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## CEC slates NDI for comments on him

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criticising the visiting National Democratic Institute (NDI) representatives, Chief Election Commissioner Justice MA Aziz yesterday said the remarks they made about him were devoid of courtesy.

"They [NDI] should know that Bangladesh is an independent and sovereign state," he said replying to a query from the reporters while leaving his office yesterday afternoon.

Earlier in the morning, at a press conference at Radisson Hotel, the NDI delegation said they have gathered that a perception of incompetence and bias is a serious problem for the Election Commission (EC).

Former US Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle, who is fronting

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## NDI concerned over public distrust of CEC

### Questions credibility of voter list, extension of retirement age of SC judges; but says early career of a caretaker govt chief should not be barrier to appointment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Democratic Institute (NDI) yesterday expressed its deep concern over the widespread lack of confidence in the Election Commission (EC), specifically the chief election commissioner (CEC).

It also said the new voter list that contains over 9.3 crore voters, a number that is substantially inconsistent with the 2001 census data, strains credibility.

An NDI delegation, that held

discussions since September 7 with the ruling and opposition political parties, EC, and civil society members on the preparation for the next election and present political situation, made its observations public at a news conference in Radisson Hotel in the capital yesterday.

Leader of the Delegation Tom Daschle, who is also a former majority and minority leader of the US Senate read out to journalists a report prepared by the delegation and said, "The CEC may be able to

correct the situation, but only if the problem is acknowledged and dealt with. In absence of a strong, corrective and urgent response, confidence in the chief election commissioner will continue to deteriorate to the point that he should not continue his duties."

He went on, "When the delegates raised the issue with the commissioner, he did not acknowledge that a problem existed and later reported to the media that the delegation had been misinformed."

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## Verdict on graft case against Ershad deferred

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday adjourned the delivery of verdict on a graft case against Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad due to power failure in the court.

The graft case was filed against Ershad in connection with the allotment of plots to 49 people when he was president. This is the second time the verdict delivery has been adjourned.

Judge SM Mojibur Rahman of the First Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court fixed September 17 for the delivery of verdict.

The judge took his seat around 11:00am yesterday and started delivering the judgement in presence of deposed president Ershad. But suddenly a blackout occurred and the judge stopped reading out

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## Huge cordon planned to foil PMO siege

### 10,000 cops, Rab, BDR to face 14-party programme; law enforcers asked to take tough action

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 10,000 police, paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel will encircle several square kilometre areas around the Prime Ministers' Office (PMO) today to thwart the Awami League (AL)-led 14-party combine's PMO siege programme.

They have been ordered to go for tough action against the demonstrators, if needed.

At an hour-long briefing at Rajarbagh Police Lines yesterday, the commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) asked the

forces to show restraint as long as possible and go tough, if necessary. He instructed them not to pounce on

women activists, senior leaders and journalists, sources said.

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## 200 Proshika offices unofficially closed as crackdown on

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A government crackdown on one of the largest non-government organisations (NGO), Proshika, continued yesterday paralysing the organisation across the country.

Two hundred branch offices of the organisation across the country were 'unofficially' closed yesterday as its 15 thousand staff are scared by the government's sudden action. Proshika staff refrained from attending offices yesterday to

avoid government harassment and arrests, sources in the NGO told The Daily Star.

Law enforcers arrested 17 more officials of the organisation between Sunday night and yesterday evening raising the number of arrestees to 137. The law enforcing agencies also continued to raid Proshika offices across the country and kept the branch offices under sharp watch.

Many officials of the organisation

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A banana vendor wades the waterlogged road in front of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday.

## City wakes up to cracking thunders, sinks in showers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A low over West Bengal in India triggered heavy rains across the country yesterday, marking the season's highest rainfall in the capital where life and trade were severely disrupted on the late monsoon day.

Rainwater flooded different low-lying areas and roads in the city, causing immense sufferings to the commuters. Huge traffic snarl-ups in the rush hours only added to their miseries.

The rain continued throughout the day with little respites. The Met

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## RMG SECTOR Tk 2,000 minimum wage may be announced today

MONJUR MAHMUD

The National Wage Board is likely to announce today a minimum wage for the workers in the export-oriented garment sector with a gross salary of around Tk 2,000 for the entry-level employees.

The announcement may invite strong protest from both the garment owners and workers, as it is a bit higher than what the factory owners had agreed and much

below than the workers' demand for Tk 3,000 as the monthly salary.

The board so far held 23 meetings after it was formed on 31 May but it could not reach any consensus in the face of strong opposition from both the garment owners and the workers.

Gross salary package of Tk 2,000 include the basic salary of roughly Tk 1,400, sources said.

In a revised proposal, garment

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