Food for Works to ensure people's access to food.

Prices of food items depends on the international market and also food-exporting countries, Shawkat said adding that the private sector which is the major supplier of food items to the local market is having a hard time due to price spiral of essentials on the international market.

The country now has a food reserve of 9.23 lakh tonnes, about 4.99 lakh tonnes more than the corresponding month last year, he said.

Termining population growth a major problem, the adviser talked about various government measures to bring down the fertility rate to 2.2 percent from the existing 2.7.

"If we can maintain this target, the country's population will reach 17.20 crore in 2020 and 21 crore in 2060," he said, adding that the use of contraceptives in the country is declining while adoption of permanent birth-control measures is on the rise.

The adviser said activities for making people aware of family planning will be geared up in Chittagong, Sylhet and Barisal divisions where the use of contraceptives is less than other divisions.

Besides, fresh awareness programme will be launched for couples aged between 20 and 25.

He said if population growth cannot be controlled it will be difficult to alleviate poverty and ensure fundamental rights of people.

Health and Family Welfare Secretary AKM Zafullah, Director General (Health) M Abul Fiaz and Director General (Family Planning) Kamrunnesa Khanom, among others, were present.

Best Air flight

FROM PAGE 16
Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB), told The Daily Star.

However, Best Air authorities told The Daily Star that the aircraft was forced to return to ZIA due to bad weather, not because of a technical fault.

"Due to bad weather over Chittagong, the aircraft was forced to return to ZIA," Farhad Hossain, director (marketing and sales) of Best Air, told The Daily Star last night, adding, "The sky was cloudy and there were lightning."

"The Bangkok-bound flight left ZIA again around 1:30pm, taking all its passengers and landed safely at its destination," he said.

"We took all precautionary measures while the aircraft was at the airport," said Naim, adding, "Our team will investigate to find out what actually happened."

Best Air started its journey as a freighter airline in 2000, obtaining an air operator certificate from the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh, its website read.

Licences

FROM PAGE 1
13,986 licensed ones as per decision of the Food-grains Collection and Monitoring Committees of different districts.

The licences of 1,513 rice mills were cancelled in Rajshahi division alone, while 268 in Dhaka, 160 in Khulna, 17 in Chittagong, 10 in Sylhet and one was cancelled in Barisal Division.

The licences of the 1,969 mills were cancelled for violating the Rice Mills Operation Ordinance 1943, it said.

Sajeda Chy

FROM PAGE 1
wife, son and daughter own movable and immovable properties worth about Tk 1.95 crore and he concealed information of wealth worth Tk 76.45 lakh in the wealth statement.

Mofidul, however, said Jahangir's and his wife's income tax files say that they own wealth worth Tk 54.15 lakh which means they have wealth worth Tk 1.41 crore beyond their known sources of income.

Both the cases were filed with Ramna Police Station yesterday afternoon under sections 26(2) and 27(1) of the Anti-Corruption Commission Act, 2004 and section 15 of the Emergency Power Rules, 2007.

Khaleda

FROM PAGE 1
Agro Trade (Pvt) Co Ltd (Gatco) the contract for container management at inland container depots in Dhaka and Chittagong causing a loss of over Tk 1,000 crore to the state exchequer.

Later, the case was brought under the Emergency Power Rules.

The case is pending with the special judge's court-3 at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban complex.

Earlier, Khaleda filed a petition with the Supreme Court on July 6 for staying the hearing on charge framing in the case.

High food prices

FROM PAGE 16
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2 graft cases

FROM PAGE 1
orders remain upheld," Hasina's counsel-barrister Shafiqul Ahmed told reporters.

"We are happy with the apex court order," he said adding that the SC order was a step for establishing rule of law, justice and democracy.

Meanwhile, Attorney General (AG) barrister Fida M Kamal said that the government would file regular appeals with the SC against the HC orders as soon as possible, as per the apex court order.

ACC's counsel advocate Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star that following the SC order, the HC orders staying the proceedings of the cases - remain valid till filing of regular appeals.

Earlier yesterday during the hearing, Fida M Kamal told the court that the HC bench, which earlier passed orders staying the proceedings against Sheikh Hasina and issuing of rules, has no jurisdiction to hear the quashment petitions and to pass orders in the petitions.

"Since the HC bench has called the records of the cases, the trial courts are not able to resume the trial proceedings," he said praying for staying of the HC orders and directing both parties of the cases to dispose of the HC rules within a time limit.

The Attorney General also said that time is being lost in the proceedings of the trials following the HC orders.

Hasina's principal counsel, barrister Rafique ul Huq, told the court that these appeals against the HC orders are politically motivated appeals.

"If the government files appeals against all the interim orders of the HC, then there is no need of the high court. Why does the government have so much interest to file such appeals? Also as per the rules of the ACC act, the officials concerned with dealing the cases have to take approval from the ACC at every stage of the cases. But in these cases, the ACC did not give its sanctions as per the rules," he said.

Barrister Huq also said that the investigation officers did not submit investigation reports of the cases within the stipulated 60 days of filing of the cases, according to the concerned law and thus the cases had become invalid.

He argued that during the hearing of the cases at the HC bench, counsels for both sides of the case had agreed that the hearing of the quashment petitions filed by Hasina would be held in the bench of Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury and

Justice Mashukul Hossain Ahmed.

"The HC bench also agreed to hear the matter. So the Attorney General's argument that this bench has no jurisdiction to hear the petitions is not valid," he said.

The apex court announced its order after hearing all arguments. Earlier, the HC bench on July 7 stayed for two months all proceedings of the Niko and barge-mounted power plant cases against Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, following the two petitions filed by Hasina for quashing the cases filed by ACC.

The court also issued separate rules asking the government and the ACC to explain within four weeks why the cases should not be quashed.

The government on July 8 filed two separate petitions (provisional leave to appeals) with the SC to vacate the HC orders that stayed the proceedings of the cases against Hasina.

The Chamber Justice of the Appellate Division Justice MA Matin referred the matter to the full bench of the apex court for the hearing yesterday.

EC to seek action

FROM PAGE 1
They are OMS dealers Farida Yasmin, Merajuddin and Nasiruddin, and loan defaulders Siddiqur Rahman and Shamsunnahar.

The EC meeting found that the RO had been right to reject their applications. Election Commissioner (retd) Gen (retd) M Sakawat Hussain said the way the applications were declared valid was unacceptable.

Officials present at the meeting said the commission secretariat would send a letter to the establishment ministry early next week asking to determine whether Akhtuzzaman cleared the applications on ill motives and take disciplinary action accordingly.

The establishment ministry is the controlling authorities of district and divisional officials.

"We'll ask his (controlling) authorities to initiate departmental action against him," Sakawat said.

"We'll not tolerate any negligence on the part of any officials engaged in election duties," he said.

According to electoral laws, the service of an official goes to the EC after given election duty. The commission can then ask the controlling authorities to take departmental actions against them if they fail to perform electoral duties properly.

CA calls for austerity

FROM PAGE 1
promotion of renewable energy technologies in Bangladesh.

Some 50 percent of peak-hour load shedding can be managed by using compact fluorescent lamp (CFL). A CFL consumes one fifth of the electricity of an incandescent bulb, the function was told.

As much as 720 megawatts of power can be immediately saved through conserving electricity.

To encourage the nation in practising austerity in the use of electricity, the CA mentioned that he has started using less electricity in his office.

The CA said he has also asked all concerned in his office to raise thermostat to 24 degree Celsius in air-conditioner to save electricity. Though some of his colleagues have complained of feeling hot for raising temperature in air-conditioner, he remained persistent.

The CA informed the function that he has directed the cabinet secretary to convert incandescent bulb (IB) into energy-efficient and energy-saving compact fluorescent lamp (CFL) in all government offices.

He told the function that less use of power and energy would not hamper comfort or efficiency.

"Let us resolve we will conserve energy -- and we can do," he said in his call.

Prof Ijaz Hossain of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BuEt) presented the keynote paper on "Enhancing Energy Security". He said country's energy security is greatly threatened due to rising oil prices, depleting natural reserves and widespread inefficiencies.

German Ambassador of Bangladesh Frank Meyke, UNDP Resident Representative Renata Lok Dessalieu and the chairman of Bangladesh Heritage Foundation also spoke at the function.

Special Assistant to the Chief Adviser for Power and Energy Ministry Prof M Tamim chaired the inaugural session. Advisers, special assistants to the chief adviser, energy experts, diplomats and distinguished personalities were present.

Losing Turag

FROM PAGE 1
working inside the fenced up 'property'.

Three months ago, this correspondent had seen another signboard of 'Partex CNG' adjacent to Zahan Group's 'property', but this time around the signboard of Partex CNG was not there. Now Zahan Group is developing both plots.

Just after Zahan Group's 'property' another signboard reads 'Uttara University'. Next to the 'property' of Uttara University, another large section of the river is currently being filled up.

The local people said the owner of Tain CNG Station thought that piece of land to set up a CNG filling station there.

The carnival of encroachment left the Turag River in such a bad condition just next to the 'Bishaw Jiterna' field that an engine boat can barely pass through the section.