

EC has no scope for vote rigging

Says former CEC Justice Rouf

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) should not be blamed for vote rigging as there is no scope for EC authorities and officials to get involved in rigging, said Council for National Agenda (CNA) Chairman Justice Mohammad Abdur Rouf yesterday.

Speaking at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city, Justice Rouf, also a former chief election commissioner, said the entire election procedure is designed in such a way that the EC officials cannot be involved in rigging.

But the political parties tend to blame the constitutional body which is not desirable, he added.

Justice Rouf suggested some changes in electoral process to hold

a free and fair election.

These included setting up of polling centre for every five hundred voters and reduce the voting time to complete vote counting within 2:00pm.

Results should be passed to the Returning Officers in presence of the representatives of the candidates and army officials.

He also recommended re-initiation of Section 91-D of The Representation of the People Order (RPO) that was skipped in 2001 for cancelling candidature of the candidates for their involvement in violent activities.

Justice Rouf called for resolving the electoral disputes within 120 days and recruiting 30 judges for election tribunals for four months.

He said the executive body and High Court should not interfere in

EC's constitutional duties and violence or threats against EC officials should be considered as undemocratic and unconstitutional and necessary steps should be taken in this regard.

Criticising the dialogue between the secretaries of the ruling and opposition parties, Justice Rouf said there is no scope for playing hide and seek game in national issues.

"The way the dialogue is going on has made the countrymen more worried," he added.

Former advisor to the caretaker government Prof MA Majed, Journalist Sadek Khan, Brigadier General (Retd) M Shakhawat Hossain and Executive Director of CNA Isharof Hossain were also present at the press conference.

8 journo roughed up in Ctg

CU CORRESPONDENT

Criminals beat up and injured eight journalists at Cheragi Pahar intersection in Chittagong on Saturday night following a feud over placing a shopping bag on top of a car.

The injured were Dainik Bhorer Kagaj Bureau Chief Omar Kaiser, its staff reporter Alamgir Sabuj, Editor of Ekushey Patrika (a local newspaper) Azad Talukder, Ekushey Patrika reporter Saiful Islam, Mintu Chowdhury of Dainik Suprothak Bangladesh, Suman Chowdhury Moni of Dainik Purbokon, Biplab Dutta of Dainik Azadi and Sajib of Channel 1.

Of them, Alamgir Sabuj, Azad Talukder and Saiful Islam were critically injured and undergoing treatment at the port city's Royal Hospital and Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

Sources and witnesses said Omar Kaiser along with his wife, coming out of his office at Lusat Bhaban around 10:30pm, put a small shopping bag on top of a private car.

The driver of the car Abul Khair reacted with swearwords and they were involved in an altercation.

The driver called Rezaul Kabir Azad, owner of the car, and he was locked in the verbal confrontation too. Journalists who were present in the area came to Kaiser's aid and they were entangled in the altercation.

Rezaul Kabir Azad called in a gang of criminals and they attacked the journalists within minutes of his phone call with iron rods and machetes.

The gang consisted at least 10 members and known criminals including Sohail, Farhad, Rassel, Saidul, Khairul, Babar, Bappa, Rana, Amzad and Jasim.

Locals, however, captured Jasim, Saidul, Rana, Khairul and driver Abul Khair and handed them over to the police.

Omar Kaiser filed a case with the Kotwali Police Station accusing eight people.

Later, more than one hundred journalists rushed to the spot, brought out a procession and held a protest rally at the Cheragi Pahar intersection.

Chittagong Press Club President Abu Sufian, General Secretary Kalim Sarwar, Chittagong Union of Journalists President Shahidul Alam and General Secretary Riaz Haider addressed the rally.



People crowd Mirpur Road near New Market in the city yesterday for Eid shopping.

Soaring prices diminish joy of Eid shopping

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The joy of Eid shopping diminishes as the shoppers face with exorbitant price tags in clothes and readymade garments along with the soaring prices of daily essentials.

After the 20th day of the holy Ramadan, shopping malls of the city still cry for customers. According to the shop owners, the price hike in essentials influences the Eid budget of people mostly the middleclass families.

"Prices of everyday essentials have soared up to such a level that common people are bound to shorten the budget of clothing for Eid," said Akram Hossain, owner of Doyel Fabrics at Chadni Chak Shopping Complex.

"On the other hand, prices of clothes imported from Mumbai are so expensive that most people cannot afford them. As a result the sales have reduced compared to last year," Akram added.

However, young ladies from all walks of life were seen crowded the shops at the same shopping complex as it is considered the most popular market for clothes and three-piece garment for women.

"I have come here because more variety of clothes are available here than other markets though the price is comparatively high," said Shila, a master's student coming from Tallola, Agargaon.

Shila came to the market for simple siphon three-piece clothes.

This Eid's latest attractions are 'Fana' three-piece, Makhon creep georgette and Makhon silk that sell at Tk 2,500-4,000, said Akram.

Sanaullah, a salesperson of Fancy Corner at the same market, claimed that embroidered three-piece garment on pure silk is the latest fashion that sells at Tk 14,000. He also said they have already sold five pieces

of the clothe out of six pieces they had imported from India.

Shop owners and sales persons of Bashundhara City Shopping Mall said the sales of readymade garments of this Eid are quite good with some exceptions.

Most of the shops sell teenage girls' dresses, salwar-kamis, boys' shirts and pants, kids' skirt-tops, sarees and panjabi for men all imported from India.

After a long time the teenagers find their suitable dresses in the market thanks to Indian actress Kajol, who wore long skirt-tops at a Hindi movie called 'Fana'.

Besides, Veer Jara and Raksha four-piece for teenagers are also selling good between Tk 2,500, 5,000, said Tanvir, sales man of Kik Star readymade garment shop at Bashundhara City.

Siphon georgette with spring work dominates the sarees of Eid collection while Jamdani saree is all time favourite.

Rehana Khanom, an employee of a multinational company, said she would buy a white Jamdani saree because she has to attend official programmes where gorgeous georgette sarees do not suit.

Mason dies in rooftop fall

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mason was killed yesterday falling from rooftop when he was working at an under-construction building at Konapara in Demra in the city.

Mainuddin, 22, fell off the rooftop of the fourth floor at Al Amin Road while he was trying to pull a bundle of iron rods along with other masons.

He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where on-duty doctor declared him death.

World leaders continue to greet Yunus

FROM PAGE 1

Muhammad Yunus and his Grameen Bank.

"I extend my congratulation to Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank of Bangladesh who have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 2006," said Stoltenberg in a message.

The Norwegian prime minister said for 30 years they have granted loans to the poor and in particular to women, making it possible for them to start new enterprises and work their way out of poverty.

In another message, Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Store said, "I am very pleased that the Norwegian Nobel Committee has paid this tribute to Prof Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank."

"They have provided concrete and down to earth help that has enabled millions of people to rise out of poverty. The Grameen Bank is one of the most important examples of successful development assistance. It has created a micro-credit model that is being copied all over the world, Store said.

"The award is very pleasing and I would like to offer my warmest congratulation to Prof Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank," said International Development Minister Erik Solheim.

Solheim said, "I nominated Prof Yunus for the Nobel Peace Prize in the 1990s when I was a member of the Storting (the Norwegian parliament), so I am delighted by this decision. It is appropriate and important that the Nobel Committee has highlighted the key importance of development and the fight against poverty in peace efforts."

"This is an enormously creative contribution to the development debate. It is obvious that improving people's living conditions is an important factor in creating peace. I am very happy, therefore, that the Nobel Committee is directing focus to this issue. Micro-credit is something this government gives priority to - and will give greater priority to in the future," he said.

European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso has congratulated Nobel Peace Prize winner Prof.

Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank.

In his message, the EC president said, "On behalf of the European Commission, it is my great pleasure to congratulate you and the Grameen Bank most warmly on the richly deserved nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. You embody the advocacy for the world's poor and Grameen Bank's approach to the poor has become a model for countries all over the world.

"Since Bangladesh's independence you have worked tirelessly for the cause of the poor by pulling the poorest of the poor out of poverty through innovative economic programmes like micro-credit."

The EC president said the United Nations has rightly coined the micro-credit as a weapon against poverty and hunger and means of reaching the UN Millennium Development Goals.

He said, "I know that the international community will be able to count on your continued commitment to world peace in the years to come."

President of the Federal Republic of Germany Prof Horst Kohler has greeted Prof. Muhammad Yunus on behalf of the government and the people of Germany on his winning this year's Nobel Peace Prize.

In a letter of congratulation, he said, "Without long-term success in combating poverty, there can be no peace in the world. The fact is that you have been distinguished with the Nobel Peace Prize, which is a sign that this connection has been recognised, and this fills me with great joy and reassurance."

Through your efforts, Kohler said, the micro-credit system has made the breakthrough to become an important instrument of development policy and a vital tool for combating poverty.

"In the rural areas, credit of this kind often provides the only means for investment," he said describing the allocation of micro-credit loans as a proven means of combating poverty.

"The micro-credit system thus represents one of the most successful instruments at our disposal in pursuing the Millennium Development Goals, which is important for the future

Kashish, Kumkum and Salma spring sarees are the attraction of this year's Eid collection that sell at Tk 5,000-40,000, said Delwar Hossain, sales man of Rangila Saree of Bashundhara City.

Delwar also said "This year sale is quite half of the sale of last year."

The shop owners and sales persons of the same market said customers are choosing turquoise, magenta, black, and orange colours for this Eid.

The 'Fana' storm also touched the Eid collection of children's clothes. The kids' zone of different shopping centres is full of Fana and Nandini long skirt tops.

"The Fana, Nandini long skirts and baby short kamiz on tissue, tasar and silk for children aged three to 10 years are selling well that cost Tk 1,500-2,000," said Ishtiaque H Bablu, chief executive of Look and Like kids' shop at Bashundhara city.

While Indian products dominate women's wear, men's wear is dominated by in-house production.

Men's wear houses like Cats Eye, Monsoon Rain, Rex, and Yellow by Beximco have brought pure cotton, Egyptian cotton made shirts, T-shirts, Panjabi and trousers for this Eid.

Sajjad Mahmud Saiju, a salesperson of Yellow, said export quality casual cotton shirts of six different colours are selling quite well.

Besides, Denim and Cargo trousers at Tk 1,400 also attracted the consumers, he added.

Khalid Mahmud Khan, proprietor of Kay Kraft, said people are increasingly tending towards in-house production.

"Fusion of different characters in a single material is comfortable and good looking and customers seem to value the new ideas of in-house products rather than luxurious products," he added.

Tremor jolts Ctg again

CU CORRESPONDENT

A light tremor measuring 4.1 on the Richter scale jolted the port city and its adjacent areas at around 1:03:56am yesterday.

It lasted for 21 seconds. Its epicentre was 191 kilometres off the country's lone seismic observatory at Ambagan in the port city, sources in the centre said.

It was the 12th quake that hit the port city this year and the second in this month, they added.

COAL POLICY Bol chief blames media for his failure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Energy Adviser Mahmudur Rahman yesterday blamed the media for his failure to get the government nod to the coal policy.

"A group of people always hold a negative attitude towards the coal policy and the media constantly gives them a good space conveying the negative feelings," the energy adviser said while addressing a press conference organised by the Forum for Energy Reporters Bangladesh (FERB) at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

"Due to this, people have become confused to accept the policy and the government has been in a dilemma to approve it. And I cannot also convince the government," Rahman, also the chairman of the Board of Investment (BoI), said.

Besides, the government also does not want to face any debate approving the coal policy just before the end of its five-year tenure, he noted.

The energy adviser also observed that a decision about the coal policy should be made within one month after the next government comes to power, adding that it should also take initiatives to develop the coalmines.

Rahman also suggested the new government should take steps for producing power by using coal, forewarning that if the power sector does not switch from using gas for its production, Bangladesh will face a severe crisis in natural gas only after 20 to 30 years.

While India and China produces 60 and 70 percent power of the total requirement from coal, Bangladesh produces 90 percent power from gas, he added.

Rahman also presented his successes and failures during his 14-month tenure as the adviser to the energy ministry, saying that his great achievement was to free the energy ministry from corruption.

When asked about his failure, he said except the coal policy, he succeeded in almost all other areas such as natural gas, CNG conversion, petroleum sector and alternative energy sector.

FERB President Mollah Amzad was present at the press meet among others.

Clarification

Three directors and a general manager of Biman Bangladesh Airlines have been given retirement on completion of their 25 years of service as per Public Servants (Retirement) Act 1974, said a Biman press release issued on Tuesday last.

They are Mohammad Abdus Salam, director of administration, Ahsan Quadir, director of project and planning, AKM Mazharul Huq Chowdhury, director of customer service, and Muhiul Huq, general manager (cost and budget).

All of them will get due retirement benefits as per the rules of the corporation.

Biman hopes that there will be no more confusions about the retirement of the officials with the issuance of the press release.

Appeal for help

Sheikh Shahidul Islam, a shopkeeper, who has been suffering from bone marrow diseases, has appealed for financial assistance for his treatment, says a press release.

He is now undergoing treatment at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital.

According to doctors, he needs better treatment, which involves Tk 3 lakh. But it is not possible for him to collect the amount.

He has earnestly appealed to the generous people to extend a helping hand to save his life.

Contributions can be sent to the following account: Sheikh Shahidul Islam, Account No.-15839, Islami Bank Ltd, Cantonment Branch, Dhaka.

Death anniversary

Today is the 9th death anniversary of Md Moniruzzaman Zahid, a student of political science department of Dhaka University (DU), says a press release.

Zahid was killed in a road accident in the city on this day in 1997.

To mark the day, a milad mahfil and Qurankhwan will be held at Zahid's parent's residence at House -34/E, Road -17/A, Banani after Asr prayers today.

Friends, relatives and admirers have been requested to attend the milad and pray for peace of the departed soul.

EC empowerment a must for free, fair polls

Abu Hena tells Odhikar project launch ceremony

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In order to make national elections free from the influence of black money and musclemen, bank loan defaulters should be declared disqualified for contesting the elections despite their loan rescheduling, said Abu Hena, former chief election commissioner, yesterday.

He said just before the elections, the loan defaulters rush for rescheduling their bad loans, get new loans from the banks and spend the money for musclemen and buying votes.

Abu Hena was speaking at the launch of a project of Odhikar titled 'Election Violence Education Resolution' (EVER) at Biam auditorium in the city yesterday.

He suggested empowerment of Election Commission (EC) for conducting free and fair elections.

The EC must have full control over its staffs and finances, he said, adding, "I fail to understand why it should be under some other division of the government."

Abu Hena said it is important for the government to empower the EC to act independently and create such an environment that is conducive to its proper functioning.

He also laid emphasis on placing right persons in right places to get the jobs done efficiently.

Stressing the need for proper implementation of electoral laws he said, "We have many laws, but those are not properly implemented."

Maj Gen (Retd) Moinul Hosain Chowdhury, a former advisor to Caretaker Government said it is a popular misconception that the CG conducts the election.

But the constitution says the caretaker government would only assist the EC in conducting the elections properly, he added.

New Age Editor Nurul Kabir conducted the programme which was also addressed by Zahiruddin Swapan MP, Secretary of Women's Affairs of Bangladesh Awami League Dr Dipu Mani, President of Jatitya Samajtantrik Dal Hasanul Huq Inu and Asia Foundation Representative Kim McQuay.

PM performs Umrah

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia performed Umrah at Makkah Al Mukarrama Saturday midnight, shortly after her arrival in Saudi Arabia.

Earlier in the night, the PM and her entourage reached King Abdul Aziz International Airport of Jeddah at around local time 11:15pm.

Governor of Jeddah Prince Mishal Bin-Majed bin- Abdul Aziz and Bangladesh Ambassador to Saudi Arabia SM Ekramul Huq received her at the Royal terminal of the airport, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday.

Khaleda and her entourage will stay in Makkah until October 18 and leave for Madinah Al Monwarah on October 19. She is staying at Royal Palace in Makkah.

The Prime Minister's two sons--Tarique Rahman and Arafat Rahman--and other family members, PM's principal secretary Dr Kamal Uddin Siddiqui and Md Mosaddek Ali MP are among others on her entourage.

7 top cops promoted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday promoted seven Additional Deputy Inspectors General to Deputy Inspectors General (DIG) and reshuffled the police administration transferring some of the promoted officials along with four other DIGs.

According to a government order issued yesterday, Addl DIG (current charge) of Sylhet Range AKM Mahfuzul Haque was promoted to DIG and made Additional Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP). Addl DIG Moklesur Rahman, who was serving as the director of National Security Intelligence (NSI), was promoted to DIG to retain his earlier position.

Amir Uddin, Addl DIG (current charge) of Highway Police, Dhaka was promoted to DIG for the post. Fatema Begum, Addl DIG and director of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), Dhaka was promoted to DIG and was placed at the police headquarters (PHQ).

Addl DIG Khan Sayeed Hasan, Commissioner (current charge) of Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP), was promoted to DIG and posted at the KMP as Commissioner. Addl DIG Najibur Rahman, commandant Special Branch (SB) training school, Dhaka was posted as the principal of Police Training Academy, Sharda after being promoted as DIG and Addl DIG Helal Uddin Badri, director (Rab), Dhaka was promoted to DIG and placed at the PHQ.

Meanwhile, Hasan Mahmud Khondokar, principal of Sharda Police Training Academy, was transferred to the PHQ as DIG, Addl Police Commissioner, DMP,

Three killed in Faridpur road crash

UNB, Faridpur

Three people died and 30 others were injured in a bus collision on the Dhaka-Khulna highway in Modhukhali upazila early yesterday.

Police and locals said the accident occurred at around 12:45am when a Sathkira-bound BRTC bus from Dhaka and a Dhaka-bound bus of Eagle Paribahan from Jessore collided head on at Kamarkhali, leaving 33 passengers of both the vehicles injured.

Of the injured, Mizan, 30, supervisor of BRTC bus, Mondol, 25, helper of Eagle Paribahan bus, and a three-month-old baby died soon after admission to Modhukhali Upazila Health Complex. Identity of the baby could not be known.

Other injured are now undergoing treatment at Faridpur Medical College Hospital, Magura Sadar Hospital and Modhukhali Upazila Health Complex.

DU mourning day observed

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) authorities and different student organisations yesterday paid homage to the memories of 39 students and employees killed in a building collapse at university's Jagannath Hall on October 15 in 1985.

The DU authorities and other organisations organised different programmes to observe the Mourning Day.

Vice-Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz, Pro-VC Prof AFM Yusuf Haider, Treasurer Prof Syed Abul Kalam Azad, Jagannath Hall Provost Dr Nim Chandra Bhowmik, provosts of different residential dormitories and student organisations placed wreaths at the memorial inside the hall in the morning.

Black flags were hoisted at the university's administrative buildings and dormitories, while university flag was at half-mast in front of the Arts Building.

University authorities, teachers and students wearing black badges took part in a mourning procession that began from the foot of Aparayeo Bangla.

Special prayers were also organised at mosques and temples.

Jagannath Hall authorities arranged a blood donation programme on the day and an oil-painting exhibition on victims of the building collapse.

A memorial meeting will be held at the Jagannath Hall auditorium on November 9.

SSKOP emergency meet today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An emergency meeting of Sangbadik Samik Karmachari Ojya Parishad (SSKOP) will be held at the National Press Club in the city at 10:30 am today, says a press release.

SSKOP leaders have been requested to attend the meeting on time.

DHAKA TODAY Report launch Inauguration Roundtable Seminar Fashion Show Conference

WEATHER TODAY Thundershowers likely

Table with 4 columns: City/Town, Temperature, Humidity in, Morning, Evening