

JS body questions

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present in our next meeting to clarify the matter," Shaikh Muzibur Rahman, chairman of the committee said.

"Golam Maola Rony, a ruling party lawmaker raised the issue," said Nazrul Islam Monzu, the lone opposition lawmaker of BNP present in the meeting.

"Under which authority the ministry invited the tender for purchasing a vehicle mentioning the minister's name?" Monzu quoted Rony as asking in the meeting.

"Couldn't the minister visit show rooms to select a car and then invite a tender for a vehicle like that?" Rony questioned again.

"My predecessor [Iqbal Mahmud] approved the file," Monzu quoted Ali Kabir as saying.

"As the committee members quizzed the incumbent communications secretary more on the issue, he replied 'the issue should be discussed in the presence of the minister,'" Monzu said.

Meanwhile,

Communications Minister Syed Abul Hossain is currently abroad.

In a breach of government rules, the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) recently invited tenders for a cross-country automobile to be used by the communications minister.

In an advertisement published in a national daily on March 18, RHD invited formal tender for supplying a vehicle for official use by the communications minister. The last date for buying the tender forms was April 15.

Bids were to be accepted till 12 noon the following day, to be opened later on the same day.

Placed by Rafiqul Islam, executive engineer of RHD procurement and storage division, the tender invitation advertisement said the vehicle should be 'brand new' of the latest model with a manufacturing date of not prior to July 2008, and should be designed according to the latest technology. The interior should be stylish and elegant looking'.

Global recession

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Bank Governor Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, Finance Secretary Dr Mohammad Tareque, Economic Relations Division (ERD) Secretary Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan and National Board of Revenue (NBR) Chairman Dr Nasiruddin Ahmed were present when the finance minister rolled out his much-anticipated scheme.

Muhith said the additional funding for the social safety programmes will translate into a rise in the number of pensioners and the amount of pensions.

The finance secretary said Tk 1,500 crore allocated for the agriculture sector will be used to ensure smooth flow of agri-loans through recapitalisation of Bangladesh Krishish Bank, Rajshahi Krishish Unnayan Bank and Karmasangsthan Bank.

The amount set aside for power sector will be used to shore up the financial base of the Power Development Board (PDB).

Of the exports, jute and jute-made goods will see cash incentives rise to 10 percent from 7.5 percent, leather and leather products to 17.5 percent from existing 15 percent, frozen foods and fish to 12.5 percent from 10 percent.

There is however no cash incentive for the ready-made garments and ceramics exporters.

Explaining the rationale for not including the RMG and ceramics industries among the recipients of the cash incentives, the finance minister said, "We're not saying they are insulated from the adverse effects of the global meltdown."

"But as the projection till June this year says they are not experiencing negative growth, we deem the time is not ripe yet for giving them cash assistance."

He said the government has drawn up the recession package in light of the recommendations by the taskforce formed recently to gauge the possible recession impact.

It also considered the opinions of the technical committee formed by the finance ministry in November last year.

The package will be implemented through immediate, medium and long term programmes.

Besides giving financial, fiscal and policy supports, the government will bring about major administrative reforms.

The policy supports to be executed during the last quarter include disbursing 70 percent of the incentives immediately after primary assessment of the claims and the rest 30 percent after necessary audits.

Any beneficiary is later found to have taken more than what it really needs actions will be taken against it.

Previously, the money would be released only after a full audit.

To boost export, Bangladesh Bank will expand its credit at 7 percent interest to all products. It will also stretch the time limit for repayment to 120 days, upped from 90 days at present.

The central bank has already raised the limit on Export Development Fund's credit for a single borrower to \$1.5 million from \$1.0 million.

It yesterday issued a circular on the decisions to bring down the lending rate below 13 percent and allow rescheduing facility without down payment.

Meanwhile, the finance ministry has requested the civil aviation and tourism

Costly equipment

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The hospital was built at a cost of Tk 223 crore and was inaugurated on August 31, 2006. Central Medical Storage Department (CMSD) supplied medical equipment worth Tk 60.71 crore for the 500-bed hospital during the four-party alliance rule.

A senior official said several pieces of costly equipment, like mammography machine worth Tk 40.64 lakh, are yet to be used due to shortage of trained manpower and chemicals.

Joyful Abedin, executive engineer of PWD, Bogra said the work proposal, which the director of the hospital sent to him, was sent to the ministry concerned three months ago for sanctioning Tk 35 lakh for the radiation-proofing work.

Earlier the government spent Tk 1.16 crore for constructing the unit but due to a faulty design the government now has to pay additional money to manage radiation leakage, said the executive engineer.

The hospital authority has been spending huge amount of money for electricity as the equipment requires a certain temperature to be kept in. The unit was opened two and a half years ago but it does not provide any service to patients.

Justice Rashid

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The file yesterday reached the law ministry, which will soon issue a notification on the appointment. The government in consultation with the new chairman will then appoint two members of the commission, sources said.

When contacted, Justice Rashid told The Daily Star that he did not receive letter on his appointment as chairman of the Law Commission till 7:30pm yesterday.

"Let me join the office and then I will determine the tasks to make the Law Commission effective," he said.

He retired from the office of the High Court judge on January 27 this year.

Law Commission Secretary Noor Md Jahangir Sarker while talking to The Daily Star at his office yesterday afternoon expressed satisfaction on the appointment of new chairman of the commission, as the post has been lying vacant for about 16 months.

He hoped that activities of the commission will get momentum with the appointment of the new chairman.

Formed in 1996 to help modernise the country's law and judicial system, the Law Commission has been inactive due to shortage of manpower and logistic supports for a long time.

The post of chairman of the commission has remained vacant since December 5, 2007 when the term of then chairman Justice Mustafa Kamal expired.

Another member of the commission retired on February 22 last year but the government did not take initiative to fill the vacant post. Justice Md Sirajul Islam is silent on the housing needs for this large number of poor."

Though the terms of reference (TOR) require that the DAP identifies unauthorised and illegal land use by housing companies, it remains silent on the issue.

"In our report, we have pointed out all the illegal housing projects undertaken in the city that are destroying flood flow zones, sub-flood flow zones, retention ponds and high value agricultural plots of land," Dr Ishtor said.

Iqbal Habib said, "The draft DAP has proposed housing land for 2.75 crore people against the government's projected figure of 1.5 crore population by 2015."

The open space, water bodies, flood retention ponds, roads and other civic amenities envisaged in the plan for 1.5 crore people are extremely inadequate, he said.

DAP Project Director Tapan Kumar Nath said that they have asked the consultants to incorporate the review committee's observations and recommendations.

State Minister for Public Works Abdul Mannan Khan also said, "We will take note of the review committee's recommendations accordingly."

Prof Muzaffar Ahmad, president of the environmentalist group Bapa, said, "Consultants were required to hold local level public consultations at the time of field survey as per the TOR for a meaningful public participation which they did not do."

Rajuk arranged a two-month long public hearing on the DAP's draft final reports from October 5 last year at Rajuk's central office and three zone offices in Mohakhali, Uttara and Dhamondi, inviting interested persons through news-paper advertisements.

Experts criticised the attempts a futile exercise.

The DMDP was initiated in 1992, completed in 1995 and officially gazetted in 1997. But Rajuk took years to initiate it, finally starting work in November 2004. Despite the delay, Rajuk extended the

UP chairman

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following the end to a legal battle that began at the election tribunal at district level and went up to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

But Abdur Rahman, whom the returning officer declared chairman in the February polls, filed a petition on April 9, 2006 with the appellate authorities, led by Rangpur joint district judge, challenging the tribunal's order.

The appellate authorities on October 1, 2006 rejected the appeal upholding the election tribunal's order to replace Abdur Rahman with Azizul.

Later, Rahman filed a civil revision petition with the High Court, which on November 30, 2008 rejected the petition.

Rahman then moved to the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court and filed a civil revision petition with it against the HC order.

The Appellate Division on March 1, 2009 dismissed the petition.

"The period of five years has already expired and as such the Civil Petition for leave to appeal has become inoperative. We do not find any cogent reason to interfere with the judgment and order of the High Court Division," the Appellate Division said.

Sohul Hussain said Abdur Rahman remained in office by obtaining stay orders from courts. The local government laws should be reformed to address such problems, he said.

An election tribunal, headed by a senior assistant judge, first declared Azizul chairman after recounting ballots on April 9, 2006. Azizul filed a petition for recounting

Dhaka's detailed

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development companies to extend their work in those plots of land.

These zones have been proposed as zones for urban housing, mixed use, commercial zones, heavy industrial zones and general industrial zones.

The report also said an extensive area of land have been left in the name of open spaces, water bodies, flood flow zones, overlay areas, special zones etc without specific definitions for them.

Prof Ishtor Islam of Buet, another member of the TWG, said that one foremost anomaly in the DAP is that both high value agricultural land and agricultural land identified in the structural plan, have been proposed as 'rural homesteads' for housing and mixed uses in the draft DAP.

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Deccan win

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But their formidable top order was handcuffed by Deccan's new-ball bowlers. Fidel Edwards was fast and frugal - consistently around the 140kph mark, he gave away only six runs, the lowest conceded in a completed IPL spell - and RP Singh evicted the Kolkata openers early.

Everything was going right

for Deccan. With Kolkata on 2

for 1 after three overs, Gayle

broke free with a crash past

point for four and a mow over

midwicket for six. Then Adam Gilchrist pushed a fielder back to long-on, where Gayle

promptly holed out next ball.

Sourav Ganguly had a

short-lived and uncomfortable

stay, beaten several times,

and was unable to find the gap

through the off side when he

is found - dead or alive.

"We can't find anyone

who has seen Prabhakaran

recently," said

Gayle, who has seen Prabhakaran

recently," said

Gayle