

Withdraw armed forces, CEC urged

A group of prominent citizens yesterday urged the Chief Election Commissioner to withdraw the armed forces personnel from the arms recovery drive, reports UNB.

The drive for recovery of illegal arms is being conducted under the direction and power of the Chief Election Commissioner. Hence, all credit, failure and responsibilities of the drive will have to be borne by the CEC, they said in a written press statement.

At a press conference at an art gallery here in the afternoon, the group identifying themselves as 'citizens in protest,' however, refused to make any comment on the February 15 election being boycotted by the main opposition parties.

"About the election, we have spoken individually or from our respective forums. Now we can tell you that we are concerned about ap-

Steps to ensure voters' security discussed

The Chief Election Commissioner at a meeting with officials of the Home Ministry, Armed Forces and law enforcing agencies here yesterday discussed measures to ensure security of voters during the coming election, reports UNB.

CEC Justice A K M Sadique instructed the authorities concerned to maintain law and order during the election and take necessary measures to ensure voters' presence without any hindrance.

The meeting, held at the Election Commission Secretariat, also asked the law enforcers to ensure security to the employees and officials engaged in election duty.

Army chief Lt Gen A S M Nasim, Navy chief Rear Admiral M Nurul Islam, Election Commission Secretary Md Ershadul Haq, Home Secretary Syed Rezaul Haq, Principal Staff Officer of the Armed Forces Division Maj Gen M S A Phuyuan, Inspector General of Police A S M Shahjahan, Director General of BDR Maj Gen Ejah Ahmed Chowdhury, DG of DGF Maj Gen Imam Uz Zafnan, DG of Ansar and VDP Maj Gen M A Kabir, acting chief of Air Force Air Commodore Shamsher Ali, Additional Secretary of the EC Secretariat S M Zakaria, DG of NSI Brig A K M Aminul Haq, Additional IGP M Azizul Haq and A F Kabir and DMP Commissioner A N Hussain were present.

The British High Commission in Dhaka has advised the applicants for settlement entry clearance, who have been invited for interview on February 14 and 15, not to visit the immigration office on either day. A press release of the High Commission yesterday requested the applicants to wait for further advice, reports UNB.

Yunus

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talise rural life. "He saw the possibilities for empowering and enhancing the status of women — everywhere among the poorest of the poor — through micro-credits for craft enterprises. Above all, he believed in the genius, the resourcefulness and the integrity of the common people."

Professor Yunus, who established the Grameen Bank in 1983, emphasised that self-employment creates jobs with little capital investment, whereas to create only one salaried job requires much capital investment. "Craft-based self-employment is tailor-made to an individual's own ability, so he or she can start working immediately," he said.

He stressed that the Grameen Bank's results are not due to charity, but to linking Bangladesh's traditional textile industry, which is based on some one million weaving families, to the world market. "We simply showed that our weavers could make a first-rate product at a competitive price."

The roundtable was followed by the inauguration of a week-long exhibit in UNESCO's main hall of traditional Bangladeshi hand loom weaving and samples of fabrics produced through Grameen small-business loans. The evening concluded with a fashion show of hand-woven cotton and silk clothing by Bangladeshi designer Bibi Russell.

Colombo blast: 19 Tamils held

COLOMBO, Feb 8: Detectives have taken into custody 19 Tamil suspects in connection with last week's attack on the Central Bank, which killed 83 people, the police chief said Thursday, reports AP.

Some of these suspects may not be involved... but the brains behind it is not in custody," police chief Wickremasinghe Rajaguru told reporters.

The 19 suspects were arrested by senior JP leaders Begum Raushan Ershad, Kazi Zafar Ahmed and M A Maleque and leaders of the party's front organisations.

Mizan urges army to maintain neutrality

By Staff Correspondent

Acting chairman of the Jatiya Party Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury said in Dhaka yesterday that the parties in power had never survived with the help of the security forces.

Addressing newsmen of an iftar party arranged by him at a local hotel, Mizan urged the army to maintain its neutrality and not to get involved in any controversy that might tarnish its image.

Mizan said, BNP was trying to cling to power by attacking the opposition activists.

The iftar party was attended by senior JP leaders Begum Raushan Ershad, Kazi Zafar Ahmed and M A Maleque and leaders of the party's front organisations.

hended violence centring round the polls," said Prof Anisuzzaman responding to a query, from a reporter.

Responding to another question, he said: "We are not against recovering illegal arms. But the army should not come in civil activities." A number of prominent citizens, including university teachers Prof Anisuzzaman and Dr Abrar Chowdhury, NGO personalities Khushi Kabir, Dr Hamida Hossain and Farida Akhtar, human rights activists Advocate Khaleda Khatun and Nurul Islam and journalist Shamim Akhtar attended the press conference.

Earlier on Wednesday, the group of citizens held a meeting in the city for exchanging views. They will also organise another meeting for exchange of views with leaders of different professional groups at 3 pm at the Jatiya Press Club auditorium on February 11.

Ban on carrying of licensed arms Feb 11-17

The government has prohibited carrying of licensed arms from February 11 to 17 in the interest of maintaining law and order during the general elections, reports BSS.

The government has imposed the prohibition on carrying of licensed arms under Article 26 of Arms Act 1878, an official handbook said.

Violators of the order will be arrested. The prohibition will, however, not be applicable to the members and officials of law-enforcing agencies, and security personnel engaged in different government, private and semi-government offices and establishments.

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Polls: 55 foreign journalists get visas so far

The government has given visas to 55 foreign journalists so far to cover the parliamentary elections on February 15.

Quoting a source at the Information Ministry, the Probe News Agency said, the journalists have got 12-day visas effective from 8 to 20 of this month.

The government has directed the country's diplomatic missions abroad to take necessary actions in this regard.

Meanwhile, the first team of foreign journalists of Reuter TV and Reuter News Agency has arrived in Dhaka. An advance team of BBC Television is already in the capital.

Ukhia TNO summoned by polls inquiry committee

COX'S BAZAR, Feb 8: The District Electoral Inquiry Committee has summoned the Ukhia Thana Nirbahi Officer (TNO) to appear before it to testify for his alleged support in favour of a BNP candidate, reports UNB.

Electoral Inquiry Committee officer and second Sub-Judge of Cox's Bazar, Dewan Ali Raza on Tuesday directed TNO Mohammad Habibur Rahman to appear before the committee at 3 pm on Saturday.

Ali Ahmed and Abdul Mannan of Vaipara village under the constituency filed allegation before the committee that the TNO was sanctioning the Food For Work projects among the supporters and party activists of BNP candidate Mohammad Shahjahan.

The thana chief executive is also distributing cash money and CI sheets of abandoned Rohingya camps among the voters to influence them to vote for Shahjahan, they alleged.

The committee also summoned the complainants to appear before the Election Inquiry Committee, constituted for looking into the violation of election code of conduct, on the day.

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Visitors at a stall at the Ekushey Book Fair at Bangia Academy yesterday. — Star photo

By Staff Correspondent

Uncertainty looms over the fate of the Ekushey Book Fair again as the Opposition is likely to gear up its agitation from Sunday.

The tempo of the month-long fair had begun to pick up slightly as more and more people were venturing a visit after a week of its opening.

"Today has been our best day," said one stall-owner on Wednesday, adding that business had been brisk throughout the day — for the first time since the fair began February 1 in the premises of the Bangia Academy amid protests by certain student groups.

More sales were recorded during the evening than during the day, when the visitors were mostly students who only came to browse, according to one publisher.

"The majority of book buyers come after 6 pm and stay till late evening. So we are obliged to stay open till 8-9 pm — well past the official closing time of 5 pm," he elaborated.

Although sales have been increasing, most publishers appeared apprehensive about reaching their sale targets and the future of the fair.

"We fared better at the National Book Fair last month, a reverse in the trend of previous years," said the stall-owner of a well-known publishing house.

The prevailing political situation, rather than Ramadan was blamed for the poor number of visitors.

"We don't know what would happen after Feb 10 when the Opposition is likely to gear up the anti-government agitation throughout the country. Perhaps people will stop coming altogether and the fair will unofficially end before the scheduled closing date of Feb 29," said a stall-owner.

Meanwhile, many people have been thronging to see the two photo exhibitions — one on the Liberation War, organised by the Muktiyoddha Smriti Trust and the other on women political activists, organised by the Sammilita Nari Samaj — currently being held at the fair.

The extension of the book fair on the road outside the Academy premises with stalls offering handicrafts, jewellery, clothes, greeting cards, leather goods, music records, food items and other consumer goods is also attracting a good number of visitors.

"More people are visiting the 'bazaar' outside than the book fair inside," complained one publisher. "People seem to be doing their Eid shopping there!" he exclaimed.

Book fair may face another setback

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Writ challenging polls in Ramadan rejected

The High Court Division yesterday summarily rejected a writ petition challenging the validity of the election Schedule for holding polls during Ramadan, on February 15, reports BSS.

A division bench comprising Justice Bimolendu Bikash Roy Chowdhury and Justice Mohammad Abdul Mannan in their verdict, observed that there is no constitutional bar on holding polls in the month of Ramadan.

Nazim Habibuzzaman, founder adviser of the Farakkah Resistance Movement, had filed the writ. Barrister Kazi Shahadat Hossain conducted the writ on behalf of the petitioner. He was assisted by advocate Sheikh Rezaul Karim, GM Emdadul Haque and MS Zafar Saadeque.

Attorney General M Nurul-lah represented the state.

Bangabazar fire Probe body asked to submit report by Feb 19

Star Report

The Home Ministry has asked the Fire Brigade inquiry committee to submit its findings on the latest Bangabazar fire incident, according to sources.

The inquiry committee that formally started its investigation from February 5 will have to submit its report by February 19.

Anwar Hossain, Director for Planning and Development who heads the inquiry team, told The Daily Star that the Director General has instructed him to include a Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) official in the team.

According to Anwar Hossain, no evidence of electric short-circuit was found following the fire on January 29 that gutted around 120 shops of the Bangabazar hawkers market. DESA engineers informed.

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The Midnight File

Serbs sever all links with NATO-led force

BELGRADE, Feb 8: Bosnian Serbs today severed all military links with the NATO-led peace implementation force in Bosnia, pending the release of eight Bosnian Serb soldiers held by the Bosnian government, the Bosnian Serb news agency said, reports AFP.

Russia gets EC membership

STRASBOURG, France, Feb 8: The Council of Europe's committee of minister has given final approval to Russian membership and formally invited Moscow to join as its 39th member state, the council said today, reports Reuters.

The decision follows approval of Russia's membership bid on January 25 by the parliamentary assembly of the Pan-European Organisation.

Constable succumbs to stab injuries

By Staff Correspondent

Mohammad Salekuddin, a constable, succumbed to stab injuries at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday, according to police sources.

Salek was attacked by some muggers on the night of January 5 near the outer stadium. Later he was sent to the DMCH.

Ban on protests

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ing to Karotya crossing at the Mirpur road, from Karotya crossing to the western point of the Tunnel Road, from Tunnel Road point to Dhanmondi Boys High School, Indira Road adjoining the Farmgate, Khujer Bagan, Manik Mian Avenue and all roads and lanes in the locality mentioned above.

Besides, carrying of firearms, swords, guns, knives, explosives, lathis, stones and similar things have also been banned during the time.

Char Syedpur

From Page 1

spot far away from the main squad. Masir called out his two terrorist associates, Doulat Hussain and Abul Hussain, at the top of his voice and asked them to kill the members of security forces.

Responding to Masir's call, his associates, armed with rods and sticks, attacked and injured the members of the security forces seriously despite giving their identity, and freed Masir.

The miscreants fled the spot as soon as other security personnel reached there, but they did not open fire considering the security of the poor villagers present at that place.

Three injured security personnel were taken to the Combined Military Hospital in a critical condition, the press release said.

It also said a squad of the joint force conducted a drive at 5 am on February 4 to arrest Masir, Doulat Hossain, Abul Hossain and other accomplices.

They gheraoed the area and a small squad during the search arrested two terrorists.

At this stage, the male residents of the area were called in to inquire into the matter. The people of the area expressed their regret for such an unprecedented incident and disclosed the names of the terrorists.

The people also informed that they were fed up with the oppression by these terrorist, the press release said.

It further said that the members of the security personnel had expressed their regret to the villagers for their inconvenience.

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3 killed, 30 hurt in road accidents

By Staff Correspondent

Three persons were killed and thirty others injured in road accidents in Sylhet and Comilla yesterday.

Our Staff Correspondent from Sylhet reports: Three persons died and five others were injured seriously when a Dhaka-bound coach (Dhaka-Ja-3624) and a Srimangal-bound tempo (Moulvibazar Pa-05-0068) from Mirzapore collided head on at Shah-jibazar yesterday morning.

Three passengers of the tempo, a school teacher, Nibaran Dew, 35, of village Bhamaha, Dipak Paul, 30, of village Khushtar and Kalamuddin, 25, of village Sulpur, Srimangal died on the spot.

Of the injured, 3 were admitted to Moulvibazar sadar hospital and 2 to the Srimangal thana health complex.

Police seized the coach. BSS said: Twenty-five persons were injured when two buses one bound for Dhaka and the other bound for Chandpur collided head on at the Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Beltoli near Comilla yesterday afternoon.

DU vacation

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The decision was taken at a meeting of the DU Syndicate held at the Vice Chancellor's office yesterday.

The situation on the university campus became volatile centring the Prime Minister's visit to the Bangla Academy to inaugurate the book fair on February 1.

Just a day before the PM's visit to the campus police attacked the students of Jagannath Hall causing injuries to some 200 students. Police also arrested 95 students from the hall.

Gas reserve

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more discoveries in the same area.

Following the formal announcement of the discovery, Cairn will give Petrobangla a bonus of one million US dollars as per the Production sharing agreement. In turn, Petrobangla will also award its employees a bonus as per tradition, the sources noted.

The drilling was conducted by both the foreign and local experts from the Petroleum Concession Division of the Petrobangla.

With this discovery, the country's total reserve may exceed 13 trillion cubic feet and more gas-based power plants can be set up.

The two foreign companies are the first foreign companies in Bangladesh to strike a gas field since the mid-1970s.

In May 1994, after two years of negotiations with the government, Cairn together with Holland Sea Search Bangladesh BV were the first foreign companies to be awarded a Production Sharing Contract (PSC) on block 16 — covering a 881 square kilometres area in the Bay of Bengal.

The joint venture company has signed another PSC for block 15 — covering the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Sitakunda and Sandwip region and is conducting a survey there for hydrocarbon reserves.

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