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Licences of arms not deposited cancelled

BSS, Dhaka

The arms licences of those who did not deposit their weapons within the deadline disregarding a government directive have been cancelled. "Cases will be filed against them under the Arms Act," M Wahid-uz-Zaman, chief coordinator at the home ministry media cell told BSS yesterday. The government on November 6 asked licenced arms holders to deposit their weapons by November 15. The order followed launch of the joint drive to nab criminals. The deadline was extended till November 21. A senior official of the home ministry said it was counting how many weapons and ammunition

Days numbered for lone pulp plant in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The country's only pulp producing plant Sylhet Pulp and Paper Mill gets closed down from November 30.

The Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) last week issued a notice stating that the plant would be closed down completely. The government decision will render 310 labourers, 242 employees and 83 officials of the unit jobless.

The notice also asked the mills authorities to immediately send a detailed statement on accounts to the head office by November 30. The mill is located in Chhatak upazila of Sunamganj district. The decision to shut down the

Low over Bay

BSS, Dhaka

The low over Southeast Bay and adjoining Southwest Bay has become a well marked low.

It is likely to intensify and move initially in a west and northwesterly direction, said a Met office bulletin in Dhaka yesterday.

Maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla have been advised to hoist distant cautionary signal No One.

Sehri, Iftar timing

Ramadan	Nov	Sehri	Iftar
18	24		5-14
19	25	4-57	5-14
20	26	4-47	5-14

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Nov 24		5-11 pm
Nov 25	6-19 am	

Prayer Timings

Nov 25		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-56	5-06
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	3-45	4-00
Maghrib	5-14	5-24
Esha	7-30	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

EC asked to defer UP elections by two months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has asked the Election Commission (EC) to defer elections to the Union Parishad by two months. The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (LGRD) and Cooperatives wrote a letter yesterday to the EC asking it to put off the polls. The EC was set to announce tomorrow the election schedule for 4,257 unions of the country. It will meet today to fix a fresh schedule. The EC had earlier announced that the voting for the lowest and oldest tier of the local government would take place between January 4 and February 27. The government however prefers the polls between March 1 and April 30. Sources said the government wants to continue with the ongoing

anti-crime crackdown till February next year and does not want the election during the drive. The government policymakers are of the view that political activities at the grassroots level have come to a standstill as most political activists have gone into hiding fearing arrest. So, if the election was held during the army drive, there would be none to carry out election campaigns, the sources added. Election Commissioner M Munser Ali told The Daily Star last night that he did not know of the letter. He added that the EC would meet today to make a decision if a deferment request was made. Meanwhile, an EC official questioned the reason for the proposed rescheduling at the last moment considering the fact that the EC had had to make a lengthy preparation for holding the polls. The official, preferring to remain unnamed, said

as per law the Union Parishad elections is to be held six months before the tenure of the incumbent office bearers expires. This means there is a compulsion to hold the elections by February. But as per the Local Government (UP) Ordinance, the government can change the election schedule through gazette notification. Sources said the government is going to exercise this power. BSS adds: Acknowledging the government's decision, Secretary of the EC SM Zakaria said, "We can only conduct the elections to the local government bodies, but it is the authority of the government to announce the poll schedule." Zakaria said he has received a 'delivery order' from the Local Government Division secretary yesterday afternoon and that he would place it to the EC today.

Govt determined to rid admin of politics

Prime minister tells secretaries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has said that the government wants to rid the administration of politics to ensure good governance. "We want to ensure good governance and an honest administration, so we are working to build a committed, competent, honest and neutral administrative system for people's welfare," she told secretaries of the government at her Secretariat office yesterday. She also said the government wants to have an administration where there would be no place for nepotism or favouritism. It was her second policy meeting with the secretaries, the last one being held in May. Khaleda covered several impor-

tant issues and made some policy statements in the two-and-a-half-hour meeting. Cabinet Secretary Dr Sadat Hossain later told newsmen that the prime minister had attached great importance to timely steps and implementation of projects, selection of projects on the basis of people's needs, promotion of officials on the basis of performance, optimum utilisation of resources, strengthening of administrative units, etc. The PM laid utmost importance on the time factor as far as all governmental activities were concerned and said, "Ours has to be a nation guided by time". Khaleda in her speech advised the top bureaucrats to ensure timely attendance in offices from

Secretariat to the grassroots level of administration. "You must turn the government offices into service institutions for the people and should also restore people's confidence in the efficacy of government offices." She advised the Secretaries not to portray themselves as rulers or administrators. The secretaries put forward various suggestions and wanted to know from her about the fate of the vacant posts in the administration as well as the issue of promotion. She said promotion would depend on competence and service records. On vacant posts, the PM said that there may be many vacant posts, but the posts would be filled up on the basis of need. "We don't need to fill



With the Eid-ul-Fitr just round the corner, makeshift shops crowd the walkways near the Zero Point as elsewhere in the city, making them virtually inaccessible to pedestrians not shopping.

Jubo Dal leader dies of army scare

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A leader of Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal, youth organisation of the ruling BNP, died of army scare at his house near Kajla Gate of Rajshahi University in the early hours of yesterday.

The victim, Enamul Haque was president of the Motihar thana unit of the Jubo Dal and wanted in several cases of extortion and terrorism. He was also one of the listed criminals of the Rajshahi Metropolitan Police (RMP), police said.

According to family sources, on hearing the sound of army vehicles at around 4:00am yesterday, a frightened Enamul asked his wife to check through the windows and see if the army had reached the house.

His wife found him dead on returning from the windows. He was taking his 'sehri' at the time. The army led joint forces raided his house several times but had failed to capture him. He had gone into hiding since the drive started November 16.

M-16 seized in Cox's Bazar, 3 Tayeb Bahini men held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The army seized an M-16 assault rifle and 18 different types of firearms from Chittagong and Cox's Bazar in 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday.

In the same period, 92 people, including 15 listed criminals, were arrested and 28 firearms seized in other parts of the country.

The M-16 aside, the countrywide seizure list includes six pistols, three revolvers, nine pipe-guns and 11 shotguns. Some 101 rounds of ammunition were also recovered.

Meanwhile, a Police headquarters press release yesterday said that the police arrested 1,357 people and seized six firearms along with 19 rounds of bullet across the country in the last 24 hours.

Also yesterday, a Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) press release said 234 people, including 30 wanted criminals, were arrested

during a special drive in the capital. Our correspondent in Cox's Bazar reports that the troops recovered the M-16 along with five rounds of ammunition from a forest at Eidgar in Ramu upazila at about 2:30am yesterday. Fourteen firearms were seized

Death at N'ganj Report on army involvement baseless: ISPR

BSS, Dhaka

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that a news item published yesterday in some national dailies relating to army involvement in the death of a young man at

from Ukhia, Teknaf, Cox's Bazar on Friday night.

In Chittagong, the joint forces arrested three members of the infamous Tayeb Bahini at Toukirhut in the southern part of crime-prone Fatikchhari upazila.

The arrested are Zakaria, a linchpin of the crime cartel, and his two associates, Enam and Mansoor. Acting on their statements, the forces recovered a shutter gun and three other firearms from different places in the upazila.

The troops also arrested one notorious criminal Jamal gang leader of the Jamal Bahini, and his second-in-command Didar at Lelang union.

One sawn-off gun with five rounds of bullets were recovered from their possession.

Meanwhile, an army team arrested a listed terrorist, Badsha Mia, at Fatikchhari the same night.

Sun sets on state-run silk factories Nov 30

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Closure of state-run silk factories in Rajshahi and Thakurgaon on November 30 brings curtains down on public-sector silk production in the country.

Upon consultation with the textile ministry, the finance ministry, at an emergency meeting on November 16, decided to close down the Rajshahi Silk Factory and the Thakurgaon Silk Factory. Finance

and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman chaired the meeting. In a circular to the Bangladesh Sericulture Board (BSB) in Rajshahi, the textile ministry said staggering financial losses for over two decades have forced the government to take the decision. The factories are saddled with some Tk 23 crore in losses, including Tk 25 lakh in bank loans. The circular says workers, employees and officials will be asked to finally leave the mills on payoff basis with effect from November 30. The BSB has already put up a notice in this regard. There is no possibility of resumption of the mills in future, the circular also says. However, the BSB chairman said the closure would not be permanent. "Both the mills will restart operations after the payoff is complete," Dr

Sawdagar Mahfuzar Rahman told The Daily Star. "There will soon be fresh appointments, albeit on no-work-no-pay basis, to smoothly run the mills." The November 16 meeting also decided that "a committee, headed by Post and Telecommunications Minister Aminul Haque, will be formed soon to formulate ideas to profitably run the factories", he added. The decision, for obvious reasons, has not gone down well with workers and employees. "We shall resist it (move to close down the factories)," they said as they demonstrated against the decision. The trade union leaders suspect behind-the-scenes manoeuvres to privatise the mills have led to the decision.

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PHOTO: STAR The government has decided to close down the Rajshahi Silk Factory on November 30 but workers still hope the mills will resume operations some day in near future.