

Saarc visa

FROM PAGE 20
which selected journalists, business persons and sports persons can be given long-term multi-entry visas after prior clearance.

People from 19 other categories, including members of parliament, diplomats and non-government people involved in Saarc projects, will get Saarc visa stickers from the respective foreign ministries exempting them from visa requirements, said media reports here.

A meeting of Saarc foreign ministers in Thimpu, Bhutan, also endorsed India's proposal for setting up a Saarc Forum, a grouping of non-government officials, which will act as a pressure group on governments to enhance the integration.

The visa stickers would ensure that their travel is not limited to any specific cities and would save them from hassles like police reporting and filling up extra forms on entry in any of the eight Saarc countries -- Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The issuance of visa stickers would fall under the discretion of the foreign ministries, they said.

Saarc member countries also agreed on various steps concerning the Saarc University in Delhi, early convening of the governing board meeting, which has been delayed for long and as a result of which several

PM offers

FROM PAGE 20
information. But I refrain from telling those as an investigation is going on," Hasina said.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith said he has learnt about transactions that have taken place. So, it is possible to identify who were behind the share market plunge.

"I admitted that I made wrong decisions. I am also responsible for the mistakes Bangladesh Bank, and Securities and Exchange Commission do."

He said it was his fault to allow banks to convert the face value of their shares to Tk10 each.

From now on, the face value of every new share of any company will be Tk10. But no one will play the roles of both share market broker and issuer.

Every one will work separately, said the finance minister.

He said the government is determined to separate the field of work of brokers, issuers and investors in the share market. The government will set up a national stock exchange, if necessary, to achieve the goal.

In response to lawmakers' queries, the premier said the market was stable in the initial period of her government, but the general index shot up abnormally at one stage due to stock manipulation.

Referring to Tuesday's agitation for the share market crash, the premier asked how a section of agitators got to know in advance that the index was going to fall within 15 minutes of transaction.

"The market was rising...then suddenly fell. Some agitators took to the streets with banners inscribed with their demand for resignation of the finance minister and burnt his effigy."

"How did they make the banners and effigy in such a short time?"

Hasina advised the investors not to panic for the share market fall as the index will rise again.

The finance minister echoed Hasina's comments about Tuesday's agitation.

He said it is right that the share market collapses whenever Awami League comes to power as it allows the market to function, which other governments did not do.

And the market will improve if functions.

Muhith said the past governments did not want to end the culture of loan default but the present government wants to do so. The functioning of the stockmarket can spawn changes in the loan default culture.

He said he strove to bring government companies' shares in the market, but he did not succeed in the last one and a half years. "I have no hesitation to admit that I have failed to do it."

crucial decisions have been pending.

The president of the university will be selected from India. The Indian government will nominate three eminent persons among whom one will be chosen by the governing board.

The meeting also approved India's proposal for setting up the South Asian Forum. The steering committee set up for the purpose will meet in April to take the proposal forward.

In the field of trade, the council of ministers decided that South Asian Free Trade Area (Safat) ministerial meeting will take place in the Maldives in May to consider ways to enhance intra-regional commerce.

Withdraw

FROM PAGE 20
ensured," he said while addressing a discussion at the Jatiya Press Club organised by Trust Media Ltd.

Meanwhile, BNP lawmakers are set to stage a sit-in in front of the Speakers' Office at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban today to protest police action on them during Monday's hartal.

The one-hour sit-in will begin at 3:00pm and a memorandum will be submitted before the speaker of the House during the programme.

Bitterly criticising the government for increasing the prices of electricity, Delwar said many industries will be forced to shut down and price of industrial products will spiral up.

"The government has created opportunities for its party men to amass money in the name of setting up rental power plants and now they are increasing the prices of power to serve the party men," alleged Delwar.

The government also obstructed the opposition party's demonstration, which was observed yesterday across the country, he added.

Shafiqul Alam Prodan, president of Jatiya Ganotantrik Party (Jagpa), and Nazimuddin Alam, BNP's former lawmaker, were present among others.

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EC to sue

FROM PAGE 20
Speaker seeking action against him, an EC press release said yesterday.

"Lawmaker Abdur Rahman from Ukhia-Teknaf constituency had assaulted executive magistrate Abdur Rahman while discharging his duties during the municipal elections in Teknaf. The Election Commission has decided to inform the Speaker about it," reads the press release.

The EC also asked the magistrate to file a case against Bodi with the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court in Cox's Bazar.

According to newspaper reports, the AL lawmaker on January 15 attended an election rally of his uncle Mohammad Islam, who was backed by AL as mayoral candidate for Teknaf municipality.

Bodi allegedly beat the magistrate as he and Upazila Election Officer Jainal Abedin went to visit the area to monitor law and order.

In 2009, Bodi had allegedly assaulted three election officials, the presiding officer and two assistant presiding officers, in two polling centres in Teknaf upazilla during the upazilla elections on January 22 that year.

US lawmakers threaten Pakistan aid on detention

AFP, Washington

US lawmakers threatened Tuesday to cut aid to Pakistan unless it freed an American detained over a shadowy shooting, as Washington intensified pressure on its uneasy war partner.

The United States has already warned that high-level dialogue would be at risk unless Pakistan releases US government employee Raymond Davis, who said he was acting in self-defense when he shot dead two men in Lahore last month.

Outlaw killed in 'shootout'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A regional commander of Purbal Banglar Communist Party (Lal Pataka) was killed in a 'shootout' between his cohorts and law enforcers at Chatmohor upazila of Pabna early yesterday.

The deceased, Md Azibor Rahman, 35, of Falia in Aitakula upazila of the district, was accused in six cases including two for murder, police sources said.

A police team raided Megharpara village at about 3:30am following a tip-off that two factions of BPCP were locked in a gunfight there, said Syed Shahid Alam, officer-in-charge of Chatmohor Police Station.

Sensing presence of the law enforcers, the outlaws opened fire on them starting a 40-minute 'gunfight' between the criminals and police.

At one stage, the outlaws fled the scene. Police later found Azibor's bullet-hit body lying on the ground, said the OC.

The law enforcers recovered a revolver and two bullets from the spot.

This was the third incident of 'shootout' in the district this month.

Four held

FROM PAGE 20
also recovered 85 tolas of the gold ornaments from "Al Mecca Jewelers" at Sonali Market in Tongi and arrested its owner Rasheedul Islam Milon.

Milon had distorted most of the ornaments but some could be identified by its owners, police said.

The other arrestees are: Lal Miah, 28, from Kalyanpur, Masud Hawladar, 23, from Paikpara of Mirpur and Md Faruk, 25, from Joydevpur.

They were arrested several times before but repeatedly managed to get out on bail, said frustrated Deputy Commissioner Mahbubur Rahman at a press briefing at DB headquarters yesterday.

The same gang was also involved in the robbery at the home of former Naval Chief Amir Ahmed Mostafa in DOHS in June last year, he said at the press briefing at his Minto Road office.

Lal Miah confessed to his involvement in the robberies and said six other members of the gang, Bellal, Saiful, Roni, Masud, Faruque and Selim, also took part in the heists.

On January 9, their ringleader Belal and driver Masud were waiting outside as they cut through the iron bars of the windows to get into Dipti's house in Pallabi.

On January 12, the same gang robbed Ali Newaz's home by entering through the back door of the two-storey building in Malibagh, he said.

After the robbery, Belal and Saiful sold 30-tola gold to Milon who instantly changed the designs of the ornaments, he said.

Police arrested ringleader Belal earlier in a robbery case in Chittagong and he would be accused in this case, Mahbubur Rahman said at the briefing.

HC summons

FROM PAGE 20
against incidents of rape and stalking.

In a suo moto move, the HC bench of Justice AHM Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik and Justice Sheikh Md Zakir Hossain passed the orders following reports run in different dailies recently.

Deputy Attorney General ABM Altaf Hossain told The Daily Star that the OC of Kurigram Police Station has to appear before the court on February 15, and the OCs of Pabna Police Station and Hajiganj Police Station of Chandpur have to appear on February 22.

According to the report published by Bangla daily Jugantor on February 7, police did not accept an FIR (First Information Report) after a girl, a class seven student of Maleka Khatun Girls High School under Ghogadaha Union Parishad, was raped.

The report said the girl had committed suicide on February 6 after her rape on January 27 and subsequent humiliation.

Bangla daily Prothom Alo published two reports on rape and stalking of two more girls.

Lawyers Seema Zahur and Sheikh Ali Hamed Khokon yesterday placed the newspaper reports before the HC bench for necessary orders.

DU students

FROM PAGE 1
demonstrate, stated the case for Bangla in unequivocal terms and were patently a portent of what might come to pass if the legitimate demands of Pakistan's Bangalee population were ignored.

The following are excerpts from the letter, which was signed by an individual acting as the convenor of the committee:

"We, the students of Dhaka University, who initiated the language movement in East Pakistan three years ago (and) who are now more determined than ever to secure for Bengali the status of State language of Pakistan, will take this opportunity, while you are assembled at Karachi, to press once more our legitimate claim..."

We refuse to believe that any language under heaven can be Islamic or Christian or heathen. If Urdu is Islamic, Bengali is equally so. Nay, it is more Islamic as a larger number of Muslims speak Bangla..."

The letter went to claim that an adoption of Urdu as the only state language would 'create a privileged class as English did and thus lead to the exploitation of the many by the few, nourish disaffection among Pakistanis in general and Bengalis in particular; and it will strike at the root of national integrity without

Wrong law

FROM PAGE 1
against Tarique and his business partner Giasuddin Al Mamun under the Money Laundering Prevention Act 2009, on charges of illegally sending Tk 20.41 crore to Singapore between 2003 and 2007.

The Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice ABM Khairul Haque came up with the ruling after disposing of a leave-to-appeal petition filed by Tarique against a High Court (HC) order.

The HC on September 29 last rejected a writ petition of Tarique, which challenged the legality of proceedings against him in the money laundering case.

ACC's principal lawyer advocate Anisul Huq told reporters that he would not advise his client to run the case against Tarique Rahman until he receives a copy of the apex court verdict.

ACC Chairman Ghulam Rahman told The Daily Star there is no problem to run the case against Tarique Rahman following the SC verdict, as there is scope for the ACC to proceed with the case according to the law concerned.

He said his office would take next course of action over the case after getting the full text of the verdict.

Barrister Rafique-ul Huq and advocate Ahsanul Karim appeared for Tarique, while Attorney General Mahbubey Alam argued for the government, and advocate Khurshid Alam Khan for the ACC.

'Heavy wounds'

FROM PAGE 1
Acting on a tip-off, Shariatpur police arrested Mahbub around 11:00am, Shahidur Rahman, Shariatpur superintendent of police said when contacted.

"We will produce him before court tomorrow (Thursday)," the SP added.

The HC bench had earlier issued a suo moto rule on the authorities for a fresh autopsy of the victim's body.

The court said there is a vast difference between the DMCH autopsy report and the one made earlier by Shariatpur Sadar Hospital. It however did not disclose details of the reports.

According to Shariatpur hospital's report, there was no injury on Hena's body.

The HC received it on February 7.

Both the autopsy reports cannot be true. One report must be true and another must be untrue, court told Deputy Attorney General ABM Altaf Hossain after the Supreme Court Registrar's office placed the DMCH report before it.

The HC yesterday asked Hena's father Darbesh Khan

which there is no future for our country."

The closing words of the letter sum up the energy that had already come into the movement in favour of Bangla and that was surely a sign of where Pakistan was headed as a country on the issue of language:

"We the students of Dhaka University, claiming the immediate implementation of the provincial policy in the matter of language and demanding Bengali to be the state language of Pakistan have given a tough fight and are prepared to fight to the last. We shall never accept Urdu as the only state language. We are sworn to expose the great conspiracy which aims at reducing East Pakistan to the state of a colony. We remind them and the people's representatives who are at the helm of affairs that until and unless the claim of Bengali is fully established in the province as well as the Centre, the students of Dhaka University shall not rest."

BPC chief

FROM PAGE 1
"It is someone else from my office who issued the letter," Karim told The Daily Star yesterday claiming, he cancelled the rationing order once he came to know about it.

Earlier he had asked for strict monitoring of diesel supply since its demand shot up unusually, noted the official.

The demand for diesel was 3.34 lakh tonnes in January this year against 2.51 lakh tonnes of the same time last year. The demand also went high by 13,000 tonnes in the first eight days of February compared to the same period last year, mentioned Karim.

Sources in BPC said there is no shortfall of diesel in the country.

"We didn't tell anyone to cut or ration supply," said a ministry official.

The ministry has asked all concerned to remain alert about smuggling of diesel out of the country, he added.

President of Petrol Pump Owners' Association Nazmul Haq said they were stunned by the supply cut when demand of diesel was increasing due to Boro season and power shortage.

The government can't cut supply for checking smuggling, he observed adding, it is the government's responsibility to stop smuggling.

He also noted normal supply has been restored from Tuesday.

The energy ministry has formed a four-member committee to ensure smooth supply of diesel during Boro season. Abu Hanif, general manager (marketing) of BPC, has been made the committee chief.

Following request of the energy ministry, the home ministry ordered deputy commissioners of bordering districts to check smuggling of diesel.

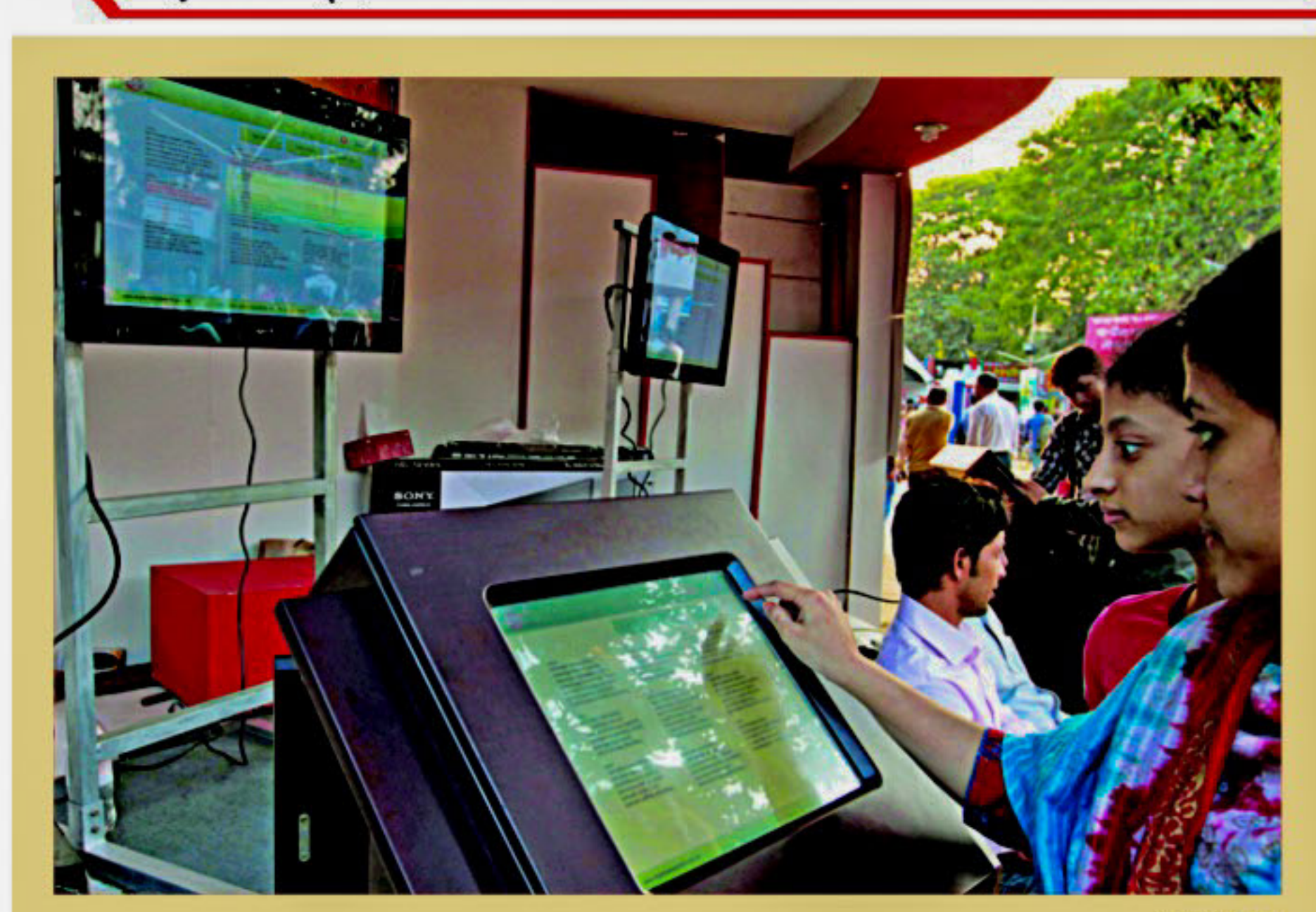
and her cousin Minu Begum to appear before it this morning for giving their statements.

It also ordered the local administration of Shariatpur to arrange conveyance of Darbesh and Minu.

On February 7, the bench summoned eight persons to appear before it at 10:30am today. They include the officer-in-charge of Noria Police Station, Sub-inspector Aslam Uddin, who prepared the inquest report; doctors Nirmal Chandra Das, Rajesh Majumder, and Hosne Ara Begum, who prepared the first post-mortem report; Sultan Ahmed and a senior nurse, who attended Hena; and arbitrator Idris Sheikh, local union parishad member.

The body of Hena was exhumed on Monday night for the fresh post-mortem in compliance with an HC order.

The Daily Star had earlier reported that the police inquest and first autopsy found no mark of injury on Hena's body.



People use the e-information system to learn about new books, writers and even their prices at Amara Ekushey Boi Mela yesterday.

e-information centre attracts young readers

RAKIB AHAMMED

Raisul Islam Mithun, a student of city's East West University, was seen happily browsing through the computers at the e-information centre of the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela looking for information about his favourite writer.

"The system is very interesting and helpful," he said, adding, "I found information on Humayun Ahmed's latest title very easily".

Two large monitors of the information centre and its operators assist bookworms everyday to obtain profiles and rare photographs of celebrated writers in Bangla literature as well as historical facts related to the academy.

The centre has been set up on the

Bangla Academy premises for the very first time this year as a part of the programme- Access to Information under the Prime Minister's Office.

Visitors can access information on new books arriving at the fair everyday, along with its publication houses and price simply by tapping on the touch screen monitors and do not need not to take help from the information centre of the academy.

Mohammad Sohel Rana, an operator of the centre, said their aim is to help visitors to gather all kinds of information about the book and the academy.

"We are getting an impressive response as hundreds of visitors are using the facilities daily," he said.

India lifts

FROM PAGE 20
Corporation of India," Razaque said.

India had allowed export of non-basmati rice to Bangladesh in August 2010 despite a ban on exports.

Although the Indian government now fights a food inflation of over 17 percent, an Empowered Group of Ministers (EGOM) decided to allow exports up to 1.50 lakh tonnes of select varieties.

The three varieties exempted from export ban are Ponni Samba, Rosematta and Sonam Masuri grown in the southern states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

"Adequate quantities are there in these states," Commerce and Industry Minister Anand Sharma told reporters after the EGOM meeting. For rest of the varieties, the export ban continues, Sharma said.

Buoyed by bumper production estimates this year, Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar favoured export of certain commodities like non-basmati rice, sugar and onion to protect the interests of farmers.

Citing the case of onion, Pawar said farmers, who were crying over crashing onion prices, should be helped to recover the cultivation cost and for that "if limited export is allowed... I think that will resolve the farmers' problem."

"A situation may arise that onion export could be allowed with some cap on quantity," Pawar said.

Asked if the government will permit sugar export, he said "let the commerce ministry and others assess the situation. One has to see how we will be able to protect the interest of our own consumers first and after that if there is surplus availability, then one can think [of export]."

He said the international market was favourable for sugar export.

Sedan venture

FROM PAGE 1
spent on imports," said the company president.

He cited the example of Hyundai Motor, a Korean automaker, that has become a global player due to transfer of technology by Mitsubishi Motors.

"It took 39 years to transfer the technology to Hyundai. If we start here today it will take at least 10-15 years to do that," said Masuko.

He believes that Bangladesh has a lot of potential in the automobile sector with its huge number of educated young people.

JS body decides

FROM PAGE 1
rule brought to the constitution, except a few including introduction of the Supreme Judicial Council.

Talking to The Daily Star after the briefing, Suranjit said the committee will now propose to reinstate the original article 96 returning the authority to the parliament.

Law Minister Shafique Ahmed said the articles that had been either repealed or amended by martial law proclamations automatically got reinstated after the cancellation of the Fifth Amendment. However, those articles will nonetheless be placed before the House for its consideration for incorporating them in the constitution amendment bill.

"The parliament has the authority to bring changes to the constitution. Therefore, if the House deems fit, it may bring further changes to those articles," added the law minister.

During the first martial law regime that began after August 15, 1975 changeover, the constitution was frequently amended through martial law proclamations.

The second parliament dominated by BNP -- floated by the then military ruler Ziaur Rahman -- passed the Fifth Amendment Act ratifying all those amendments, modifications, substitutions, omissions and additions to the constitution made indiscriminately.

The High Court on August 29, 2005 in a watershed verdict declared the Fifth Amendment illegal and void saying it undermined the supremacy of the constitution and destroyed some of its basic structures.

The HC also said the articles and clauses that had been amended or repealed would be reinstated.

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court last year upheld the landmark HC verdict with "modifications" and "observations". It released the copy of the full verdict at the end of July last year.

But after release of the copy of the full verdict, a debate was raised whether the articles will automatically be reinstated in the constitution or the parliament will have to pass a constitution amendment

bill to that effect. The parliamentary special body also got engaged in the debate, and many of its members preferred passing of a bill by the parliament.

Amid the brewing debate, Chief Justice Khairul Haque on September 30 last year said those articles had automatically been reinstated after the cancellation of the Fifth Amendment and urged the law ministry to print copies of the constitution afresh with the reinstated articles.

Similarly, changes that were incorporated into the constitution through martial law proclamations and ratified by the Fifth Amendment would also be dropped from the country's supreme charter.

In the press briefing at the parliament's media centre, Suranjit said the law minister informed the committee yesterday that his ministry will be able to provide the committee members with the newly printed copies of the constitution by February 14.

The parliamentary watchdog will hold its next meeting on February 15 to examine the new "draft" and the existing constitution thoroughly for inclusion and deletion, added Suranjit.

Asked about the meeting with the prime minister, Suranjit, also the chief of the parliamentary standing committee on the law ministry, said they exchanged views with the premier and opined for bringing necessary amendments in the light of the spirit of the constitution of 1972, and also the Supreme Court verdict.

He said they discussed the preamble of the constitution in yesterday's meeting and decided to restore the original preamble of the constitution of 1972.

Meeting sources said Rashed Khan Menon, chief of Workers Party, wanted to know about the fate of Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim inscribed above the preamble. He said the original constitution of 1972 did not have it.

Committee members belonging to ruling Awami League however said it is not possible to omit Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim in the changing political situation, a meeting source said.

PHOTO: STAR