

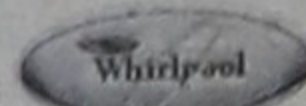


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Govt cancels lease of Khaleda's Cantt house

Cabinet takes decision; finds 'anomalies' in its allotment

HASAN JAHID TUSHER and
M ABUL KALAM AZAD

The government yesterday cancelled the allotment of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's house on Shaheed Mainul Road in Dhaka Cantonment, 'due to a number of anomalies regarding the allotment within the military zone'.

The decision came at a meeting of the cabinet with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair where cabinet members and secretaries of different minis-

tries and divisions were present. Going through various documents regarding the allotment, the cabinet 'identified numerous anomalies'.

The irregularities are that Khaleda has been carrying out political activities from the cantonment house, which goes against a condition of the allotment. The cabinet also 'found out' that one cannot get allotment of two government houses in the capital, and a civilian cannot get a resident lease within a cantonment. The meeting also observed that unauthorised

changes and extensions were made to the structure violating the code of conduct for a military area.

Khaleda, also the main opposition leader in the parliament, will lose the house in three months, according to the government decision. Former military dictator HM Ershad, who later became a president, allotted the house to Khaleda and her two sons after the assassination of her husband, former president Ziaur Rahman who used to live in that house as

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Allotment flawed, rules violated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has found anomalies in allotment of the house on Shaheed Mainul Road in Dhaka Cantonment to former premier Khaleda Zia, sources said.

The Cantonment Board would cancel the allotment after the government officially notifies the defence ministry, said cabinet sources.

Following the assassination of Khaleda's husband president Ziaur Rahman, the then cabinet decided to hand

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

WAR CRIME

Govt to follow trial procedures abroad

High-level meeting today to select prosecutor, IO

M ABUL KALAM AZAD and HASAN JAHID TUSHER

The government would follow the procedures of already held trials of various war crimes committed in different countries and incorporate some of the good sides while trying the 1971 war criminals, officials say.

The law ministry, which is going to take the lead in this regard, will also go through the tribunals, under which some of the war criminals have been tried and some are underway to make

the 1971 war crimes trial fair and acceptable.

An investigation team headed by a senior Criminal Investigation Department (CID) official will be formed soon to launch a probe into the genocide committed during the Liberation War in 1971 and detect those who were involved in murders, plundering, rape and arsons.

The investigators will include members from different law-enforcement and intelligence

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3



PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKHI

This file photo shows the entrance to the cantonment residence once allocated to Khaleda Zia, and now taken back by the government.

BNP declares countrywide protests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Vehemently opposing the government's decision on cancellation of the allotment of the cantonment residence to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, main opposition BNP announced a two-day protest programme yesterday night.

BNP and its various front organisations will hold rallies and bring out procession today in the capital and divisional headquarters while the same programme will be observed at district and upazila levels on Saturday.

As part of the today's protest programme, the party will hold a rally at city's Muktagong at 3:00 pm.

The programme came following a meeting of senior party leaders, including

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

ACC's 'no' to House body's summons

Terms its move to probe ACC accounts, activities 'motivated'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has refused to appear before the parliamentary standing committee on public undertakings saying the summons is "beyond jurisdiction of the committee."

"The committee has embarked on a motivated enquiry into the last two years' anti-corruption drive (activities) of the commission," said the ACC in a letter sent to the parliamentary committee yesterday.

"Such enquiry by summoning the commissioners in person does not fit in the prevailing legal and administrative norms and protocol," the letter read.

Earlier, the parliamentary standing committee sent a letter to the commission on April 7 asking the acting ACC chairman and the commissioner to appear before it on April 12.

The committee set four topics -- the commission's latest annual report, latest audit report, its activities and recent problems -- to be discussed with the ACC high-ups.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

Reshuffle in admin again

23 DCs transferred

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday replaced 23 deputy commissioners (DCs) in a major reshuffle in the field level administration.

Besides, some officers of the armed forces division (AFD) were also withdrawn and transferred.

The establishment ministry issued separate orders in this regard.

The 23 districts where the DCs have been changed are Gazipur, Kishoreganj, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Sunamganj, Khagrachhari, Bandarban, Cox's Bazar, Jhalakati, Panchagarh, Dinajpur, Joypurhat, Bagerhat, Gaibandha, Chandpur, Brahmanbaria, Rajbari, Gopalganj, Magura, Kushtia, Nilphamari, Thakurgaon and Satkhira.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

BDR reveals list of 202 fugitive jawans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) authorities yesterday published a list with details about 202 fugitive BDR men involved in the mutiny at Pilkhana headquarters on February 25-26.

A press release signed by BDR Public Relations Officer Nurul Huda said, "According to the information provided by different sectors and battalions, the BDR authorities have so far identified 202 fugitive members."

It said that a number of BDR members joined their work at BDR headquarters and other suitable units of BDR after the mutiny while many others were arrested.

Of the 202 fugitive BDR men, the list contains the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

UZ bill goes against AL poll manifesto

Even a cabinet decision to keep upazilas free of MPs' influence ignored

SHAKHAWAT LITON

With the passing of the new upazila parishad bill in the Awami League (AL) majority parliament, the government empowered lawmakers to meddle in the functioning of upazila parishads, burying AL's electoral pledge of making the parishads self-reliant and autonomous.

The government could not defend in the parliament a cabinet decision to keep the lawmakers at bay from the functioning of upazila parishads, in the face of tremendous pressure from the MPs who demanded authority to control the local government unit, a minister told The Daily Star seeking anonymity.

"Local governments of districts and upazilas will be made self-reliant and autonomous and they will play pivotal roles in local development," says the ruling AL's election manifesto that contributed hugely to its landslide victory in the December 29, 2008 parliamentary elec-

tion.

In the manifesto, AL also promised to bring massive changes to the political structure giving emphasis on the local government system. Union parishads, upazila parishads, and zila parishads will be strengthened by decentralising the power, it asserts.

But the bill titled Upazila Parishad (reintroduction and amendment) Act 2009, passed in the parliament on Monday, prevents the parishads from becoming self-reliant and autonomous, as they are not allowed to perform without the 'suggestions' of lawmakers.

According to the provisions included in the bill following the demand of MPs, lawmakers will be advisers to the parishads in their constituencies and the parishads 'will accept the suggestions of the lawmakers'.

Moreover, the parishads are not allowed to send development plans to the government for implementation without recommendations

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5

CNG saves \$800m worth imported fuel a year

SHARIER KHAN

The use of compressed natural gas (CNG) in the transport sector has not only reduced carbon emission but also is saving over \$800 million worth of petroleum import annually, Petrobangla sources say.

However, rapid expansion of CNG delivery network in the last few years has significantly contributed to instability of gas supply pressure in many areas.

This instability is now seriously affecting the gas-based activities ranging from power generation to CNG delivery services, the sources add.

There are around 250 CNG refuelling stations in the country and 121 conversion workshops serving around 138,000 converted vehicles.

Every month, CNG transports are consuming 58.14 million cubic metres of gas equivalent to 69.77 million litres of petrol and octane, the import cost of which is equivalent to \$67.77 million per month or \$813.29 million a year.

Presently, 14 more CNG refuelling stations are under construction and the government has taken up a project to install 26 more stations under Dhaka Clean Fuel Project funded by the Asian Development Bank.

These stations will be set up on six highways -- Dhaka-Chittagong, Dhaka-Sylhet, Dhaka-Mymensingh, Dhaka-Aricha, Dhaka-Sirajganj-Bogra and Dhaka-Mawa.

Under the Clean Fuel Project, Rupantarita Praktik Gas Company Ltd (RPGCL) of Petrobangla would import and hand over 5,000 CNG kits and 6,000 cylinders to private entrepreneurs running 100 CNG-driven buses on commercial basis.

Introduced in 2003 through the Clean Fuel Project, CNG services revolutionised the country's transport sector and helped improve the air pollution situation caused by carbon monoxide and other harmful gas emission from motor vehicles, especially two-stroke engines that use diesel and petrol.

"The air of Dhaka was mainly polluted

by emission from three-wheeler auto-rickshaws, motorcycles and diesel-run buses. The air should not have any sulphur. But such emission dangerously added sulphur in our air," says an official.

He adds the dark smoke these vehicles emitted was causing many complicated diseases like respiratory problems, eye and heart diseases.

For consumers, the use of CNG has drastically cut down fuel cost as the government initially offered a very low sale tariff of Tk 7 per cubic metre. Though this price has now increased to Tk 16.75 per cubic metre, it still keeps using CNG instead of petroleum much more profitable.

Sources say the CNG Filling Station Owners Association on Monday met the energy adviser to the prime minister and asked the government to reduce the CNG tariff as the owners are "facing huge loss".

They add in some places, there are additional CNG stations, which are affecting the financial outcome of all the stations in those areas. There are excessive

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

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