

CG can hold

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journalists at the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat.

Talking on the Awami League's proposal to limit the tenure of the CG to 90 days, the election office chief said, "The Election Commission will comply with anything that comes in the form of law. There is no scope for us to violate the law."

The correct voters list prepared by the EC would allow holding any election within a short notice, he said, adding that the list will just be needed to be updated before the polls.

On ending of the commission's tenure in February next year, the CEC said, "Everything remains prepared for the next commission. The Election Commission will be reconstituted at least one year before 10th parliamentary elections. We don't know how that commission will be. But we believe it will be able to hold any election within a short notice," Shamsul Huda said.

The present EC was formed during Fakhruddin Ahmed-led caretaker government. The CG held the ninth parliamentary elections about two years after its taking office instead of 90 days due to a flawed voters list.

The commission took one and half years to prepare the voters list with photographs with consent of all the political parties.

Intellectuals

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briefing at the Parliament's Media Centre said the committee will sit with the country's senior journalists next Tuesday and with the intellectuals on Wednesday.

He said the committee will also have the opinions of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) in writing and consider their proposals. The committee cannot invite the CPB leaders for talks as they do not have representation in parliament, he said.

The CPB is an old political party. The committee will respect its opinions. The committee will receive the proposals it should like to offer in writing, he said.

Relying to a query, Suranjit said the committee is ready to sit with the BNP leaders if the latter want to place their proposals reconsidering their present stance.

Leader of the Opposition and BNP chief Khaleda Zia was invited to the talks Monday, but she spurned it terming the invitation "conspiratorial".

About the ruling Awami League's proposals placed before the special committee, Suranjit said the committee will consider the proposals with due importance.

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina in the talks with the special committee Wednesday proposed a set of changes to the constitution including one for strictly limiting the caretaker government's tenure to 90 days.

Suranjit said on completion of consultation, the special committee will review all proposals and prepares its report.

Pollution

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Munir Chowdhury, director (Monitoring and Enforcement), also halted the activities of Index Constructions Ltd and Microcreed Centre for illegally filling up the river-banks of Brahmaputra in Narsingdi.

The team fined Minan Steel Industries and New Dhaka Moulding International in Fatullah Tk 7.5 lakh for releasing toxic fumes and polluting the air in the area.

The two factories were ordered to set up smock extraction systems within 15 days.

Meanwhile, K T Textile Ltd in Narsingdi was fined Tk 13.44 lakh for discharging toxic waste in the river Brahmaputra. The DoE ordered the factory owner to set up an effluent treatment plant (ETP) within June 30.

Huji boss

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remand for interrogation in connection with the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League rally in 2004.

Metropolitan Magistrate Keshab Roy Chowdhury passed the order after the Criminal Investigation Department's (CID) Special Superintendent of Police Abdul Karim Akand, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case filed under the Explosive Substances Act, produced him before it with a 10-day remand prayer.

In the prayer, the IO mentioned that Huji chief Mufti Abdul Hannan in a confessional statement given on April 7 said Farid was involved with the 2004 grenade attack.

Farid was also involved in Ramna Batamul blast on April 14, 2001, the IO said.

So, he needs to be remanded to find out whereabouts of the attackers on the AL rally, he added.

Farid, also known as Shawkat Osman, was arrested in Tongi Railway Station area on Tuesday.

Farid was also shown arrested in the case filed for bombing bombs on a rally of Communist Party of Bangladesh on Paltan Maidan on January 20 of 2001.

CID Inspector Mirnal Kanti Saha, also the IO of the

case, prayed for a ten-day remand for him, but the court did not pass any order on the prayer.

Meanwhile, another Huji man Maolana Sabbir Ahmed alias Abdul Hannan, was shown arrested in the same case.

CID also prayed for his ten-day remand but the court did not hear the prayer as Sabbir is now on remand in another case filed under the Anti-Terrorism Act with Keraniganj Police Station.

The same court yesterday sent two former National Security Intelligence directors general Maj Gen (retd) Rezaq Haider Chowdhury and Brig Gen (retd) M Abdur Rahim to jail on completion of their four-day remand in second phase in connection with the case.

Meanwhile, Huji Chief Mufti Abdul Hannan and one of his accomplices Abu Zandal were sent to jail after CID produced them before the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Ismail Hossain on completion of their one-day remand in Dr Azizur Rahman abduction case.

They were earlier remanded on several days in the same case filed on September 23, 2003.

Royal wedding

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says the invitation for the Syrian ambassador in London has been withdrawn following reports that up to 400 pro-democracy protesters have been killed in Syria by security forces in recent weeks.

A Foreign Office statement said: "Buckingham Palace shares the view of the Foreign Office that it is not considered appropriate for the Syrian ambassador to attend the wedding."

Miss Middleton has taken part in her last rehearsal at Westminster Abbey, with best man Prince Harry, the bridesmaids and pageboys.

In their official wedding programme released yesterday, William and Kate's message reads: "We are both so delighted that you are able to join us in celebrating what we hope will be one of the happiest days of our lives."

The affection shown to us by so many people during our engagement has been incredibly moving, and has touched us both deeply.

"We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone most sincerely for their kindness."

MUSIC CHOICES

Details of the order of service have been released on the eve of the wedding.

The bride will walk up the aisle to a coronation anthem I Was Glad by Sir Charles Hubert Hastings Parry from Psalm 122.

It was composed for the crowning of Prince William's great-great-great grandfather Edward VII at Westminster Abbey in 1902.

The couple have chosen to use the Series One (1966) Book of Common Prayer.

Classical compositions by Elgar, Britten and Vaughan Williams will feature during the ceremony, alongside the hymn Jerusalem and the English melody Greensleeves.

St James's Palace said many of the "stunning" pieces were chosen by the royal couple for their "theatre".

The Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall, Prince Harry and Kate's parents Carole and Michael Middleton, sister Pippa and

brother James will all act as witnesses and sign the marriage registers.

Kate's brother James Middleton will give The Lesson, reading Romans 12: 1-2, 9-18.

On the day, a carriage procession will pass along The Mall, Horse Guards Road, Horse Guards Parade, through Horse Guards Arch, along Whitehall, along the south side of Parliament Square and into Broad Sanctuary.

William was due to spend yesterday evening with the Prince of Wales, Duchess of Cornwall and Harry, while Miss Middleton and her family will gather at the Goring Hotel, in Belgravia.

ROYAL RECEPTION

The Queen is hosting an event for British and foreign royals at the Mandarin Oriental hotel, near Hyde Park, in central London.

Among those thought to be attending are the Duke of York and his daughters Princesses Beatrice and Eugenie, the Earl and Countess of Wessex, the Princess Royal and Zara Phillips with her fiance, England rugby player Mike Tindall.

The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall are expected to attend the reception before returning to Clarence House for their private dinner.

Karnaphuli

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Besides, a 2615 metre-long road and a 400-metre jetty would be built along the left bank of the river stretching from Sadarghat to 2.6 km of the river upstream, said Project Director Khademul Bashar.

Sources said building of illegal structures along the river bank, disposal of city's waste through different canals, construction of Shah Amanat Bridge in the river upstream in 1991 worsened the navigability.

Massive siltation in the river upstream posed a threat to the movement of inland water transports.

With the decreasing navigability of Karnaphuli, it has become difficult for lighter vessels to access the lighterage jetties in the river upstream," said Abul Bashar Chowdhury, chairman of BSM Group, one of the leading importers of essential commodities.

He hoped the situation would improve after completion of the dredging.

Chairman of Chittagong Port Authority Commodore M Anwarul Islam and MMDC Corporate Director Dato HJ Abdul Rahman HJ Mohd Nur signed the deal on behalf of the respective sides.

Chittagong City Corporation (CPA) Mayor M Monjurul Alam, former mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, Awami League and senior officials of CPA were present at the agreement signing ceremony held at the CPA training centre.

Meanwhile, K T Textile Ltd in Narsingdi was fined Tk 13.44 lakh for discharging toxic waste in the river Brahmaputra. The DoE ordered the factory owner to set up an effluent treatment plant (ETP) within June 30.

Principal Secretary to the PM M A Karim and Secretary to the PM's Office Molla Wahiduzzaman were, among others, present on the occasion.

Investigate

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Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, acting secretary general of BNP, at a press briefing at party's central office in the capital.

He alleged that Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, standing committee member of the party, was brutally tortured several times by the law enforcers and jail authorities since his arrest on December 16, 2010.

Condemning the incident, Alamgir asked the government to launch a probe and identify those responsible for the torture of Chowdhury after his arrest.

Former state ministers Lutfuzzaman Babar and ANM Ehsanul Haque Milon, deputy minister Abdus Salam Pintu and former lawmaker Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu are still behind bars and facing torture in custody, the BNP leaders said.

Referring to the recent human rights report disclosed by US State Department, he said they [US] also expressed their concern over the deteriorating human rights situation in the country but the government remains silent over the matter.

Party leaders Nazrul Islam Khan, Selima Rahman, Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, Salauddin Quader Chowdhury's wife Farhat Quader Chowdhury and Milon's wife Nazmunnahar Baby, among others, were present in the briefing.

Indian

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Rabindranath Tagore.

A scholar on literature, Ansari, leading the Indian entourage, will reach Dhaka by a special plane and will attend the function the next day, officials told The Daily Star here yesterday. Ansari will return to Delhi on May 6.

Hasina is expected to call on Ansari during his stay in Dhaka.

The delegates are being finalised by the Ministry of External Affairs in coordination with Indian Culture Ministry.

A team of Indian journalists will also accompany Ansari to cover his first visit to Dhaka and the start of year-long celebrations of Tagore's 150th birth anniversary.

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Massive siltation in the river upstream posed a threat to the movement of inland water transports.

The investigation officers will fix the date, and a counsel of the defendant and a doctor of a prison hospital will be present in an adjacent room during the questioning.

The doctor will examine Sayeedee's health condition before and after the interrogation.

The court directed the investigators not to pressure or threaten him.

Meanwhile, the tribunal yesterday upheld its order that granted bail to former BNP lawmaker Abdul Alim on March 31 in connection with similar charges and directed him to appear before it on July 21.

Alim, a member of late president Ziaur Rahman's cabinet, appeared before the tribunal yesterday in compliance with his bail conditions.

A sample survey on Employment Generation Programme for Hardcore Poor (EGPHP) found at least 5.6 percent of its beneficiaries do not fall under its criteria, while that for Vulnerable Group Development (VGD),

the figure was 10.76 percent.

Around 8.5 S S N programmes operate in Bangladesh, including major programmes like EGPHP, VGD, Vulnerable Group Feeding, Food for Work, Old

Age Allowance, Rural Maintenance Programme, Allowance for the Financially Insolvent Disabled, the study added.

Food and Disaster Management Minister Abdur Razzaque attributed the irregularities to the lack coordination among various ministries and the inadequate number of monitoring officers.

The study titled 'Social Safety Net and the Marginalised: Implications for Budget 2011-12' was presented by Dr Mahfuz Kabir, research fellow at Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, at a discussion yesterday.

Shamunnay, a non-government organisation, arranged the dialogue with the support of Manusher Jonno Foundation at Cirdap auditorium in the city.

Around 17.7 percent beneficiaries under VGD were bribed to get VGD cards, while 4 percent were bribed under EGPHP, it said.

"If such loopholes were checked, at least 2.67 lakh more needy people could get benefits while 39,101 tonnes of flour or rice could be produced," said Mahfuz Kabir.

Many programmes are taken up without proper planning or necessary ground work, he said.

Food minister Razzaque said, while listing the urban

Standard & Poor's

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improvement in debt ratios, underpin the ratings on Bangladesh. Improved central bank reserve coverage and long maturity external debt that minimises refinancing risk. These factors are balanced against emerging balance of payments pressures as remittance growth slows and imports expand, and the risks posed by rising inflationary pressures and a weakened banking sector.

However, the ratings on Bangladesh were constrained by the country's limited fiscal flexibility due to low revenue-generation capacity, against relatively high public and external debt and significant physical and human capital development needs, said the global rating firm.

Earlier this month, Moody's Investors Services, another rating agency, rated Bangladesh "Ba3" also with a stable outlook.

S&P confirmed its "BB" long-term and "B" short-term foreign and local currency sovereign credit ratings on Bangladesh. The transfer and convertibility (T&C) assessment remains "BB-".

These ratings mean that S&P thinks the outlook for long-term international credit to Bangladesh is fairly stable, second in South Asia to only India.

The stable outlook reflects

strong growth prospects and ongoing donor support, which ensures low-cost and long maturity external debt that minimises refinancing risk. These factors are balanced against emerging balance of