

No decision yet on Kosovo recognition

Says Dipu Moni

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is yet to take any decision on the issue of recognition of an independent Kosovo, a Muslim-majority state in Europe, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni said yesterday.

"The status of Bangladesh on the question of recognition of Kosovo remain unchanged. Serbia went to international court on matters relating to Kosovo's independence. Bangladesh will take its decision on the recognition after the issue is settled in the court," she said.

Exchanging views with members of the Diplomatic Correspondents Association of Bangladesh (DCAB) at the foreign ministry, Dipu Moni said establishing diplomatic relations with Israel depends on the establishment of peace in the Middle East.

"Bangladesh is strongly in favour of establishing peace in the Middle East and we can review the issue of diplomatic relations with Israel only after establishment of an independent Palestine and peace in the Middle East," the foreign minister added.

Turning to her upcoming visit to Russia on May 20-21, Dipu Moni said Bangladesh will sign a framework agreement with Russia on setting up of a nuclear power plant and peaceful use of nuclear energy.

During the visit, she will hold meeting with her Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov and discuss several other issues such as cooperation in various sectors including defence, trade, education and culture.

Dipu Moni also said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to visit Russia by the end of this year or early next year and she (Dipu Moni) is going to Russia to prepare the ground for the PM's visit.

About the PM's visit to South Korea and Malaysia on May 16-21, Dipu Moni said there is possibility of signing several agreements with Korea.

Hasina will attend the World Islamic Economic Forum in Malaysia where she will also hold bilateral talks with her Malaysian counterpart, she added.

Dipu Moni will also go to Tajikistan to attend the OIC foreign ministers' conference on May 18-20.

PM blames BNP-Jamaat misrule, graft for state of emergency

Says dialogues to be held with parties concerned before formulating Vested Property Act

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has once again blamed massive corruption, misrule and intentions of vote rigging by the BNP-Jamaat alliance government behind the state of emergency imposed on January 11 in 2007.

She said this while speaking to the Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad leaders when they call on her at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) yesterday.

Hasina said the political history of Bangladesh is unique. She mentioned that except 2001, no government has been able to hand over power peacefully without incident.

"In 1996 we had to launch a movement against the BNP government as they were plotting to capture power through vote rigging. Later they held a voterless election in February 15, 1996. But people rejected them and they were compelled to resign and hand over power to a non-party caretaker government," she said.

Hasina also mentioned that in 2007, the BNP-Jamaat government again plotted to keep themselves in power through vote rigging and registration of fake voters.

"But again the people of the country foiled their conspiracy," she said.

She said the misdeeds of the BNP-Jamaat alliance led the country to go under emergency rule.

She said later the election came and AL led grand alliance won a landslide.

"When the people of the country got their chance to cast their vote freely, they voted AL to power," she said.



Leaders of Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad greet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with a bouquet at the Prime Minister's Office in the city yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

RELIGIOUS HARMONY

Hasina reaffirmed her government's commitment to religious harmony, and its willingness to ensure the coexistence of all religious people in country.

"People of all religions and races will live in the country with equal rights and perform their religious activities freely. We believe in this philosophy and will work to ensure it permeates our society," she told the Puja Udjapan Parishad leaders.

VESTED PROPERTY ACT

Regarding the demands from the Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad leaders, she said her government would hold dialogues with the parties concerned before formulating the Vested Property Act.

She asked the Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad leaders to provide a list of mandirs across the country and the condition of the properties with the mandirs.

She said the government has already approved a project in the Ecneec regarding the development of the Kantajir Mandir in Dinajpur.

She said the religious places and structures of the country, including mandirs, are related to the history of the country and these places are also good spots for developing tourism.

"These are related with our pride and history. We have to salvage these," she said.

She said the government will take necessary steps to renovate and reconstruct the main temples, including the Dhakeshwari and Ramna Kail Mandir.

Chief Patron of Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad Major General (ret) CR Dutta and President of Puja Udjapan Parishad Shawpan Kumar Saha spoke on the occasion.



Police chase the garment workers at Mirpur 12 in the city yesterday when they were demonstrating for salary.

PHOTO: STAR

CCC MAYORAL ELECTIONS

Mohiuddin, 10 others collect nomination forms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury collected nomination forms from the district election office yesterday to contest the CCC elections scheduled for June 17.

In the last two days, a total of 11 prospective candidates collected nomination forms for the mayoral post, 211 for 41 posts of ward councillor and 35 others for 14 seats reserved for women.

Mayor Mohiuddin, also president of Chittagong city Awami League, arrived at the election office at Jamal Khan at around 3:00pm by a microbus and received the form from a returning officer.

The mayor also submitted an application to the returning officer, seeking 'lantern' (hurricane lamp) as his election symbol. He won the last three consecutive mayoral elections with this election symbol.

However, Returning Officer Jasmine Tuli said, "Since there is no 'hurricane lamp' on the list of symbols for city corporation elections this time, there is no scope for us to consider the appeal."

Both 'hurricane lamp' and 'bicycle' were dropped from the list of symbols for the CCC elections, as they are being used in the parliamentary elections by Muslim League and Jatiya Party (Manju) respectively, said sources in

the election office.

City AL General Secretary Enamul Haque Danu, Joint Secretary Ibrahim Hossain Babul, MA Rashid and some other leaders and activists accompanied Mayor Mohiuddin during the collection of the form.

Emerging from the Election Office, Mayor Mohiuddin told reporters that if elected, he would work towards building Chittagong as a developed city and ensuring welfare of the nation.

About other candidates from the rival faction of his party, Mohiuddin said he sees no problem in anyone seeking to be candidate, but everyone will have to abide by the party decision.

The other mayoral candidates who collected forms yesterday are city AL organising secretary Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Jatiya Party Chittagong city convener Solaiman Alam Sheth, Afaz Ullah Khan, Jane Alam, Mohammad Ibrahim and Swarup Kumar Dutta.

Meanwhile, Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) started setting up check-posts at different points of the city to maintain law and order in the run-up to the election.

CMP Deputy Commissioner (North) Banaj Kumar Majumder said the police searched vehicles and people at around 100 points of the city yesterday and a number of mobile teams have been deployed in this regard.

Charge framed against DCC engineer

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charge against Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) Superintendent Engineer Mohammad Faruk Aziz in connection with a case filed against him for brandishing a firearm at his boss in September last year.

Faruk Aziz pleaded not guilty and demanded justice before the court after Metropolitan Magistrate Shamima Parveen read out the charge to him.

The court fixed July 6 for trial of the case and summoned complainant to appear before it on the scheduled date.

Rapid Action Battalion arrested Faruk Aziz from Sheikherk, Mohammadpur on September 29 last year after the DCC chief engineer's staff officer filed a general diary with Shahbagh Police Station the same day in this regard.

SSC results tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

Results of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) examinations will be published tomorrow.

Examinees have been advised to collect results from their respective educational institutions, or from the website of the education board.

The results of SSC, SSC (vocational) and Dakhil examinations will be published simultaneously at 4:00pm.

The results will also be available on website. www.educationboard.org.bd <<http://www.educationboard.org.bd>>

SWADHINATA STAMBHA Engr Mosharraf, 6 others discharged from graft case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday discharged former housing and public works minister Engineer Mosharraf Hossain, also an Awami League leader, and six others from a corruption case filed against them in February 2002.

Judge Mohammad Abdul Majid of the Special Court for Dhaka Division passed the order saying that the accused are discharged as there is no sufficient element of framing charges against them.

The other accused are former public works secretary Jagannath Dey, former chief engineer AKM Mukitir Rahman, former project director AKM Shahiduzzaman, former additional chief engineers Badrey Ibriz and Mokarram Bari and former superintendent engineer Akhter Kamal.

All the seven accused were present during the hearing of the case yesterday.

The case was filed against them with Ramna Police Station on February 3, 2002 on charges of causing a loss of Tk2,40,72,000 to the government in the name of construction of Swadhinata Stambha at Suhrawardy Udyan by abusing power.

The investigation officer pressed charges against them on January 22, 2003. But the case was stayed following an order from the High Court.

No gas crisis after 2016: JS body

RASHIDUL HASAN

Equipped with new machinery and investment, Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Limited is implementing a series of programmes to produce gas up to 1,000 million cubic feet per day (mmcf) by 2016, a parliamentary body said yesterday.

The parliamentary standing committee on public undertakings said there will be no gas crisis after 2016 as the said amount of gas is equivalent to half of the country's present production.

"Bapex is set to produce 70 mmcf of gas by December, 500 mmcf gas by 2012 and 1,000 mmcf by 2016," ABM Ghulam Mustafa, chief of the committee, told reporters after a meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Mustafa, also a ruling Awami League lawmaker, said Bapex itself will be able to explore new gas fields once two drilling rigs reach Dhaka by July.

The parliamentary watchdog asked Bapex to renovate

wells in different gas fields to enhance its effectiveness.

Bapex high officials informed the committee that without any foreign company's assistance, Bapex is engaged to explore gas at different prospective fields including Kapasia, Sikail, Sundarpur, Mobarokpur and Shahajadpur.

"We want Bapex become self-sufficient in exploring and producing gas," Mustafa said.

On stopping wastage of gas, the committee recommended quick installation of gas meters and introduction of a monitoring system.

It also asked the authorities concerned to discourage import of stones for construction to save foreign currency and recommended using high quality local stones.

The committee also asked the Islamic Foundation to start a campaign in favour of the government's move to try the war criminals.

The committee said the war criminals gave wrong explanation of Islam and committed heinous crimes against humanity during Liberation War in 1971.

SC upholds HC bail to Afroza Abbas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday upheld the High Court orders that granted bail to Afroza Abbas, wife of former housing and public works minister Mirza Abbas, in two tax evasion cases, in which she was earlier tried in absentia and sentenced to 16 years in prison.

The six-member Appellate Division bench headed by Chief Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim passed the order after dismissing two appeals filed by the government against the HC orders.

The High Court on April 29 this year granted bail to Afroza in these two cases.

Afroza's lawyer Ahsanul Karim told The Daily Star that there is now no bar to his client's release from jail following the SC order.

The Special Court-2 of Judge Amar Kumar Roy on April 11 this year sent Afroza to jail after she surrendered before the court in connection with the cases.

The same court on September 2, 2007, sentenced her to 16 years in jail and fined Tk 4.92 crore in the cases on charge of concealing information about wealth and providing false information in the tax return.

Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

HABIDI'S 8TH DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Today, the 14th of May, is the 8th death anniversary of our only daughter **Fatima (Habidi) Rahman**. Our beloved Habidi passed away on this day in 2002 at St. Mary's Hospital in London. Habidi is no longer with us but her sweet memories remain in our hearts for ever.

On this day, the 8th death anniversary of Habidi, relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to pray for the eternal peace of her departed soul.

• MAHMUDA AND ANSAR RAHMAN •



PHOTO: STAR

Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury collects nomination forms from the district election office in the port city of Chittagong yesterday.

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