

Build Election Commission as institution: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked the election commissioners to build the Election Commission as an institution for fulfilling the expectation of the people.

"The Election Commission has to be built in a way so that it could work as an institution," she said.

The EC should act in a way so that the people of the country could have their confidence and faith in it.

The premier said this at a meeting with the election commissioners on 'Taking political and administrative decisions on two ongoing projects under Election Commission' at the PM's Office in the capital.

PM's Press Secretary Abul Kalam

Azad briefed newsmen after the meeting.

"It matters little who will be in the Election Commission, it is the matter whether the commission will go on functioning as an institution," Hasina told the meeting.

The PM asked for making all-out effort to make the EC more modern and equipped for smoothly conducting elections in the modern times.

She thanked the Election Commission for the preparation of photo voter list before the 9th general election, held on December 29, 2008.

Hasina noted that in this voter list around 1.23 crore "fake voters" on the previous list could not be included.

"This was a good and great job irrespective of its quality and standard," she

said.

In this connection, the PM thanked the Bangladesh Army as she noted that without their effort the preparation of the picture-added voter list was not possible.

Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda briefed the prime minister about the ongoing two projects and other issues of the EC.

Planning Minister AK Khandaker, LGRD Minister Syed Ashraf Islam, State Minister for Land Mostafizur Rahman, Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda, Election Commissioner Sakawat Hossain, other secretaries concerned were present at the meeting.



Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus speaks at a reception accorded to Brac chairperson and founder Fazle Hasan Abed on his winning the knighthood at Spectra Convention Centre in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)



Chief of Air Staff of Indian Air Force Air Chief Marshal PV Naik calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official residence Jamuna in the city yesterday.

Indonesian MPs call for cultural exchanges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Visiting Indonesian women parliamentarians yesterday stressed the need for regular cultural exchange between the two countries to share knowledge on issues of women's empowerment.

The three parliamentarians -- Hema Hamengku Buwono, Dentry Eka Widi Pratiwi and Hairiah -- visited Bangladesh under 'Women in Power Programme' of Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) in collaboration with Ain O Shalish Kendra (ASK) and Steps Towards Development.

At the press briefing at Liberation War Museum on the last day of their three-day visit, team leader Buwono said the cultural context in Indonesia is still heavily patriarchal like Bangladesh.

The common perception is that political arena is only for men and that it is less preferable for women to become members of parliament and family often becomes a barrier.

She, however, said things are beginning to look up, as Indonesian law requires political parties to nominate 30 percent female candidates to compete directly in the parliamentary election.

In the last election in 2009, a record number of 102 women became members of Indonesian House of Representatives, which has a total of 560 seats, Buwono added.

In Bangladesh, there are 64 women members of parliament at present. Of them, 19 were elected through direct voting while the others are selected for reserved seats.

Asked whether religion is posing a barrier for women to joining politics in Indonesia, she said though Indonesia has the largest population of Muslims in the world, it is not governed by Shariah law.

When there is democracy, religion should not become a barrier, she added.

The parliamentarians also praised Bangladesh's achievement for its being able to attract more women in politics at grassroots level.

Sultana Kamal, executive director of ASK, and Ranjan Karmakar, executive director of Steps, were also present during the briefing.

Communiq   to be made public soon

BSS adds: Foreign Minister Dipu Moni yesterday said the joint communiq   signed by the prime ministers of Bangladesh and India will be made public soon.

"It would be a public document soon. We believe in transparency and through practicing it religiously, we will prove that we are a pro-people government," she said.

Whatever the deal signed with the government of India is in the line and spirit of the election manifesto of Awami League.

Dipu Moni said this while addressing a roundtable on State visit by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to India, organised by The Independent and the Centre for Foreign Affairs Studies in the capital.

Death anniversary

METRO DESK

Today is the 49th death anniversary of Barrister Ahmed Ali Khan, eldest son of late K h a n Bahadur Dr Asdar Ali Khan of Bahadur, Sylhet, says a press release.

Relatives and admirers are requested to pray for peace of his departed soul.

Dr MASikder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 10th death anniversary of Dr M A S i k d e r, father of Dr MA Hasan, convener of War Crime Facts Finding Committee, says a press release.

On the occasion, special prayer session will be held at his residence in Barisal.

His family members requested all to pray for him.

Govt moves to curb smuggling syndicates

UNB, Dhaka

Home Minister Sahara Khatun yesterday said the government is searching out the godfathers in the smuggling syndicates from a list to root out the crime.

"We have got a list of godfathers of smuggling gangs and we are trying to arrest the criminals as per the list," the home minister told reporters after a meeting of the Smuggling Prevention Committee at her ministry.

She also said detective agencies have been directed to make a list of smugglers, which would be sent to the law-enforcing forces to nab them.

Sahara said the government has not been able to arrest any of the godfathers though carriers of the contrabands have been caught.

"We will not only arrest the carriers of smuggling but also arrest the godfathers behind the smuggling to get rid of it like militancy and

terrorism," Sahara added.

State Minister for Home Shamsul Huq Tuku, who was present at the briefing, said a list of the godfathers of smuggling syndicates was under preparation.

About the statistics of arrests, Sahara said the country after the reinvestigation of many cases like the Chittagong arms haul, August 21 grenade attack and SAMS Kibria murder cases, she told the journalists.

"The smugglers holed up in and outside the country after the reinvestigation of many cases like the Chittagong arms haul, August 21 grenade attack and SAMS Kibria murder cases," she told the journalists.

Asked whether any steps taken for arrest of the terrorists hiding in India, the minister said the government would take all-out steps to rein them in.

"We can take assistance of Interpol to arrest the terrorists, if necessary," she added.

ICT for Dev Award to be launched today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Science and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and D.Net (Development Research Network) will launch 'e-Content and ICT for Development Award 2010' today.

The government has taken this initiative to recognise innovations in the ICT sector.

The inauguration will be held at Bangladesh Computer Council in the city.

The Daily Star and The Prothom Alo are media partners of the event.

Sources said the award will be given in 14 categories, including e-governance, e-health, e-education, games, entertainment, culture and heritage, science and technology, environment, business, livelihood, etc.

The winners of the national contest will then compete globally.

Citizens' rights fair begins tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A two-day Citizens' Rights Fair 2010 will begin at the Shilpakala Academy in the city tomorrow.

A total of 57 local and national development organisations are arranging the fair with a view to creating awareness among the citizens about their rights.

Former chief adviser Justice Muhammad Habibur Rahman is expected to inaugurate the fair.

The organisers said this at a press conference at the National Press Club yesterday.

"The fair seeks to address the general perception that all rights are not equal and establish that every Bangladeshi has the 'right to have rights' guaranteed by the constitution," Simeen Mahmud, lead researcher of the Brac Development Institute, said while reading out a written statement at the press conference.

The fair will focus on citizens' human rights, land rights, legal rights, women rights, rights of the indigenous people, workers' rights, child rights and environmental rights, the organisers said.

There will also be cultural events at the fair.

Nijera Kori, Ain O Salish Kendra, Brac, Media Nagarik Forum, Karmojibi Nari, Steps Towards Development and Brac Development Institute are leading the fair organising committee.

The organisers said the fair will be held at the divisional and district levels in the future.

It communiq   has nothing against country

Says Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Taking a swipe at opposition leader Khaleda Zia and her party's campaign about 'Sellout of Bangladesh' during the recent India visit, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday reassured the countrymen that nothing was done against the country during the tour.

"You read the joint communiq   and find out whether there is any anti-Bangladesh element in the communiq  ," the prime minister told Imams while addressing the inaugural session of a national conference of trained Imams at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

The prime minister directed the authorities concerned to give copy of the Bangladesh-India joint communiq   to every Imam present at the function.

Sheikh Hasina reminded that her father Bangabandhu led the Bangalee nation in attaining the independence.

"Then, how his daughter can sell out the motherland?" she posed the question in the rebuttal to the opposition leader's contentious remarks in which she also dismissed the Delhi trip as a 'total flop'.

"When we signed the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty with India, Khaleda Zia and her cohorts had campaigned

that oju (ablution) cannot be done with the water coming down through the Ganga. Now my question is -- do the Muslims in India not use the river water for their oju and other activities?" Hasina told the Imams.

She further deplored that the BNP-Jamaat lineup did not take any effective step for safeguarding Bangladesh's interests over maritime boundaries with India and Myanmar and about the construction of Tipaimukh dam.

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WEATHER

Mild cold wave may continue

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 24 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Prevailing mild cold wave over Rajshahi division and the regions of Comilla, Feni, Jessore and Chuadanga may continue, Met Office said.

Moderate to thick fog may occur over the country during the period.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, it said.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:37pm today and rises at 6:43am tomorrow.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 27.3 degree Celsius was recorded at Sylhet and the lowest of 8.5 degrees at Rajshahi.

The highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	24.3	13.5	76	65
Chittagong	23.7	14.6	94	71
Rajshahi	19.8	8.5	100	81
Khulna	21.7	12.4	94	84
Barisal	23.6	12.6	79	83
Sylhet	27.3	15.7	92	73
Cox's Bazar	23.2	15.5	92	80



Visiting Indonesian women parliamentarian Hema Hamengku Buwono speaks at a 'Meet the Press' at Liberation War Museum in the city yesterday. On her right is parliamentarian Hairiah and on her left is Dentry Eka Widi Pratiwi.

TODAY

- Roundtable**
The Daily Bhorer Kagoj organises a roundtable on Prime Minister's India visit. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:00pm.
- Seminar**
The GSMA organises a seminar on 'Achieving 2021-a Digital Age for Bangladesh'. Venue: Radisson Hotel. Time: 9:00am.
- Book launching**
The launching ceremony of a book titled 'The Unheard Truth: Poverty and Human Rights' by Irene Khan will be held. Venue: Brac Centre auditorium. Time: 11:00am.
- Memorial lecture**
Sultana Kamal will deliver Rokeya Memorial Lecture 2009. Venue: Dhaka University Senate Bhaban. Time: 3:00pm.

Police still hold control of Proshika head office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police still hold control of the Proshika head office although the High Court directed the law enforcers to hand over the office keys to its present chief executive officer.

The HC bench of justices Mohammad Momtazuddin Ahmed and Naïma Haider came up with the order on January 19 following a writ petition filed by Proshika Chief Executive Officer Mahbubul Karim.

"We shall act in line with the court order as soon as we receive an official copy of the order," said Lutfur Kabir, deputy commissioner (Mirpur Zone) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Petitioner's counsel barrister Maniruzzaman Asad told The Daily Star that as per the HC order, police have to hand over the office keys to his client within two days after receiving the order.

Upon Faruque's petition for revision, the HC in an order on August 11 last year said he could enter Proshika Bhaban alone to meet the present chairman and chief executive officer.

But around 20 to 25 men hired by Faruque broke into the office on January 11 midnight and took control of it.

Police drove them out of the office the next day and have kept it under control since then.

Karim filed a writ petition on January 17 seeking HC directives on the police to hand over the office keys to him.

The home secretary, inspector general of police, DMP commissioner, deputy commissioner (Mirpur zone), officer-in-charge of Pallabi Police Station and Qazi Faruque were made respondents in the writ petition.

Transport company blocks Dhaka-Mawa highway

A CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Transport company Ilish Paribahan put up a blockade on Dhaka-Mawa highway for one hour yesterday by keeping its buses haphazardly on Mawa crossing resulting in gridlock in the area.

Movement of transports, including trucks, to the southern region was hampered seriously when the road was blocked at 5:00pm.

Managing Director of Ilish Paribahan Ali Akbar alleged that Ismail Hossain, brother of DMP Commissioner AKM Shahidul Haque, had long been putting pressure on the company for taking one of his buses in its fleet on Jatrabari-Mawa route.

But the authorities of the company informed him of their limitation on the route and requested him to give his bus to the fleet of the company on Gulisthan-Mawa route.

Ali alleged that the proposal did not please Ismail and started pulling out the buses of Ilish Paribahan from Jatrabari with the help of police using wreckers.

He also alleged that Ismail forcibly ran a bus using the banner of Ilish Paribahan from Jatrabari counter and also tried to take out another bus with the help of police.

In an instant protest, Ilish Paribahan put up a barricade on the road at Jatrabari. As the news spread through cellphones, the buses of the company were kept haphazardly on Mawa crossing.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) Md Helal Uddin of Louhajang Police Station said the problem occurred as another person tried to run 10 buses under the banner of Ilish Paribahan.

The OC, however, said he does not know whether Ismail was a brother of the DMP commissioner.

Dy Mayor of Tower Hamlets meets Khaleda

UNB, Dhaka

Visiting Deputy Mayor of Tower Hamlets in London Lutfa Begum paid a courtesy call on BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan office in the city yesterday.

During the meeting, they discussed various socio-economic matters of both Bangladesh and the UK.

Lutfa Begum appreciated development of women education and their empowerment in Bangladesh during the rule of Khaleda Zia's government.

BNP chairperson's advisory council member Sabihuddin Ahmed and BNP Joint Secretary General Barrister Mahbubuddin Khokon were also present at the meeting.

WEIGHT MANIPULATION 2 edible oil companies fined Tk 6 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some popular edible oil companies were found involved in weight manipulation, which was unearthed by a combined team of Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institute (BSTI) and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) led by an executive magistrate yesterday.

The team penalised Bangladesh Edible Oil Ltd and Meghna Group of Industry Ltd Tk 3 lakh each on charges of weight manipulation while Tegal Electric House of Nawabpur Tk 75,000 on charge of producing fake electric cables.

Mohammad Lutfur Rahman Khan, director of BSTI, told The Daily Star that they received a number of complaints from consumers that the two reputed oil companies have been giving oil less than the weight mentioned on the container labels.

Responding to the complaints, the team, led by Executive Magistrate Mohammad Al-Amin, conducted raids at the store of Bangladesh Edible Oil at Tejgaon and found that each five-litre container of its brand 'Rupchanda' contains 70 millilitre oil less and tempering the label the retail price of the oil containers were raised.

Meghna Group of the same area was also found giving 50 millilitre oil less in each 5-litre jar of its 'Fresh' brand, he said, adding that labels of powdered milk, mastered oil and tea dusts of the brand did not bear retail prices.

Sheikh Tarikul Islam, in-charge of the depot of Bangladesh Edible Oil, said: "The mobile court used manual weighing scale that might not give accurate reading as it was also age-old and rusty."

Duta distributes warm clothes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) distributed warm clothes among the destitute living on the streets on Tuesday night, says a press release.

Representatives of the association distributed clothes on the DU campus, Nilkhet, Katabon, Shahbagh, Kakrail, New Market, Chankarpul, Azimpur, Shapla Chattar, Palashi, Motijheel, and North South Road area in the city.

Duta President Dr Khandaker Fazul Haque, Vice President Dr Shahid Akhter Hussain, Acting General Secretary Dr Abul Hasnat, Prof Dr Sadrul Amin, Prof Dr Md Akhteruzzaman, Md Lutfur Rahman and Dr Biman Chandra Barua were on the team.