

ANNOUNCEMENT

Chief Election Commissioner Mohammad Abu Hena speaks to *The Daily Star* in a candid two-hour long exclusive interview. The CEC discusses in details his plans to hold a free and fair election. Read the CEC's in-depth interview in tomorrow's issue.

Inside Today

Article

The President and the Precedence

Column: Beneath the Surface
by Abdul Bayes
Page 4

International

Netanyahu asks Arafat to help build faith between Arabs, Jews

Myanmar junta steps up campaign against Suu Kyi, bans weekend meetings
Page 8

Business

ECNEC okays 16 projects involving Tk 1629 cr
OPEC to raise production ceiling for Iraq
Pages 6, 7

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day



A special Kind of School
Page 3

NEWS BRIEFS

BCL leader held in Kishoreganj

KISHOREGANJ, June 7: Police arrested a pro-Awami League Chhatra League leader from Gouranga Bazar in the town today on charges of two cases. Syed Ashfaqul Islam Titu, a central executive committee member of BCL, was sent to jail, police said, reports UNB.

78 illegal arms recovered

Police arrested 11 people and recovered 78 illegal firearms and a large number of ammunition from various parts of the country yesterday. The recovered arms and ammunition included a stengun, two rifles, one sawed-off rifle, four revolvers, 58 pipe guns, two single barrel guns, nine LGs, one shutter gun, 169 rounds of bullet and 18 bombs and other explosives, reports UNB.

Kamal's speech over radio, TV today

By Staff Correspondent
The speech of Dr Kamal Hossain, the President of Gano Forum over radio and television is scheduled for today, said a party press release. According to the release the speech will be broadcast and telecast simultaneously at 7:20 pm today.

1 killed, 20 hurt in road accidents

BARISAL, June 7: One person was killed as he fell under the wheel of the bus he was travelling at Takherhat under Gournadhi thana of the district on Barisal-Faridpur highway, police said here today. They said the victim identified as Jalal, 35, fell under the wheel when he tried to disembark from the bus. In another road accident, 20 passengers were injured, three of them seriously at Noapara under Kalkhina thana of Madaripur district today, reports BSS.

Chechen killed in Kashmir fighting

Srinagar, June 7: A Chechen was among nine militants killed in clashes with government forces in insurgency-ravaged Kashmir today, a military spokesman said.

Distribution of ballot papers completed 3 parties vie for all JS seats, 33 for one each

By Staff Correspondent

Only three political parties out of the 81 contesting the June 12 parliamentary elections have fielded candidates in all the 300 constituencies while 33 parties are in the race with only one candidate each, according to an Election Commission fact sheet available yesterday.

The three parties are the BNP, Awami League and Jamaat-e-Islami, followed by Jatiya Party (JP) with 293 candidates.

Ten parties have only two candidates each, 14 have 30 candidates each and nine other parties nominated 50 or more to join the fray.

Zaker Party comes next to the JP with 241 contestants while Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) has 165 and Gano Forum has

104 candidates. A total of 281 independent candidates with 19 election symbols are also in the race.

There are 2,574 candidates in the race, 48 of them women, the fact sheet said. Among the four major political parties, only Jamaat has not nominated any female candidate.

In all 118 political parties were allocated polls symbols by the Election Commission.

Thirty-seven parties failed to field any candidate and dropped out of the race. According to the EC, there are 56,716,935 registered voters in the country.

Of the total, 28,759,994 are male and 27,956,941 are female voters.

Meanwhile, preparations for the holding the polls are nearing completion. The EC has completed distribution of ballot papers throughout the country yesterday.

Electioneering ends at Monday midnight. Meanwhile, UNB adds: The Election Commission yesterday completed distribution of ballot papers by handing over ballots to the representatives of nine nearest districts, including Dhaka.

With this, EC officials said, despatch of all election materials has come to an end as the nation goes in to polls on June 12.

Other election materials, including ballot boxes, were sent to the districts last See Page 12 Col 5



An election procession of the Awami League in Lalbagh area of the city yesterday

Star photo

BNP conspiring to rig polls using Presidency: Hasina

BRAHMANBARIA, June 7: Awami League Chief Sheikh Hasina today charged the BNP with conspiring to use the Presidency and other organs of the government to rig the polls, reports UNB.

Addressing largely attended election rallies at various places in greater Comilla district, she accused the BNP of taking recourse to illegal and secret tactics to steal votes by using the President inside Bangabhaban and other agencies of the government.

Hasina urged people to foil their (BNP's) conspiracy in an attempt to safeguard our hard earned right to franchise. She reiterated her party's stand for transfer of power through peaceful means and by means of ballot.

On the first day of her two-day election campaign in greater Comilla and Sylhet districts, Hasina addressed a large number of public meetings and wayside rallies. She addressed meetings at Muradnagar, Debidwar, Madhabpur, Tantar bus stand, Kasba and Brahmanbaria in the afternoon. Having reached Brahmanbaria at 2:15 pm in heavy downpour Sheikh Hasina told the rally that the BNP during its five-year tenure killed people, destroyed democracy and sold out sovereignty of the country to a foreign power. It

had nipped in the bud people's hopes and aspirations.

Dwelling in brief on BNP's underhand deal to perpetuate its stranglehold on the country, Sheikh Hasina said this party had staged February 15 polls by negating people's right to vote. They staged this fake and fraudulent polls to cling to power against the expressed wishes of people.

Referring to the relentless mass movement launched during past two years, the Awami League leader said it was designed to topple that government consisting of killers and

Historic June 7 observed

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League and its front organisations yesterday observed the 'Historic 7th June' with a renewed pledge to establish the peoples' rights to franchise in a free and fair manner.

The day's programmes included discussion meetings, special prayers, hoisting of the national flag and party flag at AL offices and placing of wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur

See Page 12 Col 4

corrupt elements and re-establish people's right to vote.

Urging people to remain vigilant against such conspiracies, she said they should be careful so that their valuable votes were not stolen away in the coming poll.

Explaining her party programmes, Sheikh Hasina said if voted to power, the Awami League would do everything to restore peace in the society and wipe out corruption and terrorism from the country.

Sheikh Hasina said the AL stood for politics of development and observed, if voted to power, it would set up mills and factories to create employment opportunities for the unemployed and thereby make the country self-reliant. She said the Awami League would also try its utmost to enlarge the scope of employment for women.

Hasina reiterated her party's programme to increase the number of schools and colleges to eradicate illiteracy from the country within next 10 years.

She said her party stood pledged to give subsidy to agriculture sector and extend support to farmers to help them augment production.

Repeating her party's resolve to reorganise local go-

See Page 12 Col 4

A day-long visit to Dhaka-10

Campaigners busy knocking at doors as polls date nears

By Reaz Ahmad

With the voting date just around the corner, residents of the city's Ramna-Tejgaon area comprising Dhaka-10 constituency now have to respond more frequently to knocking at their doors by candidates and their supporters.

A record number of seven independent candidates are among the 19 in the race for the Dhaka-10 seat of the Jatiya Sangsad.

According to residents of the areas, a good number of female political activists teamed up this time to make door-to-door campaign in favour of the candidates from major parties.

One such female campaigner explained to this correspondent that their main target group is the housewives who unlike their husbands, are not usually exposed to outside electioneering.

She said her experience from the last few days door-to-door campaign is that the housewives were no more willing make their choice as per the wishes of their male partners. 'I will cast my vote at my will. My husband has nothing to do with my choice', she quoted a housewife as saying.

Taking to The Daily Star, many people in the Ramna-Tejgaon area said they were pleased at the way electioneering was being conducted by the candidates, talking to them nicely and pledging development of the locality.

Observance of the election code of conduct helped maintain a congenial atmosphere for free and fair polls and removed fear of pre-poll violence, noted an aged voter.

It was, however, reported a section of the press recently that the candidate of a

major party from this constituency had violated election norms by distributing money among poor slum dwellers.

People in the locality and political observers are expecting a tough fight between candidates fielded by BNP and Awami League in this seat. The presence of Jatiya Party and Jamaat nominees in the fray is also being felt.

BNP nominee from this seat Maj (ret'd) Abdul Mannan was also elected from this constituency in the 1991 elections. He had defeat AL chief Sheikh Hasina.

Awami League has fielded Dr S B M Iqbal, a businessman, this time.

JP nominee Imail Hussain Bengal, a freedom fighter, has also contested from this seat in the past. Dr Abdus Salam got Jamaat ticket for the fray.

25.5 m infected by HIV virus

PARIS, June 7: More than 25.5 million adults have been infected by the HIV virus since AIDS was discovered 15 years ago, and 4.5 million have died from the illness, the latest UN figures indicate, reports AFP.

Currently, 21 million adults (aged 15 through 49) are living with HIV and AIDS, said UNAIDS, the joint United Nations programme on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and the virus that brings it on.

Forty-two per cent of the victims are women "and this proportion is growing," it added, punctuating AIDS' lingering reputation in some parts of the world as a "gay plague" that mainly afflicts promiscuous whites.

The latest data puts the total number of AIDS victims among adults and children since the late 1970s at more than seven million, taking into account reporting delays, incomplete reporting, under-diagnosis and lack of access to

See Page 12 Col 1

BTV interview with CEC

Polling in centres can be postponed for bad weather

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Mohammad Abu Hena said polling would be postponed in centres which would be adversely affected by inclement weather on June 12, reports UNB.

According to him, polling will resume in those centres on dates to be announced by the Election Commission later on.

Talking to the state-owned Bangladesh Television, the CEC, however, made it clear that election schedule would not be changed in case of minor changes in weather.

"I hope voters will turn up at polling centres with umbrellas on their heads in the event of rains," he said.

BTV telecast the interview with Abu Hena after Bangla news bulletin last night (Friday) wherein the CEC listed issues on which he gave vent to his mind.

The issues include recovery of illegal arms, use of black money, political parties' adherence to election code of

conduct, deployment of armed forces, voters list and preparations for the poll taken by the Election Commission.

Abu Hena said if any candidate was found to spend more than three lakh taka allowed by Election Commission for expenses during the poll, he would be penalised a minimum of two years and maximum of seven years imprisonment with fine.

"No one guilty of expenses in excess of stipulated amount can avoid this penal measure," the CEC said.

He said: "I believe in framing as well as executing rules. The rules stated above will have to be enforced at any cost."

Explaining the objective underlying the deployment of armed forces, Abu Hena said they would be posted on the election duty to maintain law and order.

They will be away from the polling centre and rush in aid of civil administration only See Page 12 Col 1



The Zia Shishu Kishore Sangathan brought out an election procession in favour of the BNP in the city yesterday

Star photo

'Boat' symbol of famine, killing and oppression, says Khaleda

DINAJPUR, June 7: BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia today said the June 12 election would determine the country's future and urged people to elect her party for the continuation of development and progress, reports UNB.

"Our government was the best in the post-independence period, and still, BNP has no alternative," the former prime minister told a huge public meeting at Gora Shaheed ground in this northern district town at night.

Begum Zia, who is now in an electioneering tour of northern districts, said the BNP government, despite prolonged resistance from her political opponents, tried its best to develop the country in every sector.

She said three parties had ruled the country in the past, but it was the BNP government which could ensure balanced development, bringing about a radical change in the national economy and life-style of commonman.

On the other hand, Begum Zia continued, the other parties had plundered people's money to change their own lots. "Even sitting on the opposition bench, they tried their best to jeopardise our development endeavours."

Observing that these parties

did not believe in pro-people politics, she called upon the people to involve themselves in the politics of development, rejecting the politics which cannot bring welfare to them.

"You have to determine whether the country will proceed towards development and progress or destruction and anarchy," she said and urged the people to vote for "sheaf of paddy", the election symbol of the BNP.

"People are the strength of BNP's politics," she said, adding that BNP took over

power through a democratic and constitutional process, not in a hidden way.

Making an oblique reference to the Awami League and Jatiya Party, Begum Zia alleged that these two parties had sold out the national interest. "The country was liberated at the cost of blood... not to lease it out," she said.

The BNP chief described the "boat" (election symbol of the Awami League) as the symbol of killing, oppression and famine. On the contrary, "sheaf of paddy" is the symbol of production, development, peace and prosperity, she said.

Begum Zia said BNP worked for balanced development in the country, including those areas where opposition leaders got elected in the last parliamentary polls.

Referring to Dinajpur where opposition performance was better in the 1991 election.

See Page 12 Col 8

EC warns 10 more candidates for violating COC

Election Commission (EC) yesterday warned 10 more candidates belonging to different political parties for violating election Code of Conduct-1996, reports BSS.

In a press release, the EC directed the violators of the code of conduct to correct their offences within three days or to face penalty as per rule.

The violators are BNP candidate of Faridpur-3, Awami League, BNP, Jatiya Party, Islami Oikya Jote and Jamaat-e-Islami candidates as well as

See Page 12 Col 6

25-yr treaty with Bangladesh

'Most Indian parties favour renewal'

By M Anwarul Haq

An expert on South Asian politics feels that most of the Indian political parties like to see the 25-year Indo-Bangladesh Treaty of Friendship renewed.

In an interview with The Daily Star Dr Sumit Ganguly, Professor of Political Science at Hunter College and the Graduate School of the City University of New York, said the sentiment in Indian political circles is that the treaty should be renewed but perhaps the terms should be re-examined.

Dr Ganguly, who also taught at the Columbia University and has published a book on the insurgency in Kashmir, is now visiting Dhaka at the invitation of the United States Information Service (USIS).

When his attention was drawn to the fact that none of the major political parties in Bangladesh wanted renewal of the treaty the visiting scholar said it was his feeling that "in

the existing format the treaty had some shades of dominance than fairness." He, however, felt that the new government in India, if it continued in office, might not insist much on its renewal.

Dwelling on Indo-Bangladesh relations, Dr Ganguly said there were two main cross-currents in Delhi's perception of relations with Dhaka. One school of thought felt that India should have good relations with its neighbours including Bangladesh while the other school wanted good relations with Bangladesh but on their own terms. They felt that India as a "dominant power in the region should be feared."

The Principle of bilateralism has become a corner-stone of Indian foreign policy "but this is silly. It should be moved on a regional perspective."

Dr Ganguly said the fear of Hindu fundamentalism has

See Page 12 Col 2

4123 firearms recovered, 42266 held

By Staff Correspondent

The on-going illegal arms recovery drive across the country has succeeded in recovering 4,123 firearms, huge quantity of ammunition and explosives while 42,266 persons were arrested, according to a top official of the Election Commission.

He said that between April 1 and June 6 some 9,196 rounds of ammunition, 4,884 cartridges and 10,039 explosives were recovered.

Of the arrested, 1,378 were held for possessing illegal arms, 26,842 were picked up as they were running away from previous warrants while 14,048 were arrested on other charges and under the Special Powers Act, the official added.

The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) had earlier said that on an average some 2,500 firearms are recovered in the country annually, but the recovery within the last two months was quite satisfactory.

Rail link with Sylhet restored

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, June 7: The train communication of Sylhet with rest of the country has been restored at 7:30 am today after remaining snapped for about 17 hours following the derailment of 11 bogies including two oil tankers of a goods train at Bonairchak near Shibbari, about 400 yards from the Sylhet railway station.

Official sources said, the goods train 'SSF-1 UP' was on its way to Sylhet from Akhaura and met with the accident at 2:30 pm yesterday. Eleven bogies out of 37 in the train were derailed. Of these, two oil tankers carrying kerosene oil were cracked.

Almost the full quantity of oil was leaked out. However, the extent of loss is yet to be ascertained. A number of local people were found looting goods like rice, kerosene and other commodities from the wagons and tankers derailed in the accident.

Policeman killed while rescuing kidnapped couple

From Our Correspondent

SHERPUR, June 7: A policeman, fatally injured in a gunfight with some miscreants during an operation to rescue a kidnapped couple at Bajidbari village under Nakhla thana last night, died at the Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, MMCH today, police said.

The couple, Abu Taleb and Champa were rescued from their captors but fatally injured constable Abu Syed (40) was rushed to the MMCH. He died at about 11:30 am today.

Police said the couple, while going home was kid-

DS-Student dialogue on polls '96

Read what school and college students have to say about the coming parliamentary elections in our Special Focus page today (P-5)

GENERAL NOTIFICATION

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