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JS body sews legal wrap for CG rule

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The special committee of the parliament is trying to work out a way to give legality to the immediate past caretaker government's rule of about two years, since it stayed in power beyond the three months timeframe allowed by the constitution.

The high-powered committee which already opened talks on the matter, also plans to hold a special meeting on the matter if necessary, members of the committee said.

If the committee reaches to a decision that the extra-constitutional tenure of the caretaker government led by Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed requires a legal coverage, then the parliament must amend the constitution, the committee members said adding, they are also looking for measures to put in place, so such shackling of the democratic process does not happen again.

"We are proceeding with the matter positively. Through discussions, we will

find out the measures required," Advocate Rahmat Ali, chairman of the special committee, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Committee member also former law minister Abdul Matin Khasru said, "We are discussing how to give a legal cover to the immediate past caretaker government that was supposed to stay in office only for three months."

Formed on January 28 this year with jurisdiction to scrutinise the ordinances promulgated by the caretaker government, the special committee at its first meeting on January 31 opened the discussion, and might seek opinions of constitutional experts.

The committee members observed that the caretaker government's regime must be legalised to block any chance of challenging its extra-constitutional tenure.

The Election Commission's (EC) failure to hold the parliamentary election on time, made way for the caretaker

government's stay in office for about two years, although the government itself was obliged to extend all out cooperation to the EC in holding the poll within the timeframe specified by the constitution.

The High Court (HC) in a verdict on May 22 last year said the EC violated the constitution by not holding the general election within the constitutionally stipulated 90 days since the last parliament's dissolution on October 27, 2006.

According to the constitution, the ninth parliamentary election was supposed to be held by January 25, 2007, which ended up being held on December 29, 2008.

On violation of the constitution by the EC, the HC said, "The failure of the Election Commission in holding the said election within the time fixed by the constitution may better be left for consideration of elected members of the new parliament."

Legal experts said the immediate past

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BNP to play constructive role

Reassures Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said her party will play a constructive role in parliament to strengthen democracy and that she hopes the government will create an atmosphere conducive to doing so.

She made the observations at a meeting with US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard A Boucher at her Gulshan office in the evening.

Speaking briefly to reporters after the meeting, the visiting US envoy said no specific subject came up in his discussions with the leader of the opposition in parliament.

He said his country believes democracy is the best political system for Bangladesh and everyone here would work in unison to get it onto a firm footing.

Boucher also said there

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ANTI-TERROR TASK FORCE US to support regional effort

Says Boucher, meets PM today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The US will give support to the proposed anti-terrorism South Asian task force to prevent militancy and terrorism in the region, visiting US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Richard A Boucher said yesterday.

Appreciating the Awami League government's proposal for forming such a task force, Boucher said, "It's a good idea. We'll see how other countries react towards it. If it is formed, the US will look forward to supporting it."

He was talking to reporters after a meeting with Home Minister Sahara Khatun and State Minister Tanjim Ahmed Sohel Taj at the home ministry.

Trade and terrorism are on top of the agenda during



Boucher's two-day official visit to Bangladesh to talk with the prime minister, the opposition leader, key government ministers, business people and members of the civil society.

On the first day of his visit, he met with the home minister and discussed cooperation

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Rejoinder, our reply

In a rejoinder to our report headlined "Sheraton's Star At Risk" -- in its front page on 6th February, Bangladesh Services Ltd (BSL) said that it has tried its best to get a world class Hotel management company for operation and management of the hotel.

BSL said that it had tried to negotiate with companies like InterContinental Hotels Group, Global Hyatt Corporation, Marriott International, Hilton Hotel Corporations, Carlson Hotel Worldwide, Accor, Wyndham Hotel Group etc.

The conditions given by the companies including Sheraton to manage the hotel were very stringent.

Conditions included complete shutdown of the hotel during renovation for a period of about two years, which would render about 600 employees of the hotel jobless and cause loss of business due to shutdown, withdrawal of the operator in the event that renovation works proposed by

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Barefoot, they sent out for lunch

EMRAN HOSSAIN

Achhia and Kulsum wear ankle bracelets like many other girls, but the fashion becomes a source of embarrassment at lunchbreak as they must go outside the workplace barefoot.

As the bell for luncheon rang yesterday, the female garments workers of a factory on Airport Road in Chairmanbari, Banani came out barefoot.

"The authorities say many girls do not return after the break. So they allow us to go out without sandals," Achhia said.

"It is hard to walk barefoot on the hot and rough footpath. It often hurts," Achhia added while her cousin Kulsum was trying to hide her barefoot in vain.

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PHOTO: SHAFIQU ALAM

Garment workers of Tex Tech Company Ltd walk barefoot on Airport Road in Banani during lunch break yesterday as the factory authorities kept their shoes because they do not like them to go too far.

PM to hear people on Saturdays

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will hear people's complaints and opinion every Saturday from now on at her political office in the capital's Dhanmondi.

Prime Minister's Press Secretary Abul Kalam Azad said this to reporters at her political office yesterday after Hasina's meeting with Gopalganj district Muktijoddha Command Council and Awami League leaders and activists from the district.

This will be a first. Hasina is not isolated from people even though she is the premier of a country and she does not want to be away from people in future, he said.

Leaders of the National

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Tk 60cr govt land grabbed in Bogra

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

The Bogra district administration has filed a civil case to recover 29 decimal government land at Bogra New Market area worth about Tk 60 crore which alleged war criminal Rafique Khan and his associates grabbed immediately after the War of Liberation.

Bogra additional deputy commissioner (revenue) Mohammad Munir Chowdhury said defunct Muslim League supporter Rafique and his sons grabbed the government land through false documentation.

Before his death on January 4 last year, Rafique in a written reply to the case filed by the government said that he was general secretary of the Bogra District Peace Committee during the Liberation War and that some businessmen constructed 110 houses on the land without municipality approval afterwards.

His sons Rabbi and Belal Khan are fighting the case on behalf of their late father.

However, some of the businessmen who are cooperating with the government to recover the valuable land said before his death Rafique earned about Tk 5 crore from the land. He earned another Tk 5 crore as house rent from the land.

A businessman said after independence Rafique was sentenced to 5 years in jail in a case filed against him under Collaboration Act. But he didn't serve time as he was on the run

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

TRANSIT Jamaat warns govt of security threat

UNB, Dhaka

Jamaat central executive council meeting yesterday cautioned the government against giving corridor to India under the transit agreement that will jeopardize national security and interest. The warning came ahead of Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee's visit to Dhaka on Monday when the transit agreement is set to sign between the two countries.

"It's not a mere transit. India wants corridor (to its eastern states) in the name of transit agreement. Providing the corridor will seriously threaten the national security," the meeting observed

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FOUL PLAY IN BIDDER SELECTION Sylhet Gas scraps third tender, goes for another

SHARIER KHAN

Smelling foul play in the bidder selection process, the Board of Sylhet Gas Field Company Ltd (SGFL) has cancelled the third tender for installation of a highly technical Tk 157 crore gas processing plant and asked the authorities to float a fourth tender within this week, competent sources said.

The board also asked the SGFL authorities to set a stringent criterion to ensure offers from only competent bidders -- an issue that was deliberately bypassed either by the tendering authorities or the higher authority so that a bidder represented by a certain business lobby wins the contract.

"But the SGFL authorities are still trying to keep a loophole in the bidding criterion so that once again one or more incompetent bidders may get qualified," said a Petrobangla source.

Under this project, the SGFL would produce 16 barrels of natural gas liquid (NGL) and about nine barrels of associated condensate using 45

million cubic feet per day (mmcf) gas.

The NGL will then be used in an existing fractionation plant to manufacture liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), motor spirit and diesel. LPG is widely used in the country for cooking and domestic purposes.

The SGFL has been floating tender for Kailastila Molecular Sieve Turbo Expander (MSTE) Processing Plant since April 2005.

The board at a meeting on January 28 cancelled the third tender, and asked the SGFL to set a criterion that the bidder must have at least five years' experience in supply, design, engineering aspects, procurement and commissioning of the particular type of at least one natural gas MSTE plant having a minimum capacity of 45 mmcf, or Natural Gas Molecular Sieve Dehydration Plant through an international competitive bidding (ICB) outside the bidder's home country.

This should eliminate the entry of less competent bidders for this high tech job, sources said.

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Govt to build road, railway links with Myanmar

Says communications minister

BSS, Cox's Bazar

Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain said the government will start implementing election pledges from the south-east by building connecting road and railway from Ukhaia of Dhazari to Myanmar's Ghum Dhum point.

He said this after visiting the location of the proposed China-Myanmar-Bangladesh friendship road and railway at Myanmar border close to Ghum Dhum town yesterday.

The minister was briefing newsmen at the local BDR outpost following his visit to

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This photo, left, taken in 2007 shows a cloud of smog over the school making a bright sunny day overcast. The file photo on the right, also taken in 2007, shows children in a classroom of Bakchar Govt Primary School wearing facemasks to help ease breathing difficulties in the dense smog.

PHOTO: FILE



SCHOOL OF POISON Smog thins, but not enough

PINAKI ROY

The eagerly awaited recess bell finally rang and the children ran out of the classrooms in joy. Some boys started playing cricket on the school premises, while some of the girls immediately walked to the pickle vendor. Others were watching the game and chatting.

But the environment was not as good as the joyous break of a children's school looked. The premises were foggy and the day seemed cloudy. It was not usual winter fog but the industrial smogs coming out from nearby re-rolling mills.

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Students of Bakchar Govt Primary School still go to school through the smog as the government has failed to do enough to improve the situation.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN