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White Papers on graft on the cards

Documents to contain corruption during CG, BNP rule; PM rejects BNP seat demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday told parliament that White Papers should be published on corruption committed during the regimes of the immediate past caretaker government, and the BNP-led alliance government before that.

The government will take steps in this regard, she said replying to Awami League lawmaker Mujibul Huq during the question-answer session.

In response to another question from independent lawmaker Fazlul Azim, the premier strongly criticised BNP-led opposition lawmakers for boycotting parliament since its second day in session, demanding more seats in the front



row of the House.

She said BNP lawmakers have more seats in the front row than they deserve according to their representation ratio in the House.

Citing that Awami League (AL) lawmakers were given only six seats in the front row in the last parliament by a BNP-led alliance majority, although AL had 58 seats in the House, the premier added, "How could they demand what they had denied us when we had been the opposition?"

In reply to Mujibul Huq's question, the prime minister said, "I support the proposal for publishing White Papers on corruption. It's necessary to publish the White Papers, and the government will

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PM asks for recovering water bodies

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister (PM) Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed the authorities concerned to recover the water bodies from illegal occupation to remove water stagnancy in the capital and also across the country.

Hasina made the directive at a presentation programme on Hatijheel project held at her secretariat office in the afternoon.

Government officials and experts appraised the PM of the pros and cons of the project presenting her a layout.

She asked the authorities to implement the project without harming the poor people living within the project area.

The PM also stressed the need for dredging country's major rivers to increase their navigability which will be useful for country's overall development.

RPCL in limbo with costly contract

Dutch firm takes \$25m for 8yr redundant service, seeks another \$28m for future

SHARIER KHAN

The Rural Power Company Ltd (RPCL) is faced with the dilemma of respecting a very costly and redundant 15-year power plant service contract with a Dutch company that was signed on the basis of a secret and unsolicited negotiation in 2001.

The first phase of the two-part contract ended in October 2008. As dictated by that contract, the RPCL is now considering the second phase of this deal titled Long Term Service Agreement (LTSA) with Dutch company TTS.

As per the deal, between 2001 and 2008, Dutch company Thomassen and Turbine System (TTS) charged euro 12.036 million and \$9.58 million -- or around \$25 million in total -- for inspection of RPCL's power units and provide repair services and refurbishment of parts.

After October last year, TTS submitted its

proposal for the second phase of service for 2008 to 2015. It sought a cost of euro 12.66 million plus \$11.59 million (or around \$28 million in total). As the amount seemed very high, the RPCL board decided to check the market trend of LTSA and found two price offers from two other service companies -- one demanding euro 15.7 million and another euro 9.8 million.

"We have not taken any decision on this matter. Our board will decide the next course of action," said a high official of the RPCL, a company owned by the Rural Electrification Board (Reb).

An LTSA contractor's job is to inspect gas turbines of the power plant after 8,000 hours of operation, conduct Gas Inspection after 24,000 hours and Major Inspection after 48,000 hours. In addition, the LTSA contractor will respond to any problem of the plant within 48 hours of notice.

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5 JS standing bodies formed

Minister 'mistakenly' included

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The House yesterday constituted five standing committees, beginning the process of formation of the crucial committees in the current session of parliament.

Three of the committees have been formed for businesses related to Jatiya Sangsad (JS) and two on ministries.

But the treasury bench ignored the JS rules of procedure in forming the Estimate Committee by including a

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BANGABHABAN Official website still shows Khaleda as PM

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The official website of Bangabhaban, the official residence and office of the president, still shows BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia as the country's prime minister although her tenure as premier ended on October 29, 2006.

The Bangabhaban website says that late president Ziaur Rahman made the historic declaration of independence

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PHOTO: SHAKHAWAT JAMIL
Poisonous water from tanneries flows into the Buriganga through a sewerage line in the city's Hajaribagh area polluting the river.

Rejoinder, our reply

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) in a rejoinder on The Daily Star news headlined "Bangla Phone dying in neglect of BTRC" published February 9 differed on a number of points.

The rejoinder said that the BTRC issued a show cause notice as to Bangla Phone's laying of optical fibre network outside its licensed zone and also about leasing out of the network to other operators. The BTRC was not satisfied with its explanation and issued a second show cause notice.

Bangla Phone then filed a writ petition challenging the second show cause notice. On July 13, 2008 the High Court division gave the verdict that the phone company was allowed to establish the line outside the licensing zone, but it could not lease out the line without the BTRC permission.

The Bangla Phone did not apply to the BTRC for the permit.

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Zillur in, Iajuddin out

Oath today; onus on new president to put controversy to rest

SHAKHAWAT LITON

News analysis

Seasoned politician Zillur Rahman takes oath of office as the country's new president today on high expectations that he will work to restore dignity and integrity to the top constitutional post, which was mired in controversy by the outgoing president.

With Zillur Rahman stepping into the Bangabhaban, the official residence and office of the President, the unexpected long and controversial tenure of President Iajuddin Ahmed will come to an end this evening.

The Election Commission yesterday announced that Zillur Rahman has been elected unopposed the president of Bangladesh.

After 35 years since the August 15, 1975 bloody changeover, Zillur is the first incumbent with a long career in politics taking oath of the office to preserve, protect and defend the



Constitution in such a time when the outgoing president has highly been charged for violating the constitution.

Chief Justice MM Ruhul Amin will administer the oath of office to the president-elect at Bangabhaban darbar hall in a simple ceremony for a term of five years and Zillur shall, as head of the state, take precedence over all other persons in the state.

With the swearing in as new president Zillur, who was elected uncontested yesterday on nomination of ruling Awami League, will be the fifth president elected by the parliament since the restoration of parliamentary system of governance in 1991.

Alongside the expectation for change in the presidency, questions are also being raised in public mind whether Zillur will follow Iajuddin's suit to only wait for the advice of the

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Govt plans to add 741MW power by June

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government expects to add 741 megawatts (MW) additional power in both private and public sector by June this year to ease the country's ongoing power crisis.

According to the press statement, placed before the parliament yesterday to be answered by the prime minister during question-answer session, the government has undertaken short, mid and long-term programmes to generate 3,660 MW electricity by the year 2014.

In the middle of its term between July 2009 and June 2012, the government would enhance power generation capacity by 960 MW.

The immediate steps to increase power generation till next June would be possible through implementing some small-scale rental and independent power projects with the addition of 210 MW Siddhirganj public sector power project.

The mid term power projects would be Khulna 150 MW and 210 MW, Sirajganj 150 MW, Sylhet 150 MW, Bhola 150 MW and Chandpur 150 MW.

In the long term, the government will implement public sector power projects

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Power outage on rise as gas shortage hits generation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Power load-shedding has started to shoot up every day as the weather is becoming warmer -- triggering a demand rise against declining gas-fired power generation.

Power Development Board (PDB) sources said the official load shedding yesterday was 793 MW. Due to gas supply shortfall, the plants under the PDB network could not generate 521 MW power yesterday.

Yesterday's power demand was projected at 4150 MW, while the PDB generated 3240 MW.

The unofficial load shedding level would be much higher, sources said.

"But this situation could have been better if only we could ensure adequate gas supplies to the power plants," said a PDB official.

Gas supply shortfall caused power generation cut by 750 MW Monday and 550 MW Tuesday. Due to lack of adequate gas supply, the

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BNP grassroots keep on rapping Jamaat, corrupt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The issues related to Jamaat and controversial leaders of BNP figured prominently at the meeting between BNP central teams and party's grassroots-level leaders that continued for the ninth consecutive day yesterday.

The upazila leaders from Narayanganj, Bagerhat and Jessore gave their opinions at the meeting at party's central office in the capital's Naya Paltan.

"Most upazila leaders urged the central leaders to cut their ties with Jamaat and drop the corrupt and controversial leaders from the party's top level including party's central executive committee," sources said.

But some central leaders ruled out the grassroots leaders' demand for dropping

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100 hurt as RMG workers clash with cops at Ashulia

30 vehicles vandalised; highway blocked for 2 hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over a hundred people, including 31 policemen were injured in clashes between garment workers and law enforcers at Sripur in Ashulia yesterday.

Angry workers of Kushiara Knitwear Industries Ltd of Samad Group damaged about 30 vehicles and put barricade on Dhaka-Tangail Highway for over two hours from 3:00pm protesting delay in payment of salary.

Sources said the area turned into a battle zone as police fired over 200 shots and lobbed 80 teargas canisters to disperse the agitating workers who retaliated by hurling brickbats and stones at the law enforcers.

Sources said when the authorities of the factory owned by Awami League lawmaker Mahmud-us-Samad from Sylhet-3 said the workers' salaries for January would be given on February 18 instead of 5, about 2,000 angry workers attacked the factory building.

They damaged furniture and vandalised three private cars and two minibuses parked inside the factory.

Later, the angry workers took to the Dhaka-Tangail Highway

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No need for anti-terror taskforce

Says Delwar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday said the proposed anti-terrorism South Asian taskforce to prevent militancy and terrorism in the region is 'unnecessary' and warned that it would be 'suicidal' for the country.

"Any bilateral system in the name of forming South Asian task force may create a new crisis. Even the growing terrorist activities of other countries may be extended to our country which couldn't be accepted," he said at a press briefing at party chairperson's Gulshan office.

He believes that law enforcing agencies, including armed forces, are enough to free the country from terrorism and militancy.

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Guest birds in danger

Poachers active in Hakaluki Haor

RAJAT KANTI GOSWAMI, Moulvibazar

With the arrival of thousands of migratory birds in Hakaluki Haor, the biggest wetland in South Asia, poachers have become active and are killing a large number of the species for meat every day.

Several bands of local poachers set poison traps on the bank of the Haor during the winter, although killing or trapping migratory birds is legally prohibited and a punishable act.

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A man holds a dead Ferruginous Pochard, a migratory bird recovered from Hakaluki Haor. Right, a dead Common Pochard also found in the haor.



PHOTO: STAR

Hajj pilgrims have to collect int'l passport by May 15

UNB, Dhaka

The Ministry of Religious Affairs has requested the intending hajj pilgrims to collect international passport by May 15, 2009 to perform this year's hajj.

The Hajj Ministry of Saudi Arabia says as the system of pilgrim pass has been abolished the pilgrims will require international passport from this year, said an official release yesterday.