

# Ensure security for religious minorities during election

## Speakers urge caretaker govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday urged the caretaker government to create a congenial atmosphere so that 80 lakh minority voters can exercise their franchise without fear in the upcoming general election.

They said the religious minorities would not dare to go to the polling centres as the terrible repression unleashed by the activists of BNP-led four-party alliance in the wake of 2001 general election still haunts them.

The caretaker government should take necessary measures so that the minority voters feel secure and can cast their votes according

to their free will, they added.

South Asian People's Union Against Fundamentalism and Communism organised the discussion at a city hotel. Two documentaries on 'Evidence of persecution on minorities' written by four-party alliance' by writer Shahriar Kabir were also screened at the programme.

Dr Hamida Hossain of Ain O Salish Kendra said that the atrocities on the minority communities were aimed at intimidating them into not voting for the candidates of their choice.

The four-party alliance carried out such acts of violence also to force the minorities out of their lands

so that the attackers can grab abandoned lands and property, she added.

He also observed that most of the acts of violence could have been avoided if the government had taken proper security measures in time.

Walur Rahman of Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs said it is high time to stamp out religious extremism. The nation would be at stake unless drastic measures are taken right now, he added.

Dr Qazi Faruque Ahmed of Sammilita Nagorik Andolon said thousands of incidents of violence that took place during the BNP-

Jamaat regime went unreported and such incidents are still taking place in the country.

He urged the civil society and international community to send observers to the affected areas and put pressure on the caretaker government to take security measures for the minorities.

The BNP-Jamaat alliance has resorted to violence against the minority communities to make Bangladesh a monolithic society, said Prof Ajoy Roy.

Prof Kabir Chowdhury said that the pattern and magnitude of the repression is frightening and such repression can only be compared with the activities of the Nazis.

## Unite to resist vote rigging, says Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday called on all to unite to resist vote rigging in the upcoming general election.

The four-party alliance did not want the welfare of people; they came to power only to plunder people's money, she said.

Hasina also said that her party, if voted to power, would recover the money plundered by corrupt alliance leaders and utilise those for the welfare of the people.

She said this while exchanging views with Bangladesh Islami Oikya Jote leaders who called on her at the party's Dhanmondi office.

The AL chief said Jamaat-Islami, a key component of the four-party alliance, has been using Islam to come to power again.

She also said that her party has never tried to use religion for political gains.

Many leaders are defecting from the four-party alliance as they have realised that the alliance has lost people's trust, Hasina said.

Maulana Mesbahur Rahman, president of Bangladesh Islami Oikya Jote, said Jamaat does not believe in human rights and people's freedom.

He also sought moral support from the AL for resisting those who do politics in the name of religion.

The Jote leaders also announced that they would work with the 14-party combine to realise its 11-point demand.

Advocate Nurul Islam Khan, Maulana Ismail Jahedi, Maulana Mokhlesur Rahman and Maulana Amol Islam also spoke at the meeting.

## Hearing of Ershad's gold smuggling case resumes today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The hearing on the gold smuggling case filed against former president and Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad will resume today.

Judge Mohammad SM Mujibur Rahman of the First Additional Metropolitan Session Judge's Court will hear statements from any witness of the case.

Earlier on September 20 and October 19, the court had recorded statements of four prosecution witnesses (PWs) who told the court that they knew nothing about the allegations against Ershad.

Moreover, the court also issued summons upon all the witnesses including the investigation officer (IO) to appear before it today.

They are—Fakir Ashraf, former joint collector of National Board of Revenue (NBR), Pandab Chandra Barman, assistant arms and explosives expert of Dhaka deputy commissioner's office, Mohammad Ali, former secretary to the Civil Aviation and Tourism Affairs Ministry and Sheikh Mohammad Ali Haider, an inspector of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

The last date of recording deposition of the PW-3 Azimuddin Ahmed, then secretary of energy and mineral resources ministry, was on February 14, 2000. Since then, no witnesses appeared before the court, despite taking necessary steps.

A team of customs officials held four people including two foreign nationals at Zia International Airport on July 17, 1990 when they were attempting to smuggle around 3.6 kg gold worth about Tk 2.5 crore into Bangladesh, the prosecution said.

A smuggling case was filed with the Cantonment Police Station the same day against the four —Bernhard Rudiger of Germany, David Anthony Chalmar Chaker of England, then manager of the Zia International Airport Maj (Retd) Ashraf Uddin Sekender and Abu Taher, a security guard of the airport.

During investigation, the IO found evidence of Ershad's involvement in the smuggling and his name was included in the charge sheet.

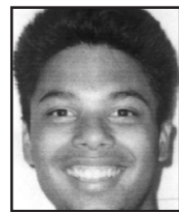
Rudiger, Chalmar Chaker, Ashraf and Taher were convicted and sent to prison on different terms on May 14, 1992.

The trial against Ershad did not start due to a stay order from the High Court.

Ershad was acquitted and discharged of four graft cases in the last two months after his announcement to join the four-party alliance.

## Buet student drowns in pond

Doa mahfil tomorrow



Hamidullah Kausar (Tanim), a student of Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology (BUET), drowned in a pond in Comilla on November 4, says a press release.

He was the son of Prof Dr Abdul Muqtadir of Buet and Afia Muqtadir. He was buried at Banani graveyard.

A doa mahfil will be held on the Buet campus after Asr prayers tomorrow.

Friends, relatives and well-wishers have been requested to attend the programme and pray for the salvation of the departed soul.

## CONTEMPT PDB chairman, 7 high officials asked to appear before HC

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A High Court (HC) division bench yesterday asked the Power Development Board (PDB) Chairman ANM Rezwan and its seven high officials to appear in person before it on December 4 and explain why a contempt charge would not be brought against them.

The bench comprising Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Kamrul Islam Siddiqui passed the order following a writ petition filed by its Additional Director Mohammad Nasir Uddin.

The writ petition came challenging the legality of promotion of another Additional Director Mosharrar Hossain to the post of director, even though he (Mosharrar) was promoted to the post of additional director after six months of Nasir's promotion.

In his petition, Nasir mentioned that he was promoted as additional director on March 25, 1999 while Mosharrar on August 2, the same year. But the PDB gave seniority to Mosharrar on September 3, 2001.

On July 7, 2004, the HC declared seniority of Mosharrar illegal following a writ filed by Nasir challenging the legality of superseding the seniority.

The Supreme Court (SC) upheld the HC verdict and rejected the leave to appeal petition of the PDB on January 29 this year. But the PDB did not pay heed to the HC and the SC orders and gave Mosharrar to the post of director superseding the seniority.

Advocates Subrata Chowdhury, Promila Biswas and BA Rashid moved the petition on behalf of the petitioner.

## Deadline for TIB cartoon contest extended

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has extended the deadline till November 20 for submitting cartoons for a contest ahead of the International Anti-corruption Day on December 9, says a press release.

TIB organised the contest to create awareness about corruption and patriotic zeal among youths.

A total of six participants in two groups 'Ka' (13-18 years old) and 'Kha' (19-35 years old) will be awarded certificates and Tk 15,000, Tk 12,000 and Tk 10,000 respectively.

The participants may use either pencil or water colour on a paper of highest A-3 (297mm X 420mm) size. The cartoon has to be original.

## BNP, Jamaat rally round CEC

FROM PAGE 1

required for holding the election." Before the attending the meeting, Razzak told The Daily Star that he came on behalf of his party and MK Anwar and Mofazzal Karim on behalf of the BNP to discuss election-related matters.

Mofazzal, a member of the advisory council to the BNP chairman, earlier met the EC secretary separately.

The BNP-Jamaat team met the EC at a time when the political arena is witnessing growing heat over the issue of resignation of the CEC and election commissioners. Apart from the 14-party, civil society and different professional bodies are demanding reconstitution of the EC. Even the council of advisers to the

**DHAKA TODAY**

**Reception**  
The diplomatic corps accredited to Bangladesh will accord a reception to Prof Yunus on winning his Nobel Peace Prize. Venue: Residence of Turkish Ambassador. Time: 6:30pm.

**Seminar**  
World Bank organises a seminar on 'Urban issues and challenges in Dhaka'. Venue: Ballroom, Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. Time: 11:00am.

**Award launch**  
HSBC will launch Young Entrepreneurs Awards 2006-07. Venue: Top of the Park, Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. Time: 4:00pm.

**Discussion**  
Bangabandhu Sanskritik Jote will hold a discussion to mark the Jail Killing Day. Venue: Liberation War Museum. Time: 4:00pm.

**Discussion**  
Bangladesh Krishak Federation will hold a discussion to mark the 10th death anniversary of Comrade Abdus Sattar

Khan. Venue: Moni Singh-Farhad Memorial Trust Dhaka. Time: 3:00pm.

**Blue for peace**  
Family members of slain former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria and civil society members will form a human chain as a part of their Blue for Peace programme. Venue: Sat Masjid Road. Time: 4:30pm.

**Human chain**  
Sammilita Nagorik Andolon and Peshajibi Samannaya Parishad will form a human chain demanding resignation of Chief Election Commissioner. Venue: In front of Election Commission. Time: 11:00am.

**Reminiscence meeting**  
A reminiscence meeting in memory of the victims of Dhaka University (DU) Jagannath Hall building collapse will be held. Venue: Hall auditorium. Time: 6:00pm.

**Painting exhibition**  
The inaugural ceremony of Najma Akther's first solo painting exhibition titled 'In colours, in letters' will be held. Venue: Shilpangan gallery. Time: 5:00pm.



Ishtiaq Aziz Ulfat, third from left, chairman of Freedom Fighters People's Council, joins Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) presenting a bouquet to Colonel (Retd) Oli Ahmed, executive president of the party, at a ceremony at the party office in the city yesterday.

**WEATHER TODAY**

**Light rain likely**

UNB, Dhaka

Light rain or drizzle is likely to occur at one or two places over Chittagong, Sylhet, Khulna, Barisal, Dhaka and Rajshahi divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Night temperature may rise by 1-3 degree Celsius over the country during the period, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 30.9 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Dhaka and lowest 19.8 degree Celsius at Ishwardi.

**The sun sets in the capital at 5.15pm today and rises at 6:10am tomorrow.**

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature	Humidity in percentage
Dhaka	Max 30.9 Min 21.3	Morning 75 Evening 61
Chittagong	29.5 23.3	71 96
Rajshahi	28.7 20.0	92 82
Khulna	29.0 22.3	85 90
Barisal	29.4 22.6	88 80
Sylhet	30.7 21.5	74 71
Cox's Bazar	26.2 23.2	81 100

caretaker government is looking for ways to make the EC credible for holding a free and fair election.

But the BNP-Jamaat-led four-party alliance is vehemently opposing any change in the EC. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia on Tuesday categorically asked the council of advisers not to tinker with the EC.

Against this backdrop, the BNP-Jamaat delegation's unscheduled meeting with the EC is viewed by many political analysts as the four-party's formal support for it.

Earlier in the morning, Democratic Hindu Party met the CEC and urged him to ensure security of the Hindus before and after the election.

Talking to reporters at his office, EC Secretary Abdur Rashid Sarkar said election schedule would be announced soon.

announcing the election schedule." He went on, "The Election Commission informed us that it is fully prepared to conduct the election in time."

Razzak said the EC sought cooperation from all political parties.

Earlier in the morning, Democratic Hindu Party met the CEC and urged him to ensure security of the Hindus before and after the election.

Talking to reporters at his office, EC Secretary Abdur Rashid Sarkar said election schedule would be announced soon.

Responding to a query, he denied allegations of irregularities in awarding work orders for the printing of updated voter list.



Prof Muzaffer Ahmad speaks at a roundtable on "Election Commission: expectations, achievements and tasks to be done" organised by Transparency International Bangladesh at city's Brac Centre Inn yesterday. On his left is Shadhan Kumar Das and on his right are Prof Khan Sarwar Murshid and Dr Iftekharuzzaman. (Story on Page 16)

## 'Tougher agitation if CEC not removed by Nov 11'

DU CORRESPONDENT

Different political and professional organisations yesterday threatened to enforce tougher movements if their demands for reforms in the Election Commission (EC) and removal of Chief Election

## 'Cancel circular'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Teachers of non-government primary schools yesterday urged the caretaker government to cancel the recently issued circular that imposed restrictions on getting salary of the teachers recruited before 1992.

Primary and Mass Education Ministry issued a circular on November 1 asking the teachers, who were recruited before 1992 and do not have Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC), to submit HSC certificates and certificates of attending Primary Training Institute (PTI) courses by November 18. Otherwise, their monthly salary will not be provided from December 2006, the circular added.

Giving an ultimatum to the caretaker government, teachers under Bangladesh Non-government Primary Teachers Association said they would launch a tougher agitation, including hunger strike, if their demand is not met by November 15.

"Around 25,000 teachers will not get salary due to this new restriction. It is not possible for the teachers to complete the HSC because most of them recruited before 1992 are now 40 to 50 years old and a good number of them will retire in four or five years," said Shamsul Alam, president of the Association while addressing at a press conference at its office in the city.

## Form Supreme Judicial Council

FROM PAGE 16

Supreme Judicial Council is formed to enquire into the allegations of misconduct against the CEC.

"We should not forget that officers in charge, returning officers and presiding officers play the most important role in a general election. So, bringing some changes in the Election Commission alone cannot help conduct a fair election," he noted.

Badiul Alam Majumder, country director of the Hunger Project-Bangladesh, said the common people feel that the EC has turned out to be one of the major barriers to free conduct of elections in the country.

Without an acceptable voter list, it is not possible to see an acceptable election, he added.

The EC is now serving the interest of a particular quarter. It has become an ineffective, non-transparent, anti-people and corrupt organization that stands accountable to none, Badiul Alam observed.

Referring to the existing practices in politics, former AL lawmaker Faruk Khan said workers in his constituency recently did not take heed of his request not to bring out expensive motor-cyclery.

"They said that followers in the rival camp has had a rally with

around 200 motorbikes," he said adding, "We need to come out of this sort of practices and strive to make politics clean."

It is not possible to contest an election with a budget of Tk 5 lakh, Faruk said suggesting that a candidate should be allowed to spend between Tk 15 to Tk 20 lakh while the security money should be raised to Tk one lakh from the present Tk 10,000.

He said he thinks most of the recommendations mentioned in the TIB reports are acceptable.

Former CEC Justice Abdur Rouf said, "Today we are crying for democracy. But the institutions that are necessary to strengthen democracy are being destroyed."

He said he had started a process to introduce identity cards for the voters but not a single politician gave support to the project. "They might have thought if the project was implemented, they won't be able to influence the voters," he noted.

"The idea of neutrality is not a good one. We should rather think about how to make the election process neutral," Rouf said.

Professor Muzaffer Ahmad, chairman of TIB board of trustees, said there are many weaknesses in the EC as an institution. "There are

many good practices around us. An institute that conducts the election should be able to work as per the electoral laws," he observed.

Abdur Razzak, another former AL lawmaker said corruption affects everything and so it should be stopped first. The people with black money seek to make the EC partisan so that they could get elected, he added.

The present EC does not have the power to undo an election even if it is highly controversial, he said.

Professor Abu Ahmed of Dhaka University emphasised on making the EC financially independent. Referring to the controversy over CEC, he said, "The whole focus is now on a particular person."

Earlier, Shahzad M Akram and Shadhan Kumar Das jointly made a presentation on a TIB report titled 'Bangladesh Election Commission: A Diagnostic Study'.

Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of TIB, said the non-governmental anti-graft organisation got cooperation from all except the EC in preparing the report. "It's unfortunate that we did not get necessary help from the Election Commission in doing the job."

## HC delists contempt case against CEC from hearing

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday delisted from hearing a contempt of court case against CEC Justice MA Aziz and three others, including election commissioners Justice Mahfuzur Rahman and SM Zakaria, for non-compliance with the HC edicts for updating the electoral roll.

Awami League General Secretary MA Jalil filed the case along with a writ petition challenging the validity of the Election Commission secretariat under the office of the prime minister in January.

According to daily cause list, the contempt case coupled with the writ petition came up for fixing the date of hearing in the court's order of the day.

When the matter came up before a division bench comprising Justice Nozrul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury, Barrister M Amir-Ul Islam, the counsel for Jalil, prayed for de-listing both the cases.

The lawyer said he did it at the instruction of his client. He submitted that his client expressed his unwillingness to have the date fixed for hearings in view of the current "political situation".

After hearing Amir, the court passed the order of de-listing the cases from hearing.

## BSF abducts 3 Bangladeshis

UNB, Sathkira

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) abducted three Bangladeshi youths from Nawapara frontier of Sathkira yesterday.

Local sources said the Indian border guards of Barunhat camp kidnapped the three while they were taking bath in the Ichhamati river in the morning.

The abducted youths are Saiful Islam, 20, Abul Bashir, 25 and Hazrat Ali, 27, of Nawapara village under Dehatla upazila.

BDR sources told the news agency that the victims' families informed them about the abduction. The BSF, however, denied the allegation, the sources added.

## Shibir attack on female students condemned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different organisations yesterday strongly condemned Shibir attack on a procession of the female students of Rangpur Carmichael College.

On November 6, a group of Islami Chhatra Shibir activists swooped on the students of the college on their way to submitting a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner (DC) and Police Super (SP) demanding security on the college campus following intrusion of miscreants into a female dormitory of the college.

The attack left 15 students and two photojournalists injured.

Termining the attack a threat to the education and progress of women, Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) demanded steps to ensure security of women on the college campus, proper investigation into the incident and punishment to the culprits.

Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) voiced concern over the Shibir barbarity and said it would be a matter of great regret if any of the female students leave the college in fear of insecurity.

## MHE admission test postponed

DU CORRESPONDENT

Admission test of Masters in Health Economics (MHE) programme of the Institute of Health Economics, Dhaka University (DU) will be held on November 20, says a press release.

The test will be held at fourth floor of Arts Building at 2:30pm.

## Zidane opens food plant, heads home

FROM PAGE 1

Grameen and Danone have plan to set up 50 additional factories across the country in next 10 years if the first factory set up on 700 square metres of land at Banani Betgari in northern district Bogra is successful.

As the function began, children from rural areas welcomed Zidane with a song when he reached Sonargaon Ball Room.

Zidane inaugurated Grameen Danone Foods Limited's first factory in Bogra by putting his sign on the founding stone plaque that will be installed at the Bogra factory.

The factory will produce 3,000kg yoghurt in the first year, increasing to 10,000kg in the third year and beyond. Shoktoidi will contain protein, vitamins, iron, calcium and zinc ingredients to fulfil nutritional requirements of children.

The factory will use purified water and harvested rainwater in the production process. It will mainly use natural gas with a special effort to use biogas and solar power to minimise the use of natural gas. The yoghurt will be sold in special biodegradable cups.

"This is a unique opportunity to create a business with a strong social aspect, a company whose ambition is not to maximise profits but rather to act

in the interests of the population without making losses," Prof Muhammad Yunus, president of the Grameen Group, told the function.

Termining the project a social business enterprise, Yunus said the aim of the company is to help people, without incurring financial loss. "The main objective will not be profit maximisation rather to help eradicate poverty by creating opportunities for the poor."

With the mission to reduce poverty by a unique proximity business model that will provide daily healthy nutrition to the poor, the project has the objectives to offer a product with high nutritional value, create jobs and protect environment.

"Made of cow's milk, date molasses and sugar, Shoktoidi is a natural source of calcium and protein which are essential for healthy growth and bones," Yunus said, adding that a pot of 80gm Shoktoidi will provide 30 per cent of a child's daily requirement of vitamin A, iron, zinc and iodine.

Each pot of 80g Shoktoidi will be sold at Tk 5 among poor families living in 25-kilometre radius off the factory.

"We have no plan to export the yoghurt or sell it to other parts of the country," said the Grameen chief while replying to a media query, adding that the yoghurt will remain fresh for three

days.

Several hundred new jobs will be created in the region's livestock farming, distribution and marketing sectors.

To avoid coming into competition with other milk purchasers, Grameen Danone will develop a series of micro-farms. Grameen Bank will offer micro-credit to the potential farmers.

Then they will purchase one or more cows and sell the milk they produce to Grameen Danone.

In return the company will guarantee them a fixed price throughout the year, and will send its veterinary expert to help them improve yield and quality.

Replying to a query, Prof Yunus said, "The investors will not take away the profit. The profits will be put for innovation and creation of new opportunities in a process to gradually develop the model."

The company also has a plan to expand the business concept elsewhere in the world, particularly in Africa. "It's a dream, many people think it's a dream that can't be materialised," said the Nobel laureate about his unique business concept. "We believe, we have made this possible not only for Bangladesh but also for the world."

While addressing the function, Franck Riboud, CEO of Groupe Danone said, "I am utterly convinced

that our future depends on our ability to explore and invent new businesses and new types of enterprise. It is a great opportunity to make progress in that direction and take another huge step towards fulfilling our mission: to bring health through food to as many people as possible."

Emmanuel Faber, Executive Vice President of Groupe Danone's Asia Pacific unit, said, "With this initiative, social impact on local community takes precedence over the need to maximise profits and share them with local communities."

Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (gain) Executive Director Marc Van Ameringen also spoke on the occasion.