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MIG-29 CASE

HC judge feels embarrassed to hear Hasina's stay petition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A vacation bench of the High Court (HC) yesterday felt embarrassed to hear a petition filed by Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina, now abroad on parole, seeking stay on the proceedings of the MIG-29 war plane purchase corruption case.

The HC bench comprised of justices Mirza Hussain Haider and Mamnoon Rahman was set for hearing the petition but one of the judges felt embarrassed to hear it.

Hasina's counsels then requested the chief justice to constitute another bench for hearing.

At their request Chief Justice MM Ruhul Amin sent the petition to the bench of justices AFM Abdur Rahman and SM Emdadul Hoque for hearing the petition today.

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Polls dates to be declared Monday

SHAKHAWAT LITON

All signs now suggest that the much debated upazila elections will not be held before the parliamentary poll after all, as the government and the Election Commission (EC) seem to be finally moving towards conceding to political parties' almost unanimous demand for the national ballot first.

With the latent new turn in the electoral course developing, the EC will announce on Monday specific dates for the parliamentary, upazila parishad, and Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) polls.

Disclosing the EC's plan for announcing the election dates on Monday, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday however

categorically said, "Detailed schedules for the elections will not be announced right now."

Reliable sources in the government administration and the EC said considering the political situation and the time constraint, upazila polls will be held after the parliamentary election, which is tentatively planned for the third week of December.

CEC Huda, who just a few days ago was the champion of 'upazila polls first', said yesterday that the EC will have to draw a new plan, as the earlier plan for holding polls to upazilas and DCC first, had not got enough wind in its sail.

"We will keep gaps between the dates of the two elections," CEC Huda said.

Keeping a request of the military

backed caretaker government, the EC on August 25 had decided that polls to 125 upazilas out of a total of 482 would be held on October 23, and to another 125 upazilas on October 27, while the DCC poll would be held on October 30.

The commission had also planned to announce the detailed schedules for the local government polls by September 10.

But in the face of vehement opposition to holding the upazila elections before the parliamentary poll, from almost all political parties including Awami League and BNP, the EC refrained from announcing the schedules.

Caught in the uncertainty about the success of its plan to hold the upazila polls in October, the EC did

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EC separately sits with BNP, allies Saturday

Invitation letters to be sent today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) will hold separate meetings with the BNP and its allies Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) on Saturday, wrapping up the year-long dialogues with political parties on electoral issues.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday said the commission's secretariat would issue invitations to the talks today.

The EC was scheduled to hold talks with the three parties today, but changed the date as the BNP yesterday said they were not still prepared, the CEC said.

The BNP had kept from joining its September 7 meeting with the EC, saying the talks will not yield any positive results. The Jamaat

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Fishing trawlers like this one are coming back from rough sea yesterday as the authorities announced danger signal-3 following a depression in the Bay. The photo was taken at Patenga beach.

Conviction order of seven stayed by HC

Major ruling delivered after graft convicts challenge legality of special court verdicts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) in a major decision yesterday issued its first stay order on corruption convictions of seven people including three former state ministers, in separate cases filed during the caretaker government's anti-corruption drive.

The HC stayed for three months the convictions by trial courts of state ministers Iqbal Hassan Mahmood Tuku, Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin and Aman Ullah Aman, BNP leader Advocate Syeda Ashrafi

Papiya, former BNP minister Mirza Abbas's wife Afroza Abbas, former BNP state minister Mir Nasir's son Mir Helaluddin, and Orion Group Chairman Obaidul Karim.

They were convicted and sentenced to different terms of imprisonment in cases filed by the government and Anti-corruption Commission (ACC).

Defence lawyers said the HC stayed the convictions on grounds of the ACC's filing of the cases and submitting of charge sheets being in contradiction with the law, and since many accused in similar cases

had earlier been granted bail by the same court on similar grounds.

A bench officer of the HC bench concerned told reporters that the court also granted ad interim bail for three months to Mir Nasir, Tuku, and Afroza.

A vacation bench of the HC comprising Justice Mirza Hussain Haider and Justice Mamnoon Rahman issued the orders after hearing separate writ petitions filed earlier by the convicted challenging the legality of the trial court judgments.

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Rebel Tigers slapped with 10-year ban

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Wednesday imposed a ten-year ban each on cricketers who joined the Indian Cricket League (ICL).

The harsh but inevitable decision came a day after 13 rebel cricketers including six centrally contracted players signed for the ICL under the banner "Dhaka Warriors".

"The board has decided to impose bans of ten years on contracted and all registered players, officials and technical staff of the BCB who participate



in cricket events which are not authorised by the International Cricket Council (ICC) and BCB," said BCB president Major General Sina Ibn Jamali while disclosing the out-

come of the board's emergency meeting at a crowded press conference in Mirpur yesterday.

The ICL, a Twenty20 event which was introduced by the ESSEL Group in India last year, was banned by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). The BCCI decision was also adopted by the ICC and

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No agreement in sea border talks with Delhi

But both sides claim talks 'fruitful'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The three-day Bangladesh-India maritime boundary talks in Dhaka ended yesterday without reaching any agreements as both the sides were rigid on their stance on disputed issues, but both described the talks as 'fruitful'.

The expert committees that represented the two countries at the talks will now report to the higher authorities their counterpart's views on maritime issues and then sit for further negotiations. No date for this was however fixed yesterday.

Asked by newsmen after the

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Deep depression fizzles out

STAR REPORT

Over 10 fishermen went missing as three more trawlers sank in the turbulent sea on Wednesday night amid the deep depression that crossed Orissa coast early yesterday.

Flood control embankments in Bagerhat, Satkhira, Patuakhali, Noakhali, Barguna and Bhola were washed by tidal surge during high tides. Around 50 villages, 50 shoals and also the low-lying areas of these districts have been inundated, leaving thousands of people marooned.

Standing Aman crops at the affected villages have been damaged while about 200 shrimp enclosures washed away.

Water vessels plying 76 routes remained suspended as the rivers

became choppy due to influence of the depression, our correspondents reported. Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to keep hoisted local cautionary signal number three.

Earlier On Tuesday, more than 100 fishermen reportedly went missing as 25 trawlers capsized in rough waters caused by the depression over the North Bay on Monday. Besides, the low-lying areas in the coastal districts were submerged due to tidal surge.

Our staff correspondent from Khulna reported that high tide on the river Baleswar has inundated at least ten villages under Sharankhola upazila of Bagerhat, leaving several hundred people marooned.

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Gridlocks dictate business in Motijheel

SHARIFUL ISLAM

A journey towards downtown Motijheel during peak hours from anywhere seems a nightmare as traffic gridlock has become an irreversible predicament.

Urban experts apprehend traffic system in the business hub will collapse in near future if immediate measures are not taken considering the increasing number of people as well as vehicles.

In addition to huge waste of fuel and man-hour for the gridlock, the city commuters have to count extra money as drivers of taxicabs, CNG-run three-wheelers and rickshaws pullers charge almost double to go there, if anyone agrees to go.

Illegal parking of hundreds of vehicles on the roads, movement of slow-moving rickshaws, and occupying of walkways by street hawkers and shop owners are the reasons behind traffic congestion.

Many furniture shops in nearby Fakirer Pool even display their products on the walkways.

As there is no foot-over bridge in the business hub, a large number of people cross the roads indiscriminately, further slowing down the traffic. Traffic policemen say a foot-over bridge is a must near Shapla Chattar and they have repeatedly informed the matter to higher authorities in vain.

The loss of man-hour and wastage of huge fuel have forced many big business houses to shift offices from Motijheel, businesses say.

"As people and vehicles have increased to a great number but roads remain the same, more than 50 percent of the roads is occupied by parked cars," urban expert and honorary chairman of Centre for Urban Studies Prof Nazrul Islam told The Daily Star.

He said it will take 15-20 years to construct parking facilities, but in the meantime traffic congestion will turn so fearsome that people

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Rickshaws create severe congestions in Motijheel area especially during office rush hour in the morning and afternoon. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon.

16 killed in attack on US embassy in Yemen

AFP, Sanaa

Islamist militants attacked the US embassy in the Yemeni capital Sanaa with a car bomb and rockets yesterday, leaving 16 people dead, in the second strike on the high-security compound in six months.

The toll included six Yemeni soldiers, six attackers and four civilians, including an Indian, the interior ministry said.

Meanwhile, the White House on Wednesday denounced an Islamist militant attack on the US embassy

in Yemen's capital Sanaa and offered condolences to the relatives of Yemenis killed in the strike.

"The United States condemns this attack," said spokesman Gordon Johnndroe. "This attack is a reminder of the continuing threat we face from violent extremists both at home and abroad."

Witnesses said gunmen raked a Yemeni police detachment outside the heavily fortified embassy compound before a suicide bomber blew up a car right by the entrance, setting off what one described as a

fireball.

A series of explosions followed as the compound came under rocket as well as small arms fire.

A group calling itself Islamic Jihad in Yemen said in a statement received by AFP that it carried out the attack and threatened similar strikes against the British, Saudi and United Arab Emirates missions in the Yemeni capital.

Briton Trev Mason told CNN from Sanaa that he heard at least three big explosions around the

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Khaleda asks govt to free all detained politicians

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Recently released BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday demanded release of all detained political leaders particularly the leaders of her party saying people had already raised their voices in regard to the release of BNP leaders.

"I hope the government will take necessary steps to create congenial political atmosphere through releasing all detained political leaders as a show of

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Dairy for life

Statement From Fonterra

This is to update our customers on the current situation regarding melamine contamination of San Lu dairy products in China. Fonterra is a 43% shareholder in San Lu.

- The current issue in China with San Lu is specific to products made from adulterated raw milk sourced in China.
- Fonterra does not export any dairy ingredients or milk powder from China.
- Melamine is an industrial chemical that we suspect was added to the milk supplied to San Lu by the local supplier of China to boost the protein levels of milk, which subsequently increases the payments suppliers receive. Melamine is a nitrogen-based chemical that should not be present in milk powder supply chains.
- Fonterra is confident our supply chain in New Zealand and internationally is safe and free of melamine. Fonterra adheres to extensive and stringent testing methods to ensure our products are high-quality and safe, and we are confident melamine has not entered our supply chain.
- Fonterra's testing in New Zealand would identify elevated levels of protein in milk, potentially detecting any irregularities in milk, such as the presence of melamine. However, given that melamine would not normally be expected to be found in milk.
- Consumer safety has always been, and continues to be, Fonterra's number one priority.
- We further certify that all our supply of milk powder to New Zealand Dairy Products Bangladesh Ltd. and others in Bangladesh market are of very high quality and safe & free from any contamination.

Yours sincerely,

Glenn Kane

Glenn Kane
General Manager
Fonterra SEA Pte Ltd.

Fonterra (SEA) Pte Ltd

79 Robinson Road
#21-02 CPF Building
Singapore 068897

Office +65 6879 2977

www.fonterra.com