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No decision on transit in Delhi talks
Assures foreign secy

UNB, Dhaka

No decision on India's proposal for transit will be taken at the foreign secretary-level talks beginning in New Delhi tomorrow, said Foreign Secretary Touhid Hossain who flies to the Indian capital today.

"Nothing to be worried, no decision will be taken at this point in time," he told reporters yesterday.

Quoting the foreign adviser's statement made to dispel speculations over the transit issue, Touhid reaffirmed that nothing would be done against Bangladesh's interest.

Earlier, Indian High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakrabarty had told reporters that the transit issue would be raised at the foreign secretary-level meeting

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FIRST-EVER MAYORAL DEBATE IN SYLHET

Candidates pledge graft-free city admin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The mayoral candidates of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) yesterday said they, if elected, would work to make the city corporation administration free of corruption and solve problems the city dwellers are facing.

During an electoral dialogue held at the Jalalabad Gas Auditorium in Sylhet, they said they would admit to their failures and resign if they fail to carry out their duties.

The Election Commission (EC) took initiative for the dialogue and BBC Bangla Service organised the

dialogue. The elections to the SCC and three other city corporations are scheduled for August 4.

Bangladesh Television (BTV) and Bangladesh Betar aired the programme live.

Seven out of the 15 mayoral candidates of SCC took part in the first of two such dialogues. Around 200 people, including students, businessmen, government and non-government officials, were present at the dialogue and raised different problems they are facing in the city.

They candidates who took part in the dialogue yesterday are AFM Kamal, Abdul Mukit Khan, Abdul

Haque, Abdus Samad Nazrul, Alhaj Maulana Sirajul Islam, M Kutubuddin Ahmed and Kazi Kamal Ahmed.

The incumbent SCC Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran is in detention while the rest seven candidates will take part in the second dialogue scheduled for tonight.

About 30 people asked the candidates questions on their plans for the city's development. The questions were largely on issues like clean water and sanitation, water logging, land grabbing, law and order and corruption.

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UNDP commends ACC progress in anti-graft drives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has lauded the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) for making 'significant progress' in its fight against corruption but did not make any specific reference regarding the matter.

The UNDP commended the ACC in a study on the commission's sustainability.

"The study found that the commission has made significant progress in the past 18 months in building an effective anti-corruption initiative in Bangladesh," said primary findings of the study the UN body conducted from June 12 and July 15.

A team of national and international experts conducted the study on 'Sustainability of the ACC' at the request of the commission. They interviewed a large number of

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Gatco, Niko graft cases against Khaleda stayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday stayed for two months the proceedings of Gatco corruption case filed by the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) against detained former prime minister Khaleda Zia.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court (SC) yesterday upheld an HC order staying the proceedings of the Niko graft case filed by the ACC against the former premier.

After hearing a writ petition filed by Khaleda Zia, the HC bench comprising Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Mashuque Hosain Ahmed also issued a rule upon the government and the ACC to explain within four weeks why the proceedings of

Gatco case against the petitioner (Khaleda) should not be quashed.

Khaleda's counsel barrister Rafique-ul-Huq told the newsmen that the HC stayed the proceedings of Gatco case and also issued the rule on the grounds that the ACC's approval for filing the case was not in accordance with the law.

ACC's counsel Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star that the HC issued the rule to examine whether the commission gave permission for filing the case following due process of law.

He also said the ACC will file an appeal with the SC against the HC order as soon as possible.

During the hearing of the writ petition, Khurshid Alam told the court that the ACC did not make any error in giving permission to its

officials to file the case and in taking the investigation report and the charge sheet of the case into cognisance.

Replying to a query of the HC, he also said the ACC gave the approval after examining all the relevant records and documents.

The ACC filed the case against Khaleda and 22 others on September 2 last year on charges of corruption in awarding the contract for container management at inland container depots in Dhaka and Chittagong to Global Agro Trade (Pvt) Co Ltd (Gatco), causing a loss of over Tk 1,000 crore to the state exchequer.

Later, the case was brought under the Emergency Power Rules (EPR).

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US envoy holds closed-door meeting with parties, lawyers

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

Leaders of major political parties, including Awami League (AL), BNP and Jatiya Party (JP), yesterday told the US ambassador to Dhaka that the state of emergency must be lifted before holding parliamentary polls, scheduled for December.

The leaders and two lawyers gave the opinion during a two-hour "tea party" held at the residence of US Ambassador James Moriarty. They meeting started around 4:00pm.

Several issues, including national and upazila parishad elections, dialogue between the government and the political parties, ways to keep crime out of politics, restoration of democracy, reforms in political parties, India's

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CANDIDACY IN POLLS

Barring convicts still an unresolved issue

SHAKHAWAT LITON

It still remains unresolved whether an aspirant electoral candidate is disqualified from contesting in polls on conviction by a trial court for a criminal offence involving moral turpitude or the person is allowed to contest in polls as long as an appeal against the verdict is pending in a court, which might go on until the appeal is adjudicated in the Appellate Division of Supreme Court.

According to the country's constitution, a person shall be disqualified from contesting in elections if he or she is convicted of a criminal offence involving moral turpitude and sentenced to imprisonment for a term of a minimum of two years, and unless a period of five years has elapsed since the

individual's release.

But a debate is still raging between interpretations of the expression 'conviction' as to whether it means conviction by a trial court or a final conclusive conviction after all appeals have been exhausted.

The Election Commission (EC) recently decided that a convicted person is not disqualified from contesting in polls while his or her appeal is pending in a court, but legal experts said a convicted person becomes disqualified on conviction by a trial court.

Before the 1996 parliamentary election the question was widely raised as former military dictator HM Ershad became a candidate in the poll while his appeal against his conviction for a criminal offence

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KHULNA MAYORAL POLLS

Adviser accused of violating code of conduct

STAR REPORT

Two mayoral candidates in Khulna have accused Jute and Textiles Adviser Md Anwarul Iqbal of violating electoral code of conduct by reopening a privatised jute mill at Khalishpur as it would directly benefit another mayoral candidate.

The adviser should not have reopened the People's Jute Mills as he had played the key role in forming the mayor panel for Khulna City Corporation (KCC) and BNP leader Moniruzzaman Moni, also a candidate for the upcoming mayoral poll, was made the acting mayor from the panel, they said at separate press conferences yesterday, reports our staff correspondent in Khulna.

Khulna city Awami League (AL)

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Nobel Peace Prize winner Prof Muhammad Yunus welcomes Chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee Ole Danbolt Mjøs at Zia International Airport yesterday. Mjøs is on a six-day visit to Bangladesh.

Nobel Committee chairman says climate change challenge not Bangladesh's alone

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee Ole Danbolt Mjøs yesterday said tackling the adverse effects of climate change in Bangladesh is not a job only for Bangladesh but also the rest of the world.

He said Bangladesh is already facing the big challenge of poverty.

"I think it is not only a matter of Bangladesh to solve the problem here. It is a matter of Asia, the world," he told journalists on his arrival in Dhaka on a six-day visit in connection with an exhibition on Nobel Peace Prize.

Bente Erichsen, director of the Nobel Peace Centre, also arrived in Bangladesh at the invitation of Nobel Peace Prize laureate and

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Certificate Courses

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) & Clean Technology and Cost Saving (CTCS)

EIA (29-31 July): The course is designed for environmental consultants & management practitioners, NGO and government officials, engineers, environmental specialists, architects, landscape architects and planning consultants.

CTCS (19-21 Aug): The course is aimed at Technical, management and other officials dealing with quality assurance, engineering, production, Quality Control and Product developments. It will be of special interest to all managers trying to improve production efficiency and reducing cost of environmental compliance.

Resource persons: Key resource persons for the courses comprise industry practitioners, experts and academics from the university of Dhaka and BUET.

Registration & Fees: For registration please contact: University & Industry Alliance, Room No-302, IBA, University of Dhaka, Dhaka-1000, Phone: 8653400, 01714-002424 E-mail: u-and-i.du@linuxmail.org Last date of Registration for EIA: 24th July, 2008, Fees: Tk. 9,800/- Last date of Registration for CTCS: 14th August, 2008, Fees Tk. 9,800/-

Mode of delivery: This will consist of lecture sessions, group exercises, case analysis and field visits.

Certification: All participants successfully completing the course will be awarded a 'Course Completion Certificate' to be issued by U&I Alliance, University of Dhaka.

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Ershad acquitted in ENG case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday acquitted former president HM Ershad on corruption in purchasing electronic news gathering equipment, saying investigations into the allegations against the Jatiya Party chairman were inadequate and flawed.

Charged in dozens of criminal cases following his ouster in 1990, Ershad was earlier cleared of four graft cases in August and September in 2006 soon after he consented to join the then ruling BNP-led four-party alliance.

Afterward, he was acquitted in two more cases filed for graft and gold-smuggling.

Judge Golam Mortuza Majumder of the Special Court for Dhaka Division delivered the verdict.

"The prosecution could not prove the charges brought against Ershad. So, Ershad is acquitted on all charges... I found no evidence of misappropriation of money by him," the judge said.

The now defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption filed the case with Tejgaon Police Station on October 27, 1992, stating that Ershad misused power and misappropriated money by ordering the authorities concerned to purchase ENG (electronic news gathering) equipment worth about Tk 2.93 crore for personal use even though all broadcasting facilities were available at his secretariat at the time.

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Nizami freed on bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami was released last evening from Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) hospital prison cell on a two-month ad interim bail given by the High Court (HC).

Nizami, an ex-minister, was set free around 6:50pm 24 hours after the HC granted him bail in the Gatco corruption case in which BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is also an accused.

Arrested on May 18 at his Moghbazar home in connection with the Gatco case, the Jamaat ameer is the second high-profile political figure to be released, after arrest, since the government launched the anti-corruption drive early last year. Earlier, Awami League President Sheikh Hasina was released on parole for two months on medical grounds.

He was admitted to BSMMU on June 29 due to pain in his back.

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Why city, municipality polls without final voter list not illegal

HC asks govt, EC to explain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule upon the government and the Election Commission (EC) to explain within eight days as to why the EC's August 4 schedule for holding elections to four city corporations and nine municipalities without the final voter list should not be declared illegal.

Responding to a writ petition filed by Jasim Uddin Sarker, a Supreme Court (SC) lawyer and a leader of the Dhaka city unit of Jamaat-e-Islami, an HC division bench comprised of Justice Md Imman Ali and Justice Md Emdadul Huq issued the rule.

The chief adviser of the caretaker government, law secretary, cabinet secretary, the president's secretary and the EC are the respondents.

On July 10, the HC summarily rejected a writ petition filed by another SC lawyer Giasuddin Ahmed seeking stay on the EC's schedule for holding the elections.

Masood Reza Sobhan, counsel for Jasim Uddin Sarker, argued before the HC bench that the schedule for holding elections to the city corporations and municipalities without publishing the final voter list was illegal.

"As per the rules of the Electoral

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