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JS body to scan all 122 ordinances

Rejects expert body's short-listing of 50 to be made law; decides to hear its view Tuesday

SHAKHAWAT LITON

A special committee of the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday decided to thoroughly scrutinise all 122 ordinances promulgated during and just prior to the immediate past caretaker government's regime, before placing them as bills in the parliament for ratification.

The committee, consisting of senior lawmakers, also questioned the caretaker government's jurisdiction to promulgate the ordinances frequently by overstepping the bounds of its constitutional authority, according to meeting participants.

In its first meeting held in the parliament building, the high-powered special committee also put off acceptance of an expert committee's recommendation for ratifying 50 of the ordinances, until hearing the logic for the recommendation.

On the basis of the expert committee's recommendation, the law minister earlier however said the 50 recommended ordinances would be placed in the parliament for ratification.

The special committee yesterday also decided to invite the members of the expert committee to its meeting on Tuesday, for explaining their recommendation for ratifying the 50 ordinances and the reasons

for not recommending the rest.

"We will see which one deserves ratification and which does not, before placing them as bills in the parliament for ratification," Advocate Rahmat Ali, chief of the special committee, told The Daily Star over the phone following the meeting.

"We will have to carefully examine whether there is any provision in the ordinances contradicting the constitution, the supreme law of the land," Rahmat Ali said.

On the decision to invite the expert committee to a special committee meeting, Rahmat Ali said, "We will hear their

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POLL EXPENDITURE Hasina spent lowest in Rangpur

RAFIQUE SARKER, Rangpur

Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina spent only about Tk 4.22 lakh for election expenditure in Rangpur-6 parliamentary constituency although she was entitled to spend Tk 11.84 lakh.

Election expenditure of Hasina, who won the ballots in the constituency, is the lowest among others who won in five other constituencies of Rangpur.

Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad, who still has huge popularity in his home district, spent Tk 9.50 lakh for contesting for the Rangpur-3 seat.

Election expenditure of

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Bapex eyes 2.5tcf new gas in 7 years

Set to become strong player in oil and gas

SHARIEF KHAN

Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration Company (Bapex) aims at striking around 2.5 trillion cubic feet (TCF) gas and providing an extra 200 million cubic feet gas per day (mcf) within next seven years.

The long-ignored and cash-starved Bapex has set to achieve its first operating profit from next year and become a well-paying and high-end job provider by 2013 thanks to a policy intervention and a seven-year package of Tk 3,200 crore investment promised by the caretaker government.

From now until 2011, Bapex is expected to recruit 370 officers.

Till 2015-16, Bapex plans to drill 15 exploration wells and strike gas in at least six instances. Since its inception in 1989, Bapex was given only eight projects till last year, leaving explora-

tion and development of the oil and gas sector to foreign companies almost entirely.

As a result, Bapex now produces a paltry 40 mcf gas, while four foreign companies -- Chevron, Cairn, Tullow and Niko -- produce around 700 mcf.

Bapex was so sidelined that when it was created out of Petrobangla, it was given no producing gas fields, which could ensure its income and development.

Instead, it relied on percentage from Petrobangla against its past discoveries and assets (which were given to Sylhet Gas Field Company Ltd and Bangladesh Gas Field Company Ltd).

When it started producing gas from two small fields of Fenchuganj and Salda, it was offered a tariff of only Tk 7 per thousand cubic metres, while the foreign oil companies get

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BISHWA IJTEMA

Akheri Munajat today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Akheri Munajat of the 45th Bishwa Ijtema -- the second largest congregation of Muslims -- will be offered after Zohr prayers today with the participation of an expected gathering of around two million devotees.

Ijtema sources said over 15 lakh people from across the country and various other countries have already gathered at the Ijtema venue on the second day of the three-day congregation on the bank of River Turag.

More devotees are expected to join for the Akheri Munajat.

Moulana Jobayerul Hasan of India is scheduled to lead the Akheri Munajat.

The Ijtema mainly focuses on prayers and meditation

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A security helicopter hovers overhead devotees at the Bishwa Ijtema venue yesterday.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH.COM

BNP braces for reforms, leaders

NSC sits today to draw up plan for party revival

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

The party that once campaigned as being the 'choice of new generation' -- BNP -- is now limping with lack of new and competent leaderships at all tiers and facing the massive challenge of reinvigorating itself with many of its leaders becoming too aged.

Even the party's highest decision-making body -- National Standing Committee (NSC) -- is severely lacking vital leadership.

The NSC sits today to discuss how to reorganise the party by holding councils at all of its levels and bring in new leaderships. But the lack of democratic practices within the party for long, especially at the central level, has made it very difficult for the NSC to find proper leadership.

The 15-member NSC is practically functioning with eight members including party Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain. Three other existing members -- RA Ghani, Abdul Matin Chowdhury and Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmad -- are suffering from old age complications and cannot participate in party activities. Four posts have remained vacant for years.

The limping NSC is facing tremendous pressure from the party men who expect drastic overhauling of the party. So, it is ready to discuss possible changes even within itself to bring in

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Brutality beats the beast

3 killed after rape

STAR REPORT

A five-year-old girl was strangled after being violated at Kashiani in Gopalganj on Friday while a teen-age girl was allegedly raped and then killed in Bhanga upazila of Faridpur yesterday just because she had turned down a proposal for marriage.

In another incident, a housewife was raped and then strangled to death in Pilkuni area of Fatullah in Narayanganj yesterday.

A correspondent from Gopalganj reports: The minor girl was identified as Shewly, daughter of Rabiul Sheikh of Purnapur village of Kashiani upazila.

Police and locals said

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JS resolution made govt obligated

Home to play pivotal role in lead-up to trial of war criminals

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

Thursday's resolution in parliament means the government is now under an obligation to ensure trial of the war criminals, says the law minister.

Passed unanimously, it calls on the new administration to take immediate measures to try those who had committed war crimes in 1971.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday about implications of the motion, Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Shafique Ahmed said, "Since it's a resolution adopted by the legislature, the government will now take on the responsibility for trial of the war criminals."

To get the ball rolling, it first needs to settle on how to go about the task.

Shafique said since war crimes are considered criminal offences, the home ministry is responsible for prosecution of the war criminals. State will be the complainant.

"If the home ministry wants, our ministry would advise them on related legal matters," he added.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Liberation War Affairs ABM Tajul Islam told The Daily Star, "Documentation of evidence to begin the trial 37 years after the war is an uphill task and time consuming."

He, however, said his and the defence ministry would help the trial-implementing agencies gather evidence.

"The home ministry itself has a huge collection of evidence on war crimes as the Bangabandhu-led post-Liberation War government had initiated a process to put on trial the collaborators of Pakistani occupation forces."

"Documents on thousands of cases filed at that time can be collected from police stations and other departments concerned," he continued.

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Govt eager to push country into anarchy

Khaleda tells Bogra audience

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said the government is eager to push the country towards anarchy again as no step has been taken to check the acts of violence across the country.

"Since Awami League assumed office they have created a fearful atmosphere

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Seat order row to continue

JS session resumes today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led opposition is unlikely to return to the Parliament today as their demand for three more seats in the front row might not be met before the resumption of House proceedings this afternoon after a two-day recess.

The situation arose as both the Treasury Bench and the Opposition stick to their stances on seating arrangements.

Chief Whip of the Parliament Abdus Shahid said they have nothing to do about the Opposition's demand.

"They have already been given five seats including one for the

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Hasina asks people not to lose faith in govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged people to stay alert against any move to mislead them against the government.

"Many people from many corners will try to mislead you so that you lose your faith in us. I request you not to lose patience and give us time to build a golden Bangladesh,"

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ANNOUNCEMENT

The Daily Star 18th ANNIVERSARY

The largest circulated national English daily is bringing out a 200-page, four colour Special Supplement to mark its 18th anniversary. The central theme of this supplement is: **Towards a new beginning.** This will appear in three parts:

- A. Lessons from the Caretaker Government
- B. Expectations from the elected government
- C. Global trends

Eminent intellectuals, professional experts, distinguished members of academia and civil society, corporate sector leaders and journalists have already agreed to write for this grand supplement.

The three-part supplement will be distributed FREE with the normal paper on three consecutive days which will be printed in greater numbers than usual and thus reach more than the normal number of readers who are likely to preserve the issues as reference.

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The last date for receiving your ad materials is **February 10, 2009.**



Amar Ekushey Boi Mela begins today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The month long Amar Ekushey Boi Mela 2009 begins today on the Bangla Academy premises in the city, commemorating the martyrs of the historic Language Movement. With a record number of institutions taking part, the book fair this year will also have special visiting hours for women and children only on three days.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the month-long exhibition of books at 3:00 in the afternoon. The minister for Cultural Affairs AK Azad and Professor Kabir Chowdhury will be present as special guests.

The inauguration

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A worker puts the finishing touches on a banner as last minute preparations continued yesterday ahead of the inauguration of the Ekushey Boi Mela today.

PHOTO: STAR