\$1.4m Goldman

METROPOLITAN/NEWS CG should do what it thinks right for free, fair polls

Say legal experts, civil society members

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rising above all debates, the caretaker government should do what it thinks is right for a free and fair election, legal experts and civil society members said at a roundtable yesterday

Appreciating the move to reconstitute the Election Commission (EC), they also demanded amendment to the electoral laws and correction to the voter list.

Other options, including formation of a judicial council, can be considered if the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) declines to resign following the requests from the caretaker government, they sug-

Shushashoner Janney Nagorik (Shujan) organised the roundtable on 'Reforms of electoral laws and regulations' at the National Press Club in

"The caretaker government should do every necessary task with a view to holding a fair election. They should not give up for fear of controversy," said ASM Shahjahan, former adviser to the caretaker government.

It would not be right to demand resignation of any advisers, rather they should be allowed to work as a team, he told reporters.

Eminent jurist Dr Kamal Hossain observed that the EC with unqualified election commissioners cannot hold a fair election. So, it should be recon-

stituted and the voter list corrected. Once the EC is reconstituted, there will be enough time to correct the voter list, Dr Kamal said, adding

ADMISSION FORGERY AT

Three handed

over to police

Dhaka University (DU) authorities

yesterday handed over three people

to police on suspicion of having

involvement in admission forgery

raising a question about the trans-

parency in admission process.

DU CORRESPONDENT

that any attempts to hold the election with the incorrect voter list will bring no good to the nation

Amendments to the electoral laws are a must because election in the country has now become a game of money and arms, which cannot reflect the people's choice, he said.

It is possible to make amendments before the time when candidates should provide details of their assets and personal information to the EC, he said and suggested forming a scrutiny committee to verify the information provided by

Stressing the need for electoral reforms. Shuian President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said it is possible for the caretaker government to make the administration neutral and active if it now takes initiatives to hold a fair election.

Upon recommendations from the EC. the President can enact ordinance to reform electoral laws, he

Presenting a keynote paper, Shujan Treasurer Badre Alam Khan said there should be a short-term and a long-term plan to make the democratic and constitutional process

Electoral reforms are vital to hold the election in a free and fair manner with participation of honest people,

In the long-term plan, some constitutional amendments can be made to enable the President to appoint chiefs of important institu-

Commission, he added

He also suggested registration of the political parties to ensure their accountability and internal democ-

tions such as EC and Anti-Corruption

Blaming the political parties for not complying with electoral laws Dr Tofael Ahmed of Chittagong University suggested formation of a separate agency to take action against those violating the laws.

Shuian Secretary Badiul Alam Majumder called for bringing about political reforms to stop politics of mud-slinging. Otherwise, democracy would be at stake, he added.

Former adviser to the caretaker government M Hafizuddin Khan, woman leader Dr Hamida Hossain. Prof Asif Nazrul, Abul Ahsan, Bangladesh Manabadhikar Samannay Parishad President AHM Noman, Advocates Saidur Rahma, ABM Golam Mostafa, Shah Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman, Ajoy Roy of Sammilito Samaiik Andolon and Tusher Rehman of Citizens Rights Movement also spoke at the roundtable moderated by Justice Kazi Ebadul Haque



Shujan President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad speaks at a roundtable on 'Reforms of electoral laws and regulations' at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right is ASM Shahjahan and on his left are Justice Kazi Ebadul Hague and Abul Ahsan.

BANGLADESH SANGLAP

'Fair election depends on EC reforms'

A delegation of European Commission envoys call on President and Chief Adviser lajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban

Panellists at a BBC programme have said the caretaker government can arrange a fair election but much still depend on reforms of the Election Commission (EC), says a press release.

"If the President frequently requests the chief election commissioner over phone to resign, he will be embarrassed and will subsequently resign," said Syed Manzur Elahi, a business leader and former adviser to the caretaker government in 1996 and 2001, at the 'Bangladesh Sanglap' programme broadcast last night.

The programme will be aired by

Samajik Protirodh Committee

formed a one-hour human chain in

front of the High Court in the city

yesterday demanding free and fair

Representatives from the

Committee's partner organisations

joined the human chain carrying

festoons of its seven-point demand.

tion of the Election Commission

removal of controversial the Chief

Election Commissioner and other

in a murder case filed by Jamaat-e-Islami.

yesterday noon through the secre-

The council of advisers sits

Things got even more compli-

cated after the chief election com-

missioner (CEC) had refused to

step down and the EC declined to

initiate any major steps to correct

to the CEC on behalf of the care-

taker government, but he said he

won't resign," Dr Akbar Ali Khan

plex. We will discuss probable

alternatives at tomorrow's [today's]

"He (CEC) is holding a constitu-

tional post and is not bound to

resign even if the president and the

chief adviser asks him to do so. We

can however keep trying to per-

suade him besides considering all

Asked whether there will be any

new appointment to the EC, Akbar

said. "At this point, we neither rule

"Now the situation is very com-

"An adviser had already talked

today to discuss the issue.

the flaws in the revised list.

told reporters yesterday.

meeting," he added.

other options." he noted.

FROM PAGE 1

sources said.

tary of its secretariat.

The demands include reforma-

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

general election.

CEC's removal demanded

Channel i at 8:00pm today.

In response to a question, "Can the reconstruction of EC result in a fair election?" form the audience Awami League leader Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim said that as long as EC remained a matter of controversy, fair election would not be possible. But Abdullah Al Noman of BNP shared his views that the caretaker government has the ability to conduct a fair election. Noman said the CEC should

resign if requested by the President, but that is not mandatory for him. His resignation will not affect the election process.

election commissioners, update of

voter list, freeing the state-run

media from political influence and

improvement of law and order

Ayesha Khanom, general secre-

situation by arresting the criminals.

tary of Bangladesh Mohila

Parishad, Shirin Akhter, president of

Karmajibi Nari, Dr Mahmuda Islam,

president of Women for Women and

Selina Khaleq, president of

Bangladesh Mohila Samity were

present on the occasion.

CEC has created the controversy himself. "People don't want him. Why wouldn't he then resign?"

Munira Khan, head of the Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (Fema), said the CEC has lost credibility with the people at the time of updating voter list. "The CEC is a rational man and he knows the present stake. Hopefully, he will not push the country towards instability.

Afterwards when comments were invited on this issue from the audience, most of them raised their hands in support of CEC's resigna-

Again the panel was divided over a question from the audience -"Who are to blame for the incidents that took place between October 28 and 30." Noman and Sheikh Selim blamed each other for the violence, and the role of Jamaat and the police remained a matter of controversy. Munira Khan held all the political parties respon-

Shakeel Anwar of the BBC Bengali service moderated the programme held at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference

Limitations are there and the election should be carried out accepting

Sheikh Selim argued that the

sible though

Centre in the city on Saturday.

Sachs Foundation grant for AUW The Asian University for Women

(AUW) announced a \$1.4 million grant from The Goldman Sachs Foundation to fund its first academic programme on its new campus being built in Chittagong, says a press

The grant will support the launch of the AUW Access Academy, a precollegiate programme for new stu-

The freshers will benefit from intensive training in English, mathematics and/or computer science prior to the beginning of their university

All students attending the Access Academy will do so on full academic scholarship, providing for all their needs, including tuition, room and board, and healthcare. The grant will support the development of the programme, including recruitment of students, faculty and curriculum development.

"We are delighted to support this exciting project," said Stephanie Bell-Rose, president of The Goldman Sachs Foundation. "We share AUW's commitment to creating opportunities for women with the potential to become outstanding leaders and who will encourage intercultural understanding and sustainable human and economic development in Asia and throughout the world.

This grant follows a \$15 million challenge grant made earlier by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. AUW has also received support from the Open Society Institute, USAID. Nike Foundation, Chevron Foundation, Citigroup Foundation, SAB Miller Corporation, Pearl Energy Corporation, Andrew W Mellon Foundation and a host of individual contributors from the US, Japan and

Jack Meyer, a Boston-based investment manager and chairman of the AUW Support Foundation Board, echoed her enthusiasm. "We are proud to have The Goldman Sachs Foundation as a partner in building a world-class university committed to educating talented young women from Asia. We expect AUW graduates to serve as catalysts for addressing gender inequality in the

Scheduled to open its doors to students in 2007, AUW will be a vibrant residential learning community where highly talented women from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds will develop their intellectual and personal potential. The university will offer a five-year integrated programme leading to a combined bachelors and master's

The university will ultimately serve as a beacon for those striving to raise educational standards, increase opportunities for women, and promote regional cooperation and understanding among the peopresident of the AUW Support

Awami League (AL) Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday

for free and fair election

The arrestees are Shawkat, Shafaet and Selim. Of them, Shawkat confessed that he is the general manager of University Coaching Centre (UCC) and Shafayet is an official. A guard of Teachers Students

Centre (TSC) said Shawkat was coming out of Janata Bank TSC branch, where DU admission forms for B and D units are sold, with a

On suspicion, he informed the journalists present there of the When challenged by Shahjahan

Shuvo, a university correspondent, Shawkat promptly returned back to the bank and concealed the bag. Proctor Prof AK Firoz Ahmed and

assistant proctors rushed to the spot

and handed the suspects to police. As the bag was not found later the authorities suspected that bank officials might be involved with

"I have told them that the bag must be found out in any way as the transparency of the admission process is involved with it," said the

Bank Manager AKM Khaleguzzaman said he is going to hold a meeting with his officials to

take necessary steps in this regard. BSF returns

bodies of 3 Bangladeshis

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) returned the bodies of three Bangladesh farmers after a flag meeting at Bewihari bordering area under Banliadangi upazila of Thakurgaon yesterday, BDR sources said.

BSF gunned down the farmers when they went their paddy fields for harvesting yesterday morning near Pillar 378/2-F of Bewjhari bordering area. BSF of Chaklagochh camp under 47 Krishanganj Battalion fired at least 20 bullets, leaving three farmers dead on the spot.

The dead were identified as, Anar Uddin, 25, son of Mazimuddin of village Baria Bashi and Hamidul Islam 32, son of Piaruddin Ahmed of village Jhuliabasti under Baliadangi upazila and Md Moksedul Islam, 11, son of Moslem Uddin of Ranisankail upazila of Thakurgaon.

The bodies were handed over to the family members of the

Meanwhile, BSF handed over Md Ramzan Ali, 14, son of Asir Uddin of village Beltala under Baliadangi upazila of Thakurgaon to Inddian police, family and BDR

AL for neutrality in state-run media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

urged the caretaker government (CG) to ensure neutrality in state-run media to help create an atmosphere favourable

"Aneutral and level playing field is a prerequisite for holding a free and fair election. The state-run media can create such environment. But it is unfortunate that no change has taken place in Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar," said Quader at a press briefing at AL's Dhanmondi office in the capital

editors and other top officials of BTV, Betar, Press Institute of Bangladesh Directorate of Film and Publications, appointed by the previous government, are still in their post which, he said, is hampering the neutrality of these organisations.

Alleging that the state-run medias are still controlled by the Hawa Bhaban, Quader called for equal and neutral coverage in radio and television.

AL leaders Abdul Mannan, Abdur Rahman, Yafes Osman, Dr Dipu Moni and BM Mozammel Haque

'Reform EC to hold free, fair election'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

hold a free and fair election.

25 houses gutted in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 25 houses were gutted in a devastating fire at Swamibag in Sutrapur area in the city yesterday

Police said the fire originated from a tin-roofed house at Swamibag Rail Crossing area at 5:45pm and soon engulfed the adiacent houses

But the reason behind the fire could not be known till filing the

the city brought the fire under con-

Bastabayan Kendra (Centre for implementing women's rights) at Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) office in the city.

Yeasmin Emili, general secretary of the centre, said as the head of the caretaker government is a political person and assumed the post by violating the constitution, he had to prove his neutrality but failed.

chief adviser to the caretaker government to implement the 11point demand of 14-party combine within the stipulated time. Shagufta said the bureaucrats

loyal to four-party alliance have been reshuffling and distributing duties among them making the administration more biased.

rights of franchise for people of women as well as their security.

Mamtaz Farook, Assistant General Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury and Advocate Monju Naznin were present at the press conference.

chased them and dispersed the

the Shaheed Minar on the campus

at that time, said witnesses.

Five crude bombs went off near

Being chased, BCL men pelted

Additional police were deployed

After staying outside the campus

JCD activists with brickbats and

damaged about 10 vehicles on the

on the campus to avert further

during the BNP-Jamaat-led coali-

tion government the BCL, student

wing of Awami League, tried to enter

the campus under the umbrella of

road causing traffic disruption.

untoward incident.

JCD, BCL clash in front of Dhaka College President Moniruzzaman Manik

procession

DU CORRESPONDENT

Activists of Jativatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) and Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) yesterday locked horn in front of Dhaka College causing damage to around 10 vehicles and traffic disruption for

about 30 minutes. Police picked up a BCL worker Bipul Kumar Singh, an MSc student of Mathematics, on charge of van-

The clash erupted at around 12:15pm when the BCL workers in a procession led by its President Sagir Ahmed tried to enter the campus on the opening day of the college after Eid vacation.

caretaker government, said But the JCD men led by its

were present at the briefing.

Speakers at a press conference yesterday demanded reformation of the Election Commission (EC) to

They also criticised the present EC for its failure to publish a correct voter list even after spending Tk 60

report at 9:00pm last night.

Eight units of the Fire Brigade of

organised by Nari Odhikar

In a written statement Shagufta

She urged the president and

The speakers demanded nec-

religious minority groups and Vice-president of the centre Secretary Shimu Anwar, Prof Mamtaz Begum, Advocate Dr

Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) on essary measures to ensure the October 28.

70 DAB members

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

iberal Democratic Party (LDP)

A total of 70 doctors of the **Doctors Association of Bangladesh** (DAB) joined the LDA and formed a new association with a 21-member convening committee. Former Secretary General of DAB was made the convener of LDA.

President Prof AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury will exchange views with the general people from today at his Baridhara KC Memorial Clinic.

Sacked BSS staffs demand reinstatement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirty-four employees of stateowned news agency Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), who were sacked by the immediate past fourparty alliance government immediately after assuming office in 2001, yesterday demanded their reinstate-

Although iournalists' organisations home and abroad, the civil society, many political parties, intellectuals and professionals strongly condemned the government move earlier terming it as an expression of political vengeance and demanded their reinstatement, the government did not pay any heed to it.

As the 34 terminated staffs of the news agency, 27 of whom are journalists, were denied of justice over its whole tenure, they have appealed to the caretaker government for their tement and arrears The terminated staff did not get justice due to arrogant attitude of two

former managing directors and some officials loyal to the four-party alliance government, said the members of Niriatan Birodhi Sanqbadik Forum (Forum of Journalists against Torture), BSS, in a statement. "We hope the information ministry of the caretaker government will take

effective steps for justice by reinstat-

ing the terminated staff immediately

the statement added.

50 pro-AL docs get bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted bail to 50 pro-Awami League (AL) doctors, including president and secretary general of Swadhinata Chikitshak Parishad, in five cases filed against them for attacking the pro-BNP doctors and ransacking different departments and faculties of Bangabandhu Sheikh

Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Shamsul Alam passed the order after Swadhinata Chikitshak Parishad President Professor Ruhul Haq, Secretary General Dr M Iqbal Arslan and others appeared before the court and sought bail in the cases filed on behalf of pro-BNP doctors with Shahbagh Police Station on

Earlier on November 1, over 70 pro-BNP doctors, including its Secretary General AZM Zahid Hossain, filed five cases against them for attacking the pro-AL doctors and ransacking and torching biochemistry department and library of BSMMU on October 28.

join LDA

A group of doctors yesterday joined the Liberal Doctors Association (LDA), a front organisation of the

out the possibility nor accept it." Another adviser M Azizul Haque said they could only try to persuade the CEC to quit on moral grounds. "We are optimistic that there will be a positive outcome if the eminent persons and professional bodies Meanwhile, newly formed LDP act to convince him that he should resign on moral grounds," the

> From the outset, the council of advisers has been seeking ways to

adviser said.

make the EC effective and suitable for free and fair conduct of the

14-party leaders come out of the High Court in the city yesterday after they were granted ad-interim anticipatory bail

upcoming polls. Earlier the president had sum-Some advisers at Thursday moned the EC secretary in the night's meeting guestioned the wake of intense anxiety among the acceptability of the updated voter advisers over the updated roll, list citing the unusual rise in the

> number of voters They also stressed the need for immediate measures to rectify the mistakes in the voter roll.

Referring to the 2001 census report, an adviser told the meeting that the number of voters should not exceed the eight crore mark. whereas it stands at 9.30 crore, adding to the already bitter controversy over the list.

The secretary of the EC

Secretariat was present at

Bangabhaban on Thursday night.

Still, the EC did not bother to reply to the advisers' suggestions until the president ordered the secretary to see him yesterday. Before sending the secretary to the Bangabhaban, the commission held a meeting and observed that it is not possible to take drastic mea-

sures to take the errors out of the

electoral roll as the election sched-

uled for January approaches fast. "The president enquired whether we could detect and cut out the fake names or any duplication in the updated voter list. I told him that we don't have adequate time in hand. We could have taken such steps, had there been more time ahead of the polls," Abdur Rashid Sarkar, secretary to the EC Secretariat, told reporters on his return from Bangabhaban.

He said he told the president that they will correct the mistakes only if anyone brings it to the their notice.

"But it is not possible to send officials from door to door for the purpose," he added.

HOW THE EC WASTED TIME CEC MA Aziz had unilaterally decided to prepare a fresh voter list in July last year, ignoring the objections from the then two election

commissioners The EC began the voter-listing job on January 1. Disposing two writ petitions, the High Court (HC) on January 4 directed the commission to revise the electoral roll prepared in 2000. But the EC continued the enumeration task, ignoring the HC directives and strong opposition from different political parties and professional

bodies. It came up with a draft of the fresh voter list registering 9.13 crore voters on May 3. The unusual rise in the number of voters trigaered enormous controversy over

its accuracy. The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court on May 23 upheld the HC directives and cancelled the draft voter list prepared at a cost of over Tk 40 crore. The EC then opted to move slowly to update the voter list following the apex court's judgment.

It finally started the revision job

on July 1 and completed it in

August. But the updated list too

witnessed a staggering 9.30 crore

voters. It was prepared without scrutinising the voters' information collected by the field level officials. The commission did not take any step to rid the updated list of flaws before issuing printing order

in late October.



Dr MA Rashid, founder vicechancellor of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), says a press

25th death

Dr Rashid was elected fellow of the American Society of Civil Engineers, a trustee of Asian Institute on Technology. He was awarded the Independence Award (Swadinatha Padak) posthumously.

Mistake rectification not possible for time pressure Besides, he was associated with Chifferent welfare activities in Dhaka Besides, he was associated with and in his village home in Habiganj.

Mohammad Alam Khan



Mohammad Alam Khan, father of freedom fighter Abdul Halim of Munshiganj,

says a press release He died on this day in 1998 due

to old age complications. On the occasion, a milad and doa mahfil will be held at his youngest son's residence at Moghbazar in the

DHÂKA TODAY

Media award

Discussion

announce and hand over WFP Media Award 2006, Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:30am.

Colonel Taher Sangsad will hold a

discussion on 'Reform in defence

World Food Programme (WFP) will

system: Reflections of Colonel Taher'. Venue: TSC, DU. Time: 3:30pm. Freshers' reception

A freshers' reception for honours and masters students of Fall-2006 sessions of Stamford University Bangladesh will be held. Venue: Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre. Time: 2:30pm.