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'The day was fine,' says CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The chief election commissioner (CEC) and election commissioners (ECs) were busy with their usual tasks yesterday as opposition demonstrators were locked in fierce battle with law enforcers in their bid to lay siege to the EC Secretariat demanding resignation of the CEC and ECs.

"The day was fine," CEC Justice MA Aziz said while leaving office at 4:45pm when reporters asked him how he passed the day.

Asked about the opposition demand for his resignation, he said, "No comments".

He however said, "It is a democratic country and the reason behind the movement is political. So, I cannot comment on it because I am not a politician."

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14-party calls hartal for Sunday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL)-led 14-party opposition combine has enforced a countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal for Sunday protesting police atrocities on its leaders and workers during yesterday's Election Commission (EC) Secretariat siege programme.

Around 100 opposition leaders and activists, including opposition leader Sheikh Hasina's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury and AL leader Hazi Mohammad Selim, were injured critically when riot police swooped on them to thwart the opposition programme.

The opposition combine will also stage demonstration across the country.

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## Police go wild to thwart EC siege attempt

### 100 hurt as they club opposition MPs, leaders; critically injured Saber may be taken abroad

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

Riot police indiscriminately clubbed senior opposition leaders, lawmakers and the activists of Awami League (AL)-led 14-party opposition coalition to thwart their attempt to lay siege to the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat in the capital yesterday, injuring around 100 including Saber Hossain Chowdhury.

Every single attempt by the

opposition leaders and activists to approach the vicinity of the EC Secretariat was met by police firing teargas shells and charging batons indiscriminately that left Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina's Political Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury critically injured.

A road march of a newly formed opposition alliance of several political parties, National Unity Front (NUF), towards the EC Secretariat, was also intercepted by

police near Bangla Motor intersection where leaders of the alliance announced a seven-day ultimatum to CEC MA Aziz and three other election commissioners to resign from their posts.

The 14-party coalition yesterday announced a countrywide dawn to dusk hartal scheduled for Sunday and countrywide demonstrations today protesting the police atrocities.

As several thousand opposition

activists reached a police barricade on Mirpur Road near Road No 27

intersection in Dhanmondi and tried to defy the government's ban on any gathering near the EC Secretariat area yesterday, the law enforcers all of a sudden began clubbing the marchers indiscriminately although State Minister For Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar on Tuesday had asked the law enforcers and the opposition to

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Opposition men scuffle with police during yesterday's Election Commission Secretariat siege programme, left, severely injured Awami League leader Saber Hossain Chowdhury being taken to hospital.



PHOTO STAR

## Cops tasked to survey ruling party candidate popularity

ZAYADUL AHSAN

In a clear show of using state institutions for political purpose, the government has tasked the police with conducting a survey on the popularity of its aspirant candidates for the next general elections in comparison with those of other parties.

As part of the survey, local police administrations have started collecting information about the results of the last three parliamentary elections and position of all aspirant candidates to analyse the present situation and forecast for the next election.

Although different governments earlier used the police to

serve their own interest, this move by the ruling four-party coalition surpasses in magnitude all previous incidents of political use of the key law enforcement agency.

It is a common practice of the governments to use intelligence agencies for such political purpose, but it is for the first time that the police have been given such a political task.

Till date, ruling parties have usually used the police to foil the opposition's political programmes, harass their leaders and activists, file false cases against them and manipulate the investigation into the cases, and save their own leaders and activists.

A home ministry letter sent to all

district superintendents of police (SPs) last week asked for detailed analyses of the results of the last three general elections, deficiencies of the defeated candidates and the positive sides of the victorious ones in order to weigh up its own position.

A number of SPs told The Daily Star that they received such letters with no signs and memo number.

Sources said the government has engaged the police with the survey as it cannot completely trust the party men. Policemen have been tasked with collecting grassroots-level information since the ruling party believes its workers had earlier misguidedly

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## Bangladesh 3rd best business place in S Asia

### Says WB-IFC report

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh is the third easiest country in which to do business in South Asia, although as a whole is lagging behind other parts of the world when it comes to reforms that could enhance business activity, says a World Bank-IFC (International Finance Corporation) report.

The top ranked countries in the region are the Maldives (53) and Pakistan (74), followed by Bangladesh (88), Sri Lanka (89) and Nepal (100). India comes in at 134, Bhutan at 138 and Afghanistan at 162.

Bangladesh has undertaken steps to improve its business climate and one notable reform made recently was introduction of a new land registration act to improve security and reduce corruption in land transactions, says the report launched yesterday.

The report finds that the greatest remaining obstacles in the region are slow courts and rigid labor laws. For example, in Bangladesh, enforcing a simple commercial contract through the courts takes 50 procedures and

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## Seoul Peace Prize goes to Prof Yunus

AFP, Seoul

Microfinance champion Prof Muhammad Yunus was yesterday named as winner of the eighth Seoul Peace Prize.

Dubbed as 'Banker to the Poor,'

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## Commentary

### An apology to Tarique Rahman

#### How dare we talk about 'honest candidates' for the next election?

MAHFUZ ANAM

Mr Tarique Rahman, senior joint secretary general of the BNP has most rightly castigated the civil society initiative for organising countrywide discussions for electing honest candidates in the coming election.

Since The Daily Star is part of this initiative, along with the CPD, Prothom Alo and Channel 1, I think we owe Mr Rahman an unconditional apology for all the 'crimes' we have committed by demanding honest candidates in the next

election with disclosure of their background, talking about the quality of present day politics, asking for electoral reforms and attempting to raise public awareness about their rights and obligations. This surely is not acceptable, according to the politics of Mr Rahman. We tender our apology for this transgression.

After all, how can anybody compare Mr Rahman's own contribution to establishing honesty and integrity in the country over the last five years? Immediately after the BNP won the 2001 elections, he

placed people of the highest integrity as state and deputy ministers in almost all the ministries. These 'nominees', by acting as alternative power base, made many of the ministries completely dysfunctional (ask the ministers) and corrupt. To guide them towards ruining, sorry I meant running, the country he set up the Hawa Bhaban whose reputation for financial propriety and probity remains unmatched in the country till date. Finally, in the last several months he worked tirelessly for

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## Japan's royal succession crisis ends as a boy is born in 40 yrs

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's Princess Kiko yesterday gave birth to the royal family's first boy in more than 40 years, easing a succession crisis and silencing calls to let a woman lead the world's oldest monarchy.

Networks broke in with special broadcasts, commuters snapped up extra editions of newspapers and political leaders rushed to offer congratulations on the birth of the long-awaited third in line to the Chrysanthemum Throne.

The boy is the first male child to be born to the royal family since his father Prince Akishino, the emperor's second son, in 1965.

For months, Japan's press was full of fevered speculation on

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## ADB forecasts 6pc GDP growth, cautions about inflation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) forecasts six per cent GDP growth in the current fiscal year (FY), which is slightly lower than 6.7 per cent growth of the last FY.

"The moderation in GDP growth would result mainly from a return to more normal growth in agriculture following the post-flood high-growth recovery of FY06," said an update of ADB's annual flagship publication Asian Development Outlook 2006 issued in April.

The update released yesterday forecast economic trends in the region and identified a number of risks that could pose a threat to both fiscal and monetary stability

including increase of inflation in Bangladesh.

"Despite the generally positive outlook though, substantial under pricing of energy products is continuing to build large financial imbalances, which are posing a growing threat to both fiscal and monetary stability," the report said.

Other risks include political uncertainty that could disrupt the economy in the lead up to general elections due in January next year, it said, adding that conditions for expansion in industry as well as in services are expected to be favourable, though the frequent power disruptions need to be addressed.

Referring to recent labour unrest over wages in the garment

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## HSC results today

DU CORRESPONDENT

Results of the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examinations and its equivalent Alim, HSC (BM) and HSC (Vocational) examinations will be published today, a press release of the education ministry said yesterday.

The examinees have been advised to collect their results from respective examination centres or institutions from 4:00pm. Results will also be available on websites - www.educationboard.gov.bd and http://result.bteb.gov.bd.

## Production stops at CUFL and Kafco

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Production at Chittagong Urea Fertiliser Ltd (CUFL) and Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company (Kafco) was suspended yesterday evening as supply of power and gas suddenly snapped.

Sources said the Raozan Power Plant unit No. 1 could not resume operation after its regular maintenance work yesterday due to an abrupt halt in gas supply from

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## Muggers snatch Tk 21 lakh from garment factory staff in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Muggers snatched Tk 21 lakh from two staff of an apparel factory in the city's Oxygen intersection area yesterday.

Sources said four armed muggers attacked Accounts Officer of KDS Apparels Anjuman Ara and another staff who were carrying the money of the workers' salary from the adjoining factory at around 4:30am.

As the officials were entering the

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## DRÖUGHT IN NORTHERN DISTRICTS

### Farmers already fork out Tk 171cr on irrigation

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, Bogra

The ongoing drought has already forced the farmers of 16 northern districts to spend Tk 171.32 crore for irrigating 16.67 lakh hectares of land for Aman cultivation, according to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), and Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) regional offices.

BPC control room officials said about 60 lakh litres of diesel worth Tk 22.20 crore was supplied to North Bengal in August this year in addition to the regular amount of fuel supply for irrigating Aman fields. BPC did not have to supply

any additional quantity of diesel to that area for irrigation in the last Aman season said BPC officials.

DAE officials said more than 99 thousand tube wells including six thousand deep tube wells were functioning in the 16 districts in August. More than 80 thousand tube wells were running for irrigation purposes including 79 thousand shallow tube wells in eight districts of Rangpur Agricultural Zone, said Md Zakir Hossain, additional director of DAE Rangpur. About 4,800 deep tube wells were running in Barind area of Rajshahi Agricultural Zone said Md Mozahar Hossain, additional director of DAE in that zone.

A high official of DAE said the department requested the agriculture ministry to provide it with Tk 10 crore as an aid to face the persistence drought in the region.

Md Abul Bashar, deputy director of DAE Bogra, said on an average Tk 600 was spent for irrigating one hectare of land. Rabindra Kumar Majumder, deputy director of DAE Rajshahi, said Tk 1200 was spent per hectare of land for irrigation in Barind area. DAE official sources said on an average Tk 900 was spent only for irrigation purposes in different areas in Rajshahi division.

Rangpur Regional Agricultural

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PHOTO STAR

A farmer in a Bogra village gets his cropland irrigated by a power pump while the ongoing drought is hampering cultivation in the northern districts.

## Fuel strike called off

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Fuel distributors and the tank-lorry owners and workers withdrew their indefinite strike enforced from Tuesday after a successful meeting with the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) yesterday.

The strike, called in Dhaka division demanding cancellation of fuel rationing and smooth supply of petroleum to the dealers and agents, was cancelled as the government has agreed to meet these demands.

BPC chairman Sheikh Khurshid Alam presided over the meeting, while Gasuddin Ahmed MP, Syed Sajjadul Karim, president of Bangladesh Tank-lorry Owners Association, Abdur Rahman, president of Bangladesh Jalani Tel Paribeshok Samity and Matin Munshi, president of Bangladesh Tank-lorry Stramik Union were present.

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## Open market sale of essentials from Sept 12

UNB, Dhaka

The Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) will launch open market sale (OMS) of essentials through its dealers on September 12.

"Initially, the TCB will sell sugar and pulses and then chickpeas and soybean oil in the open market," a senior official of the commerce ministry told the news agency after an inter-ministerial meeting yesterday.

Held in the conference room of the commerce ministry with Commerce secretary Firoz Ahmed in the chair, the meeting decided that OMS dealers would sell the essentials to the public at reduced rates as fixed by the government.

The meeting decided to run

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বাংলাদেশে সঙ্গীতের সকল শাখার সকল শিল্পীরা আবারও একই মঞ্চে, আপনাদের সামনে...

চ্যানেল আই'তে চোখ রাখুন আজ সন্ধ্যা ৭:৫০ মিনিটে

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