

Sources of funds

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Commissioner Muhammed Sohul Hussain told The Daily Star yesterday.

The sources said the commission might ask the banks concerned to furnish it with political parties' account statements.

The commission is also considering seeking assistance from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) for checking the authenticity of the financial statements, the sources added.

To scrutinise large contributions and their sources, the EC might seek assistance from intelligence agencies, one of the EC sources said.

The EC already announced that political parties willing to get registered with it must apply by October 15 for the next parliamentary poll, meeting a number of criteria including the financial ones.

The parties however will be exempted from the requirement of submitting financial audit reports of the immediate past year, as they were not registered with the EC during the period.

But after getting registration, every political party must submit yearly audit reports to the EC by July 15 of each year, according to the new rules.

The new provisions in the Representation of People's Order (RPO) allow political parties, also for the first time, to receive donations or grants officially.

According to the new electoral law, a registered political party is entitled to receive donations or grants from any person, company, and group of companies.

A registered political party may receive a donation of Tk 5 lakh or property or service equivalent to it from an individual in a calendar year, while it may receive Tk 25 lakh or property or service equivalent to it from a company or an organisation in a calendar year.

No registered political party

may receive any gift, donation, grant or money from any foreign country or any non-government organisation or from any person who is not a Bangladeshi citizen or from any organisation established or maintained by such a person, says the new electoral law.

In defence of the EC's efforts to ensure financial transparency in political parties, the commission said the existing culture have been allowing political parties to collect funds from any source, but allegations of misusing the opportunities were raised against the parties.

Political parties including Awami League, BNP, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami never disclosed the sources of their funds.

Only a few top leaders of the parties know about the sources, leaving almost all other party leaders, activists and the public in the dark.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda in a news briefing on Monday said 'political parties have been facing difficulties in maintaining their accounts'.

"Transparency will be ensured once the system of registration of political parties is introduced," the CEC added.

Political parties however have been vehemently opposing the EC's move to register them before the stalled ninth parliamentary election planned for December, arguing that it is not possible for them to complete the preparations for registration 'within such a short time'.

Under the circumstances, the EC is about to open a series of dialogues with 16 political parties on September 6 to discuss the matter of mandatory registration.

The erstwhile EC could not make political parties register with it before the 2001 parliamentary election due to strong opposition from them.

Iceland president

FROM PAGE 1
Grimsson also said that the new security challenges rising out of the effects of climate change would be the central peace challenge of the 21st century.

The president of Iceland's comments came at the closing ceremony of the International Symposium on Climate Change in Dhaka yesterday. Grimsson warned that environmental challenges such as water shortages and soil erosion threaten to sow the seeds for future conflicts.

He said global warming is "now several decades ahead of schedule" because the melting of ice-sheets in the Arctic and Greenland region, projected to occur in the middle of this century, has already begun.

Grimsson said Iceland could serve as an inspiration for switching to clean energy resources, with 100 per cent of the country's electricity produced by clean energy sources compared to 80 per cent produced from coal and oil half a century ago.

He urged other countries to follow suit in transforming their countries' energy systems, lifestyles, societies and economies to adapt to climate change.

The Iceland President said Bangladesh has become a frontline state in the fight against climate change and it must engage beyond South Asia in "more extensive initiatives and including countries that depend on the Himalaya region for their water."

RMG workers clash

FROM PAGE 1
As police rushed to the area to bring the situation under control a fierce clash broke out between the demonstrating workers and the law enforcers.

Officer-in-charge (OC) of Joydebpur Police Station Abdur Rashid said they fired around 30 teargas shells and 100 rounds of rubber bullets.

He also said 18 police including two sub-inspectors were injured from brickbats the workers were raining on them during the melee. The injured were treated in a local clinic.

The OC said they managed to bring the situation under control around 4:00pm.

Police, army, and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) were later deployed in the areas to fend off further flare-ups.

Meanwhile, about 30 people were injured in a clash between police and workers of a garment factory of Biswas group in Savar after the workers blockaded the Dhaka-Aricha Highway for three hours demanding payment of two months' arrears.

The agitating workers damaged 10 to 12 vehicles.

Several hundred vehicles remained stranded on both sides of the road due to the blockade.

Witnesses said about 8,000 workers gathered at the factory at around 1:00pm. They started vandalising the factory after receiving the news that the factory had been closed for a month.

Later, they took to the street and blockaded the Dhaka-Aricha Highway.

On information, police rushed to the spot and asked the workers to

withdraw the blockade. But the workers paid no heed to them. Later, police charged baton on the workers, who pelted the law enforcers with brickbats.

The workers withdrew the blockade at around 4:30pm.

Later, Rab and army personnel held talks with the factory owners about the payment of workers' arrears.

Police said the factory workers had been staging demonstrations for the last few days demanding payment of arrears. Although the factory owners assured them of paying arrears on several occasions, they did not keep their words.

Safety-net funds

FROM PAGE 1
Tomorrow's inter-ministerial meeting.

A proposal for revising the policy to increase coverage to reach out to the poorest in Barisal, Khulna and Rajshahi divisions is also likely to be placed at the meeting.

"While changing the policy, it is necessary to make allocations on the basis of population and poverty rate instead of district- or upazila-wise equal allocation," says the finance ministry report.

There is a proposal for creating a database of the beneficiaries and maintaining their track records.

In running the safety-net programmes, assistance can be taken from the frontline NGOs and development partners whose survey and track records can be of help, said another proposal.

Tigers crash

FROM PAGE 16
Bangladesh captain Mohammad Ashraful said his team's poor top order batting ruined a good effort in the field.

"Our bowlers bowled well and we fielded well also, but we didn't bat well," Ashraful said.

"Once we lost five wickets quickly it was very difficult to come back."

Left-arm Mitchell Johnson did the early damage for the hosts with 2-10 from six overs, while leg-spinner Cameron White wrapped up the tail with 3-5 from just 1.4 overs.

Only three Bangladesh batsmen made double figures, with opener Tamim Iqbal top-scoring with 21, and their best partnership just 16.

Earlier, youngster Shaun Marsh anchored the Australian total with 76 at the top of the order, while fellow West Australian Mike Hussey made a typically industrious 82.

Stand-in Australian captain Michael Clarke was pleased with the total in the conditions.

"It's a very good score," he said. "It was hard at the start, there was a little bit of swing."

"Marsh batted fantastic and Mr Cricket (Mike Hussey) was at his best again today."

However, Australia's effort with the bat was overshadowed by the absence of Symonds, who was sent home and won't play any part in the series.

Cricketer Australia officials said they would reveal the reasons for Symonds' departure after the match, but he was believed to have missed a team meeting because he had gone fishing.

Symonds was also suspended for two matches in 2005 after a drinking binge before Australia suffered its only loss to Bangladesh in one-day internationals.

His absence, with squad member Shane Watson again struck down by injury and veteran opener Matthew Hayden ruled out as he recovers from an Achilles problem, left Australia with just the bare minimum of 11 players available.

Australia were also without captain Ricky Ponting and pace-man Brett Lee.

As a result, Tasmanian seamer Brett Greaves was gifted his international debut, with the Australians expected to name a replacement for Symonds.

Geeves capitalised by claiming 2-11.

Marsh, the son of former Australian opener and vice-captain Geoff Marsh, looked on target for his maiden international century when left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak slipped one through his defences and rattled the stumps.

In just his sixth one-day international, the emerging West Australian batsman showed great application on a slow deck more conducive to singles than boundaries.

He survived a confident appeal for caught behind from Shakib Al Hasan on 25, and hit four boundaries in his 106-ball knock.

Hussey faced 87 balls, hitting five fours and one six.

Bogra Medical

FROM PAGE 16
Police said the clash ensued on the night when Shibir cadres attacked the 'dining room manager of Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Hostel at one stage of altercation over quality of food of the canteen.

With the help of some outsiders, Shibir cadres -- Kollol and Roni -- beat up the dining manager, who is also a BCL activist, and vandalised several rooms of the students. The clash later spread among the activists of BCL, student wing of Awami League, and Shibir, student body of Jamaat-e-Islami.

Of the injured, 16 were admitted to hospital for treatment.

Protesting the incident, general students of the college held a rally and brought out a procession on the campus in the morning demanding punishment of Dr Mokaddes, president of Shibir college unit. The agitating students also burnt an effigy of the Shibir leader and submitted a memorandum to the college principal.

The college academic council later sat a meeting in the morning and took the decision fearing further deterioration of the situation.

Zardari

FROM PAGE 16
"It's a three-way contest now," Election Commission secretary Kanwar Dilshad told AFP.

Zardari, the widower of slain former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, is seen as a controversial figure because of past allegations of corruption and misdeeds during his wife's troubled spells in office, between 1988 and 1996.

Siddiqui has been nominated by the party of another former premier, Nawaz Sharif, who won the second highest number of seats after the PPP in February polls, but recently quit the coalition government in a row over sacked judges.

Hussain will represent the party allied with former president Musharraf whose August 18 resignation in the face of impeachment charges triggered the election.

Around 700 votes of federal and provincial lawmakers are up for grabs in the elections with the PPP commanding a majority in the 342-member national assembly and two of the four provincial assemblies.

CA calls for urgent steps

FROM PAGE 1
Impact, and the costs of doing nothing are simply too great to allow," he said at the concluding session of a five-day international symposium on climate change and food security in South Asia at Sonargaon Hotel in the capital.

Jointly sponsored by the government of Bangladesh, University of Dhaka, Ohio State University, World Meteorological Organisation, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-Escap), the symposium was attended by around 250 delegates from 17 countries.

The greatest challenge that Bangladesh faces is lifting some 50 million people out of poverty, but this already-formidable challenge is made all the more difficult for Bangladesh because global warming has started to affect food production, helping to raise food deficit over the last two decades, the chief adviser (CA) said in his address as the chief guest.

Climate change affects food production directly through changes in agro-ecological conditions and indirectly by affecting growth and distribution of income, he said. The frequency and severity of events such as cyclones, floods, hailstorms and droughts can hamper crop yields and local food supplies, he noted.

"Considering that agriculture remains the principal source of income for a vast proportion of the South Asian population, especially in Bangladesh, the negative impact of climate change on production will lead to significant negative shocks in income," Fakhruddin said.

Bangladesh is particularly vulnerable to climate change in its given geography, he said. "As a low-lying mega-delta with three large river systems, accompanied by heavy rainfall, floods have become an annual calamity. The melting of the Himalayan glaciers and huge sediments carried by the rivers coupled with restricted drainage further worsen the situation," he added.

There is an empirical evidence that even a one-metre rise in sea level would submerge one fifth of Bangladesh -- thus an estimated 25 to 30 million people would be displaced as 'climate refugees'.

The Maldives could disappear entirely and floodplains of India, Pakistan, Myanmar and huge coastal belt areas could face permanent inundation, the chief adviser pointed out.

Referring to scientists' warnings that 'business as usual' approach would not reduce greenhouse gas emissions, he demanded deeper cuts in such gas emissions by the developed countries.

"Developed countries must provide adequate additional resources to tackle climate change," he said. "It is a global issue that demands a global response, and I hope that the world community, particularly historically high greenhouse gas emitters, will come forward to provide assistance in tackling the losses of climate change so that we can cope with the adverse impacts and maintain food security."

He went on, "Countries like Bangladesh will otherwise suffer the most from a problem to which we have contributed little -- this is not just a practical issue, but a fundamental moral issue."

Fakhruddin emphasised defining the impact of climate change on key aspects of food production and rural populations at risk. He called for implementation of farm-level adaptation strategies to maximise food production, united actions by scientists, farmers, fishermen, civil society, businesses, media and policymakers and researches to develop high yielding and drought, flood and salinity-tolerant crops, capacity building of people and construction of multi-purpose shelter houses in coastal zones.

Iceland President Olafur Ragnar Grimson also addressed the concluding session.

Other speakers at the session, chaired by Dhaka University Vice Chancellor Dr SMA Faiz, included FAO Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific Changchui He, special assistant to the CA on environment and forests Raja Debashish Roy, Education Adviser Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, Ohio State University Professor Rattan Lal, MVK Sivakumar of World Meteorological Organisation and AHM Mustafizur Rahman, chief coordinator of the organising committee.

It was also felt in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan, according to Xinhua, which added that many residents stayed outside after the quake.

A massive 8.0 magnitude quake in Sichuan province on May 12, leaving nearly 70,000 dead, with about 18,000 people still missing.

S Asian climate change

FROM PAGE 1
affecting agriculture and food sector, economy, societies and environment.

Prof Lal said, "The serious problems of soil degradation and desertification are likely to be exacerbated by climate change through accelerated erosion, fertility depletion, salinisation and acidification and that subsistence agriculture, characterised by low productivity and extractive farming, is extremely vulnerable to such climatic change."

In the wake of such threats, the symposium urged the development partners and the private sector to fund implementation of programmes that reflect the recommendations.

The other recommendations include initiating and strengthening cooperation among academic and research institutions, international organisations, and NGOs to provide opportunities for strengthening institutions, human resource development and capacity building.

The symposium also suggested developing innovative financial mechanisms to scale up technical and financial support for the adaptation efforts of the South Asian countries and strengthening regional institutional and policy mechanisms to promote and facilitate implementation of location-specific adaptation and mitigation practices.

The Declaration says, "Climate Change and Food Security in South Asia Network and South Asia Climate Outlook Forum both to be maintained by the WMO will share information on management of climate change and related science, data, tools and methodologies in South Asia."

They will also generate data on solar heating as it relates to the effects of soot, aerosols and particulate material emissions on radiation balance, rainfall patterns and regional climate change.

The proposed network and the forum will develop seasonal climate predictions to assist farmers to optimally adjust their planting dates, crop varieties and management practices to reduce agricultural vulnerability to hydro-meteorological hazards, it notes.

These will promote adoption of proven sustainable technologies related to better soil, crop, livestock and fishery and water management in order to increase food productivity by enhancing efficiency of inputs such as fertiliser, water, energy and labour, it adds.

They will create mechanisms to pay farmers for ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration in soils and reductions of gaseous emissions related to deforestation, degradation of agricultural soils, grasslands and water quality improvement, and reduced emissions of methane and nitrous oxide from agricultural and forestry land

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Justice Fazlul

FROM PAGE 1
the arrestees in exchange for getting Haque out of all cases filed against him.

Justice Haque, a former adviser to the previous caretaker government, and his son Dr Raj own the two NGOs -- Foundation for Research and Study and Spectrum Consultancy.

Dhanmondi police yesterday produced the arrestees to a Dhaka court with seven days' remand prayer for each. Upon hearing both sides, Metropolitan Magistrate Ismail Hossain granted three days' remand for each.

"I'll have to interrogate Justice Fazlul Haque and his son for a complete investigation of the case," said investigation officer of the case Sub-Inspector Amirul Islam of Dhanmondi Police Station.

The three arrestees admitted of receiving Tk 24 lakh from Huque's son Dr Raj through their employee Towfiq. The deal was mediated by Towfiq's friend Abdul Gaffar Titu, the arrestees claimed.

They told the police that on October 28 last year Towfiq first gave them Tk 4 lakh during their meeting at a fast food store inside Metro Shopping Mall at Dhanmondi and the remainder of the payment was made on different dates at the NGOs.

It is alleged that while Haque was in charge of forest, land and law ministries, he took Tk 1.25 crore in bribe -- Tk 80 lakh from two forest officials and Tk 45 lakh from Bashundhara Group.

One of the forest officials bribed him for a transfer order to a better location and the other paid him for stopping his transfer.

The Bashundhara Group bribed the then adviser for his help in leasing 84 acres of government land.

On April 13 this year, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed a case against Justice Haque on charges of amassing illegal wealth and concealing information from the ACC.

According to first information report (FIR) of the ACC case, Haque in his health statement to the ACC held back information about movable and immovable properties worth around Tk 97.37 lakh and his accumulated assets did not match with his known sources of income.

Coordination body

FROM PAGE 16
"We have taken various steps to provide passengers with better service at the airport and modernise the infrastructure," Mahbub Jamil, special assistant to the chief adviser on civil aviation and tourism ministry, told reporters at a press conference at ZIA.

He said the whole airport is being modernised with renovation of existing structures.

The security system at the airport has already been tightened, he said claiming that smuggling through the airport has now dwindled.

The civil aviation authority along with 22 other agencies including police and customs had been working at the airport without any central coordination, said Mahbub Jamil.

A separate committee has been formed comprising members from various agencies working at the ZIA to ensure coordination between them, he said.

The committee will hold a meeting every month to review the activities of the agencies. Moreover, the secretary to the civil aviation ministry will sit with the committee every three months to evaluate the entire process.

Mahbub Jamil said it was very disappointing that successive governments over the years failed to uphold country's positive image abroad by ensuring better service at ZIA.

He said they took the initiative to bring about changes at the airport to free the passengers from all sorts of hassles.

The international departure area at the terminal has been divided into two parts -- Terminal-1 and Terminal-2 -- to streamline the operation of international airlines at the airport.

CAAB Chairman Air Commodore Sakeb Ikbal Khan Majlis said the air traffic control radar has been repaired while carpeting of the runway would begin soon.

China

FROM PAGE 16
Five others died in Chuxiong Prefecture, Yunnan Province, said Mengfu, a prefecture government official, according to Xinhua.

The were no reports of casualties in Panzhihua city.

The Yunnan Seismological Bureau said the quake and its after-shocks were also felt in Yongren county, Yunnan.

Xinhua quoted Zheng Zhouwei, a local legislator in Yongren, as saying: "Locals in the county rushed out into the open. Cracks appeared on house walls and many windows were broken."

It was also felt in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan, according to Xinhua, which added that many residents stayed outside after the quake.

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Biman

FROM PAGE 16
"My flight to Dubai was scheduled for August 23. But I still don't know when I'll be able to leave at last," Abu Taher from Chittagong told The Daily Star at ZIA yesterday.

"They have changed schedule for at least seven times since August 23," said Zahid Hossain, another passenger of the flight.

"Schedules for Biman flights barely work these days. None of its flights can depart ZIA on time," a high official of Biman told The Daily Star yesterday. He was at the airport to calm down the incensed passengers.

Members of the joint forces rushed to the spot to diffuse the tension at ZIA.

Of the Biman aircraft in use, two are DC10-30s, one Boeing and one Airbus.

There are two more DC10-30s and an Airbus, but most of the time they are down due to mechanical problems.

Besides, a Boeing-747 has been sent for maintenance check-up that will take at least a month.

Delwar

FROM PAGE 16
meet us and we went there at the invitation of the jail authorities," he said.

"It was not a meeting of the coalition, this allegation has been made with an ill-motive," he said in reply to criticism by the Awami League and its political allies that such meeting was illegal.

He questioned the procedure of releasing Awami League President Haider Siddique said he was released at 8:30am as the High Court had granted him bail.

Earlier on March 31, a Dhaka court sentenced Paban and four accomplices to 17 years' imprisonment each for possessing illegal arms and ammunition.

Five more cases against him on charges of carjacking and earning illegal wealth, and three on extortion charges are under trial at the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka.

Paban got bail in all the cases recently.

He was arrested at Mohammadpur in the capital on Oct 30 last year.

10 injured

FROM PAGE 16
Vehicular movement on the busy thoroughfare remained suspended for over two hours.

The demonstrators got back to hostel at around 11:40pm at the insistence of college Principal Hamida Banu.

Contacted, Rab-4 spokesman Captain Moshul Alam said they did not go for any action against the students.

Call for saving hills

FROM PAGE 16
He espoused afforestation of barren hills and relocation of brick kilns as mid-term measures to stop landslides and said no high-rise building should get clearance in the hill areas.

Stressing the need for the development planners to take note of the city's contour lines, he said a long-term solution should take in an integrated hill management policy and integrated land use.

Prof Shahidul said a report of the Hill Management Committee, formed by the Cabinet Division, lays out the proper management of hills. If the report's recommendations are implemented, deaths from mudslides could be prevented, he said.

Engineer Ali Ashraf, chairman of IEB, Chittagong, said area specific land-use plans, which would include landscape-planning component and take conservation issues into account, is needed for important hill areas in Chittagong.

Architect and town planner Zarina Hossain spoke for forming a powerful town and country planning authority. She said planners should be consulted before leasing out any land.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Zafar Alam said the government suspended leasing out hill lands in 1994.

He said they are working to stop landslides by making the hillsides sloping and protecting the hills through geo-technical methods like tree plantation, anchoring and nailing instead of constructing costly retaining walls.

Former Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) chief engineer Zia Hussain called for expanding the city limits in order to reduce the density of city population. If urban facilities could be expanded, then people would not be forced to live beside hillside near their workplace, he said.

CDA town planner Shahinul Islam Khan said the authorities

Flood grips North

FROM PAGE 16
The monsoon is likely to remain active over Bangladesh and adjoining Assam, Meghalaya, Aunachal Pradesh, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in India for the next two to three days, it said.

Our correspondent from Rangpur reports, nearly 1,25,000 people in Lalmonirhat, Kungram and Rangpur have been marooned as the Teesta, the Brahmaputra, and the Dharla rose over the last couple days.

Mohsin Ali, deputy director of Department of Agriculture Extension, Kungram, said vegetables and crops including Aman on about 10,000 hectares of land in the area have been flooded.

A correspondent from Lalmonirhat reports, Aman on several thousand hectares of land went under water while the affected people are suffering from acute scarcity of food, drinking water and sanitation facilities.

Educational institutes in Rajpur and Sindurna unions were also declared closed due to the floods.

The Lalmoni-Burimari land port high way and the embankment at Paruliya Bazar under Hatibandha upazila is under threat of erosion by the rising waters of the River Teesta.

Our correspondent from Nilphaman reports, portion of the Teesta Barrage was damaged on Friday night and floodwaters flowing through it inundated about 300 houses in