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EC wants power to cancel candidature

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) will ask the government to amend the electoral laws to authorise the commission to cancel candidatures of the contestants in parliamentary polls for gross irregularities in the election process.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz yesterday told reporters that the EC would also seek the power to initiate contempt proceedings against violation of the commission orders or electoral laws.

"We are now reviewing the existing laws and will send a proposal to the government to amend the laws," he said adding, "We won't have anything to act upon unless the electoral laws are amended."

The provision for cancelling one's candidature was among the

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EU envoys meet CEC on credible next polls

Offer transparent ballot box, EC shows little interest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The European Union (EU) in Dhaka yesterday offered to provide the Election Commission (EC) with transparent ballot boxes in the next parliamentary polls to stop irregularities in voting, but the EC showed little interest.

A high-power delegation led by UK High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury at a meeting with the EC at the office of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz made the offer as they were informed about the allegation that ballot papers are stuffed in the ballot boxes prior to beginning of voting.

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PHOTO: STAR

A high-power European Union delegation meets Chief Election Commissioner MA Aziz, right, at his office yesterday.

Killed for dowry, buried unnamed

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Halima Begum is on a desperate quest to find the grave of her daughter, who she alleges had been brutally tortured and harassed for dowry and then killed by her in-laws on July 5.

The grief-stricken mother rushes around, looking into every possible nook and cranny to learn whereabouts of the body of Shahinur Akhtar Camelia. At last, she knocks at the door of Anjuman-e-Mufidul Islam. But, "They can't say exactly where they had buried her," says the dejected woman.

Mirpur police recovered Camelia's body from her house on July 5 and sent it to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital morgue. For six days the body lay there until the morgue authorities handed it over to Anjuman on July 11, as no one came to claim or receive it.

The morgue is authorised to

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Killing spree in 'crossfire'

ZAYADUL AHSAN

Members of law enforcement agencies seem to be out in a competition to earn better record on killing people in so-called crossfire incidents that have left dead some four hundred people including several innocent ones since June last year.

The last 13 days alone saw 18 people killed, pushing the number of casualties in extrajudicial execution to 378 in 13 months and 13 days. Of them, 245 people died in police actions, 116 in Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), 12 were killed by Cobra and Cheetah [special crime-busting units of police] and five by joint forces.

Death of some top criminals in

'crossfire' came as a great relief to a section of people. Despite being well aware that the killings were sort of executions without trial, many people greeted with acclamation the way the law enforcers were dealing with the criminals. The rationale behind such attitudes was mainly the country's frailties of many years where criminals get arrested, but come out on bail and go about their business as usual.

But soon after a number of people with no criminal records fell victims to the 'crossfire', panic had started to pervade cross sections of the society.

The law enforcers, however, have been relentless in their attempts to show the innocent victims of

crossfire as criminals by coming up with false criminal records against them. But investigations by newspapers have nullified the claims by the law enforcers while corroborated those of the victims' families.

Law enforcers beat up some people at their offices and later gunned them down outside, describing the deaths as results of 'crossfire'. But it all reminded the people of the death of independent University student Rubel at Detective Branch office in 1998. The idea that anyone may fall victim to such incidents began to creep into the consciousness of the people.

The government had constituted special forces -- Rat, Rab, Cobra, and

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| Crossfire | Rab | Police | Cheetah-Cobra | Joint forces | Total |
|---------------|-----|--------|---------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|
| June-Dec'2004 | 63 | 76 | 8 | 4 | 151 |
| Jan-Jul' 2005 | 53 | 169 | 4 | 1 | 227 |
| | | | | | Till July 13, 2005 Total 378 |



Yunus named for Nobel

REZAUL KARIM

A number of Nobel laureates from different countries have nominated Prof Muhammad Yunus for Nobel Prize of 2005 for his outstanding contribution to globally acclaimed micro-credit programmes.

The micro-credit programme is his outstanding economic innovation meant for helping the poor out of poverty trap.

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Donors tag neutral oversight to aid

Judicial reforms, functional ACC also high on agenda

REZAUL KARIM BYRON

Four major development partners of Bangladesh have pinned their aid to judicial reforms, making the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) functional and appointing the heads of oversight bodies in a transparent and politically neutral process.

In a draft assistance strategy paper, they have advised the government to choose the oversight body chiefs on the basis of merit to ensure accountability and curb corruption, and also to allot adequate budgets to the regulators to facilitate their independence and effectiveness.

The key oversight bodies mentioned in the draft joint Bangladesh Country Assistance Strategy (BCAS) include Bangladesh Bank, Election Commission, Public Service Commission, Cabinet Purchase Committee, Comptroller and Auditor General, Securities and Exchange Commission and the parliamentary committees.

The donors Japan, Department for International Development (DFID) of the UK, World Bank (WB) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) -- have prepared the BCAS to jointly support the government in implementing its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

Representatives of the donors

yesterday sat in a discussion on the draft BCAS with the secretaries of finance ministry and Economic Relations Division (ERD) and high officials of a number of ministries and government agencies at the National Economic Council auditorium.

The assistance strategy will be finalised by August and will be the basis on which Bangladesh will get aid from the four donors in the next four years. It will identify the projects that will get the donors' support. Padma Bridge has already been named in the draft as one of the priority projects.

Through a series of discussions with the government, civil society, journalists and non-government organisations, the donors will finalise the conditions for aid and also map out the implementation timeframe, which will be basis of future evaluations and disbursement of aid, said an ERD source.

The paper identified a number of specific drawbacks in the areas of macro-economic stability, business cost, infrastructure, governance, energy, transport, banking and financial services, local governance etc and suggested some 90 steps to address them.

Referring to some 800,000 pending cases, the BCAS termed the

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Draft of new court contempt law to be placed before cabinet today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry has prepared the draft of a new law of contempt of court that will be presented before the cabinet meeting today.

If the cabinet agrees in principle on the draft, steps will be taken for enactment of the new law that will replace the contempt of court law formulated in 1926, sources said.

"We have started the process of the new law and it will require further discussion and opinion from

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PM opens gas supply to Bogra

UNB, Bogra

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday inaugurated gas supply to Bogra and announced the fossil fuel would reach Rajshahi soon and other northern towns gradually.

Southern region will also come under gas network, she said, asking all to maintain peace, stability and continuity of development process for national advancement.

"Social peace and political stability is necessary for what we want to attain as a nation," Khaleda observed, seeking the people's

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Flooding worsens in 35 upazilas

Erosion by major rivers embankments in N-dists

STAR REPORT

The flood situation has deteriorated further in 35 upazilas of seven northern districts while the situation in Netrokona, Sherpur and Mymensingh districts has slightly improved.

Continuous downpour created water logging in Barisal, Patuakhali

and Barguna districts, adding to the sufferings of the people.

The early floods this year are damaging crops, fish and other agricultural products, and washing away houses, already creating untold sufferings to more than one million people.

Flood affected people are

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15 suicide bombers strike Iraq in 48 hrs

Truck bomb toll rises to 98

REUTERS, Musayyib

Stricken townspeople swept away the wreckage of a fuel truck bomb that killed 98 people south of Baghdad as three more suicide car bombers struck the Iraqi capital yesterday in a relentless new campaign.

The overnight attack which devastated the highway town of Musayyib was the deadliest since the new Iraqi government took

power in April and the highest death toll from a single car bomb since 125 people were killed in February in Hilla, also south of Baghdad.

Saturday's bombing prompted denunciations of the authorities in parliament and calls for local militia to take up arms.

Some 15 suicide bombers have struck within just over 48 hours in the capital and along the highway heading south in what al-Qaeda's

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Purbani Hotel fined for unsafe food

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court yesterday fined luxurious Purbani Hotel Tk 1 lakh for using unsafe ingredients in food.

The home ministry formed two mobile courts after a series of report in The Daily Star on unsafe food last month. The courts have been raiding restaurants, kitchen markets and shopping malls almost every day to curb sale of adulterated and poisonous food.

A team led by a magistrate yesterday visited Purbani Hotel and found

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PHOTO: STAR

Members of a mobile court examine standard of food ingredients at Purbani Hotel in the capital yesterday.

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