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Hena wishes Syed all success

By Staff Correspondent

The outgoing chief election commissioner, Mohammad Abu Hena wished the new CEC all success in running the affairs of the Election Commission.

Syed is a good friend of mine. We were classmates in the English Department of the Dhaka University. I wish him success in his new assignment as Chief Election Commissioner," Abu Hena said.

"He is a man of integrity and served the state in different capacities honestly and efficiently."

Replying to a query, Hena told The Daily Star "I had no prior idea about my friend's appointment."

"Syed has to secure co-operation of all concerned to succeed in the new job," said Hena.

UNB adds: Mrs Abu Hena described her husband's friend as

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Controversy will be over now, hopes govt

The government yesterday hailed new Chief Election Commissioner M A Syed as an honest, efficient and hardworking person competent to grace the office and conduct national elections fairly, reports UNB.

"I believe the controversy over the chief election commissioner will now end and the new CEC will be acceptable to all who believe in democratic and constitutional rule," Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister M A Samad told newsmen at a hurriedly called press briefing at his office in the afternoon.

Press secretary Jawadul Karim who was present there said the President appointed Syed as new CEC as he is an honest, sincere and hardworking former bureaucrat.

Asked whether Syed is a consensus nominee, as de-

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Amendments to 3 hill dist council acts approved

The Council of Ministers approved the amendments to three district council acts of Chittagong Hill Tracts yesterday, reports UNB.

The acts are Khagrachhari Hill District Council Act, 1989, Bandarban Hill District Council Act, 1989 and Rangamati Hill District Council Act, 1989.

It was approved at the weekly cabinet meeting at the PM's Office with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

The Cabinet also approved the National Housing Authority Act, 2000, said an official press release.

Our new numbers

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May	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
21		6-38 pm
22	5-13 am	

Prayer Timings

May 23	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-45
Zohr	1-00	1-30
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-38	6-40
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

MA Syed new CEC

By Staff Correspondent



M A Syed talking to newsmen after being nominated new CEC yesterday. — Star photo

M A Syed, a retired civil servant and now Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission, has been appointed Chief Election Commissioner.

The appointment, given by the President yesterday on the advice of the Prime Minister, ended two weeks of confusion and speculations over the issue among political circles in particular and people in general.

Chief Justice Latifur Rahman is scheduled to administer oath to Syed today.

Syed would be the eighth CEC and the second bureaucrat to head the Election Commission following Abu Hena who resigned on May 8.

President Shahabuddin Ahmed gave the appointment after he received the nomination from the Prime Minister's Office yesterday morning, an official announcement said.

Previously, Syed was Secretary to the ministries of Agriculture, Home Affairs and Information. He served the World Bank as Alternative Executive Director in the early Nineties and was Chairman of the Rupali Bank. He hails from Gopalganj.

Asked about the appointment of Syed as CEC, acting Chief Election Commissioner Mostaque Ahmed Chowdhury said, "We are ready to welcome him to the office."

The appointment followed two abortive attempts to choose a CEC on the basis of consensus between the government and the Opposition over the last two weeks.

The first attempt came from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on May 8 when she invited Leader of the Opposition in parliament Khaleeda Zia for a discussion on the issue at 7:00 pm the next day.

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Reaction

Opposition rejects new CEC terming it unilateral decision

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led opposition alliance has rejected appointment of M A Syed as Chief Election Commissioner and said people will not accept it as the government has done it unilaterally.

"We do not accept this appointment... People will also not accept this unilateral appointment," BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said. "It's a conspiracy and advance preparation of the Awami League to rig the future polls."

He was briefing newsmen

following a meeting of the Central Liaison Committee of the alliance at the official residence of Leader of the Opposition in Parliament yesterday.

The meeting unanimously rejected appointment of the new CEC, he said.

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Interview

Everyone has to be fair before questioning fairness of EC: Syed

By M Shamsur Rahman

The newly appointed Chief Election Commissioner, M A Syed, has sought cooperation from all quarters in carrying out his new assignment he dubbed as "a big challenge."

"My first task as the chief election commissioner will be to ensure everything possible to hold a free and fair election for which the nation will be proud of," Syed told The Daily Star in an interview shortly after his appointment.

At his office at the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in the city, which he

headed until yesterday, Syed said everyone involved in elections has to be fair before questioning fairness of the Election Commission.

He said lack of fairness is the main obstacle to election processes. "In any election, a good intention is the main thing, and that is to hold fair election," Syed said.

He said power brokers play a major role in elections in the country. Their influence should be reduced, if not possible to eradicate fully. "This is possible," he said.

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Legal shop owners of Adarsha Market queue up with valid papers to enter the market yesterday. — Star photo

DCC 'recaptures' Adarsha Market after 2 years

By Morshed Ali Khan

The Dhaka City Corporation took over the Adarsha Market adjacent to Bangabazar at Fulbaria yesterday, more than two years after a group of men claiming ownership captured it.

About 200 riot policemen and two magistrates stood on guard as the DCC officials conducted the recovery drive lasting over an hour. There have been no reports of untoward incident during the drive that rendered several thousand youths of the 487 stalls of the market jobless.

DCC officials and the policemen cordoned the market at about 10:30 a.m. and asked all inside over the loudspeaker to evacuate. Hundreds of shopkeepers closed their shops with all merchandise inside and

walked off the congested Adarsha Market that generates more than Tk 2 crore of business in garments everyday.

Officials put down the whole drama of capture and re-capture to "gross lack of coordination" between the LGRD and the Religious Affairs Ministries.

While the DCC built the market and allocated stalls to temporarily rehabilitate hawkers of other areas in 1989, the Waqf Administration under the Ministry of Religious Affairs leased out the entire area, claiming that it has been a Waqf estate of Shahjadi Begum since 1865 and that the DCC was not its original owner.

As soon as the Matwali of the Waqf Estate leased out the market despite knowing that

DCC was in control, a new group of people led by Zakir Morol forcibly took over the market in the middle of the night about 25 months ago and formed a new committee of shop owners.

The same group seized the market at gun point Mahanagar Hawkers' Market last week before police. They also opened fire at the evicted shopkeepers injuring five people.

Most of the shopkeepers in the vicinity are tenants who deposited between Tk 50,000 to Tk 1 lakh for each stall and a monthly rent of about Tk 5,000. The new committee after taking over the market fixed new amount of deposit money for the shopkeepers and the monthly rents.

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Liaison Committee of the 4-party Opposition alliance met to discuss appointment of new CEC yesterday. — Star photo

Magistrate to die for killing lady magistrate

By Court Correspondent

The Second Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court Dhaka awarded death sentence to a magistrate yesterday for killing a lady magistrate in 1993.

Judge Rishikesh Saha handed down the death sentence to Liakat Ali Khan, a magistrate in Sherpur, in absentia for killing Shahida Chowdhury who was a magistrate in Myemensingh.

In October 1993, Shahida Chowdhury, an expectant mother, was staying at her sister-in-law's house at Kurmitola in Dhaka. Liakat met Shahida in that house on October 8 and insisted on her going with him. Liakat stabbed Shahida as she refused.

Shahida succumbed to her

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'No way to save Chandrima park' Flaw in original PWD layout blamed

By Special Correspondent

The authorities will go ahead with the planned destruction of a part of Chandrima Udyan at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, one of the three wooded parks in the city, to make room for a power station for the Bangabandhu Convention Centre being built for the Non-Aligned Movement summit in September next year.

The go-ahead was given despite newspaper reports on citizens' concern over a substantial loss of greenery at a place with public buildings around. The Chinese contractors building the Centre also admitted that the power station could have been accommodated in the land

given to them.

"There could be an underground power station instead of destroying the park," said an official of the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MOEF), sharing the citizens' concern.

MOEF has sought clarification from the PWD on the issue and an investigation into reports about the actual intention behind felling of trees, being sold at a throw away price.

"We cannot but go ahead with the task. To save part of the park, we have to redesign the entire layout for the convention centre and that would mean the centre cannot be com-

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Banks asked to give report on Kajol's accounts

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, May 22: The Income Tax Department has asked several branches of Sonali Bank to prepare a detailed report on the bank accounts of Faruque Ahmed Kajol, operator of the so-called 'Syndicate Bank' at Kotchandpur.

The Income Tax Department wants to know the extent of tax evasion which the alleged swindler committed while earning huge money allegedly through fraudulent means.

As empowered under Sections 115 and 117 of the Income Tax Ordinance, 1984, the Income Tax Commissioner, Khulna has issued an official order to managers of several branches of Sonali Bank of Jhenidah and Chuadanga districts to submit correct figures of the bank accounts of Kajol. His wife and agents who allegedly lured the people by promising to give lucrative 'incentive interest' against deposits with the 'Syndicate Bank'.

The depositors have now little hope to get their money back as the so-called 'Syndicate Bank' is no more in existence which Kajol operated for nearly six years in connivance with a section of govt officials both in police and civil administration.

Officials of these two districts are reportedly feeling insecure in giving such statements of bank accounts due to threats by Kajol's accomplices, said a reliable source.

2 killed in Nilphamari bomb blast

NILPHAMARI, May 22: Two people were killed and another was injured when a powerful bomb exploded in the house of a retired BDR commander in Kishoreganj upazila Sunday night, reports UNB.

Another explosive device lying in the same room was detonated today by army experts, police said.

Police arrested the retired BDR Nayek Subedar, Abdus Samad, from his Hajipara residence today in this connection. Police also recovered 161 empty bullet shells from the spot.

Samad went on retirement five years ago when he was posted at Rangbari in Khagrachhari and started living at Hajipara six months ago. His

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ADB threatens to stop funding social forestry sector

Star Report

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) may totally stop funding social forestry sector due to the government's poor performance in handling business and its non-committal attitude towards carrying forward reforms in this sector.

"We conveyed our message to the government that if certain reforms are not done, we may have to pull out from this sector. Presently, we have suspended funding this sector," said Phiphi Suphaphiphat, resident representative of ADB's Bangladesh Mission.

Suphaphiphat was talking

on "ADB Operations in Bangladesh" at the luncheon meeting of France-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCIFB) at Hotel Sheraton yesterday.

Earlier this month, an ADB mission while disclosing the bank's new lending scheme of 1.5 billion US dollars for Bangladesh linked the actual disbursement with good governance, reforms and implementation capacity.

Undisbursed ADB fund worth 1.2 billion US dollars for Bangladesh is currently lying in the pipeline.

The ADB resident representative emphasised good governance and transparency in government works for effective utilisation of resources and public funds since corruption is eating up a substantial portion of the money earmarked for development.

Since availability of fund from ADB's soft-loan window, Asian Development Fund (ADF), is limited now due to fund constraints, Suphaphiphat said they have classified different member countries in different groups based on their economic capa-

bility for giving fund from ADF.

Earlier, Bangladesh was tagged in the group of the most least developed countries, which enabled it to get most of its funds from ADF. But now that Bangladesh graduated from that group recently it will have to take a portion of its requirement from Ordinary Capital Resources (OCR). ADB's high interest lending window, Suphaphiphat said.

About ADB's operation in Bangladesh from early '70s, Suphaphiphat said earlier little effort was given on capacity

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'Resolve issue of TU rights in EPZs without delay'

By Staff Correspondent

BGMEA President Anisur Rahman Sinha has demanded immediate resolution of the issue whether trade union activities should be allowed in export processing zones.

The issue is becoming one of the main deciding factors in getting trade facilities in developed countries, particularly the US, he pointed out.

Sinha was exchanging views with some newsmen at the BGMEA office here yesterday.

The demand for quota in-

crease or duty free access of our goods to US and other developed countries is being linked with allowing freedom of association in EPZs," he said.

"If we do not get duty free access to the US market within 4/5 months, the country's garments sector will suffer tremendously. Many sweater factories which had been doing well over the years might face closure."

The US congress passed a

bill recently allowing duty free access of goods from 48 African and Caribbean countries. It will create tremendous opportunities for those countries and pose a threat to Bangladeshi garments items, the BGMEA president said.

Bangladesh 'missed the train' because there was no initiative from the government to avail the opportunity. Even the Bangladesh embassy in Washington knew nothing about the Bill and it did not inform the government anything

about it," he alleged.

Sinha demanded appointment of a special consultant immediately to assess the impact of the Bill on the garments sector. The government could appoint a lobbyist to obtain duty free access for Bangladesh products to the US market, he suggested.

He however said the government should keep in mind that the US government may not be interested to allow such facilities to Least Developed

Countries (LDC) if they approach as a group because it also includes Burma and Vietnam.

The US government is 'hesitant' as regards LDCs due to political reasons. He suggested that the government should try so that Bangladesh benefits from the Bill, like the African and Caribbean countries. This is possible because the US government will take some important decisions before the next election, he observed.

Sinha said the issue of trade union rights in EPZs is hanging for long as the government wants workers' welfare associations to be formed through selection while the US government stresses on election.

US Labor Department officials during recent discussions with him in Washington indicated that formation of an independent tribunal to ensure justice to workers and factory owners in EPZs might be ac-

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