

## President's JS speech to be placed in cabinet today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A cabinet meeting to be held at the Bangladesh Secretariat this morning is set to approve the draft speech of the president for the inaugural session of the ninth parliament.

"The draft speech is ready and the matter is on the agenda of today's cabinet meeting for approval," a senior minister told The Daily Star yesterday.

President Iajuddin Ahmed will deliver the speech at the inaugural session of the parliament on January 25.

Some important decisions regarding the construction of Padma Bridge and instructions about the law and order in the country might also come in today's meeting.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will preside over the meeting.

## Scrap vested property return ordinance

Eminent citizens urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent citizens in a statement yesterday urged the government to scrap the Vested Property Return (Amendment) Ordinance, promulgated by the previous caretaker government.

They also called on the government not to place the ordinance in the parliament in its first sitting on January 25.

Termining the ordinance anti-people and motivated, they demanded its immediate cancellation.

They said the vested property act is labelled as a black act and the interim government promulgated the ordinance five days before the December 29 general elections amending the Vested Property Return Act 2001.

"Difficulties have been created afresh by amending 2, 9, 26 and 33 sections of the Vested Property Return Act on

December 24," they said, adding that the government had no right to promulgate the order only seven days before an elected government takes office, said the statement.

The Pakistan government during the Indo-Pak war in 1965 enacted Enemy Property Act which was made active in independent Bangladesh as Vested Property Act.

Though the Supreme Court declared the vested property act dead in 1974, the Vested Property Return Act 2001 was enacted dissolving the Vested Property Act. Later in 2002, the property return act was amended.

Signatories to the statement include Justice Gholam Rabbani, Justice Gour Gopal Shaha, advocate Sultana Kamal, Kamal Lohani, Dr Abul Barakat, Khushi Kabir and barrister Sara Hossain.

## DFID director gen due today

UNB, Dhaka

Director General for Country Programmes in the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID) Mark Lowcock arrives in Dhaka today on a four-day visit aimed at updating development partnership between Bangladesh and the United Kingdom.

Lowcock will visit different rural and urban locations to gain insights into the development progress Bangladesh people are making, a DFID announcement said here yesterday.

During his visit, he is scheduled to meet high-level members of the new government to initiate the dialogue focusing on shared areas of development interest for the UK and Bangladesh. He is also likely to meet donor partners and civil society members.

Before getting out of London, he said, "I am excited to be visiting Bangladesh again. The country has just elected a new government and there cannot be any better time to renew Bangladesh's commitments on the Millennium Development Goals."

He mentioned that the UK and Bangladesh share a long-standing development partnership - this is one of the UK's largest country programmes.

"And, with this new government, we have a shared interest in seeing the people of Bangladesh fulfill their potential, seeing the country prosper," he said.

"During the tour, I look forward to discussing how best the UK can help Bangladesh achieve its vision of reduced poverty and inequality, continue to tackle climate change, and improve the life chances of all men, women and children."

## Shakil appointed deputy press secretary to PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mahbubul Haque Shakil, an assistant secretary for Awami League's subcommittee for Research and Information, has been appointed as deputy press secretary (DPS) to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Also a former vice president and organising secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), Shakil has been acting as the deputy press secretary to the AL chief since the 1/11 political changeover.

Earlier, he also worked as chief executive officer (CEO) of Centre for Research and Information (CRI) of AL.

Shakil completed his masters from sociology department at Dhaka University.

## UTTARA, PURBACHAL

# Rajuk to involve Buet in plot allotment

HELEMUL ALAM

Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk) will involve Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) for preparing database of the applicants and conducting lottery for the allotment of plots at Purbachal New Town Project and Uttara Model Town (Third Phase).

"It will take two months from the last date of submitting the applications to scrutinise them and conduct the lottery with the experts of Buet," said Sukumar Chandra

Saha, member estate of Rajuk.

He said they have extended the time for submitting the applications due to upcoming upazila election and immediate past parliamentary election.

On January 13, Rajuk extended for the second time the time limit for collecting and submitting the application forms for both the projects.

The last date for collecting application forms is now April 29 and for submitting those forms is April 30, instead of January 14 and January 15.

There was sharp reaction

from the applicants over the extension of the time, which they termed unnecessary.

Many applicants showed their interest in withdrawing the applications as they said the delay in the process is keeping their deposited money idle while many aspirants have already cashed their pay orders following the extension of time.

A total of 1.56 lakh applications including those from abroad were submitted till January 11 for both the projects.

An applicant preferring anonymity said he could earn

about Tk 7000 to 8000 monthly from his Tk 1 lakh, which he had deposited for a five-katha plot at Purbachal.

Sukumar said they will consider the application for withdrawing the money if anyone shows his interest but it will be tough job to find out the application.

An applicant has to submit an application to the Chairman of Rajuk for the withdrawal of his money, he added.

Sukumar said they will be able to distribute plots by 2012.

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