

## 'Form independent monitoring cell to make polls acceptable'

EC urged to reject nomination papers of black money holders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government should form an independent monitoring cell to strictly observe the election and correctly count the votes so that the results of the forthcoming elections are acceptable to all, jurists at a roundtable said yesterday.

They also called on the caretaker government to allow all media organisations to have access to election results in order to avoid manipulation of the results.

Former justices, lawyers and civil society members took part in the roundtable on 'Election 2007: Acceptability and national expectation' organised by Lawyers For Transparency at the south hall of Supreme Court Bar Association in the city.

Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, chairman of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), said the Election Commission should reject nomination papers of black money holders so that the nation can elect honest lawmakers.

The speakers said strengthening parliament is very essential for the nation and that the fair election is the only way to allow democracy to flourish.

They also warned that the nation would plunge into deep crisis if the caretaker government fails to hold an election acceptable to all. Justice Naim Uddin Ahmed said the Election Commission (EC) has prepared the voter list in violation of



Prof Muzaffer Ahmad speaks at a roundtable on election 2007 in the city yesterday. On his right are Advocate ABM Bayezid and Justice Naim Uddin Ahmed.

rules, which is not acceptable.

"The Election Commission should have prepared the voter list by going door to door, but it did not do. Anyone can file a writ petition against the EC for violating the fundamental rules," he added.

Underlining the strict election monitoring system, Justice Habibur Rahman Khan said all print and electronic media organisations should be allowed to collect all kinds of election data so that the countrymen can know what is happening.

He suggested forming an independent monitoring cell, which will observe the election and preserve the results on computer so that the results can be compared with the results announced by the Election Commission.

President of Lawyers for Transparency Advocate ABM Bayezed, Executive Director of Bangladesh Society for Constitutional Rights Aminur Rahman Sagor also spoke.

## Party men guard Shamim Osman's house to thwart arrest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Supporters of Awami League (AL) leader and former lawmaker Shamim Osman guarded and encircled his Chashara house in Narayanganj to resist the law enforcers from the alleged arrest attempt.

They blocked all roads leading to 'Heeramahal' to thwart his arrest.

Ending a five-year of self-exile, Shamim finally returned to Narayanganj for submitting nomination paper on Monday. But his return was overshadowed by report of arrest attempt.

Shamim's supporters put barricades on roads in Chashara, Fatulla and Siddhirganj areas in Narayanganj town since Tuesday night after an announcement from a local mosque that law enforcers were trying to arrest him.

Talking to the journalists, Shamim said he is in the town. The attempt to arrest him is part of a conspiracy, but it was doomed to failure in the face of people's resistance.

Narayanganj Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ahsan Habib said he knew nothing about the news of the arrest attempt.

## Transport strike causes untold suffering to Ctg city dwellers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Thousands of commuters experienced untold sufferings as a result of a nine-hour transport strike enforced by drivers, workers and owners of Special City Bus Service in the port city yesterday protesting harassment by the traffic police.

Sufferings of the people, specially office-goers, garment workers and students, knew no bound yesterday as around 600 buses that ply on the city roads under the service were not in operation yesterday.

The bus drivers and owners enforced the strike supported by the City Bus Minibus Human Hauler Association protesting realisation of illegal fine for different allegation from the bus drivers by some traffic sergeants.

Association leaders alleged some of the traffic sergeants whimsically harass bus drivers through awarding fines and seizing vehicles and keeping those in custody for several days to realise excess and illegal fines.

Lineman Secretary of the association Abdul Hakim alleged the department releases some extra fines in the name of different charges like wrecker (vehicle puller) charge without using those.

However, Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) (Traffic) Mohammad Abu Sufian denied the allegations of realising extra or illegal fines.

Sufian claimed that there is no chance to realise extra or illegal fines as the department has recently introduced a computerised system for realising fines according to the different clauses of law in order to stop such incidents.

He alleged that many buses of the service with route permit of a definite route try to ply on other routes causing indiscipline in the transport system of the city.

## RED staff angry over its division into two parts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The decision of dividing Rajshahi Education Board (REB) into two separate boards and shifting its fund and work force to other half triggered criticism and agitations among staffs yesterday.

The agitating employees have confined REB chairman into his office for three hours and staged angry demonstrations on the compound all day long.

They said, "The caretaker government in its bid to fulfil the election pledge of previous four-party alliance government recently established Dinajpur Education Board (DEB) and asked REB to shift its Tk 4.5 crore and 162 staffs on Tuesday."

According new order, REB will control 645 colleges in Rajshahi, Natore, Naogaon, Chapainawabganj, Bogra, Joypurhat, Pabna and Sirajganj districts.

And the DEB will administer 500 colleges in Dinajpur, Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Rangpur, Gaibandha, and Kurigram districts.

REB Karmachari Union General Secretary Shamsur Rahman said, REB is an autonomous body and existing rules do not permit any transfer of its fund and staffs.

The agitating staffs said in rallies held in REB compound, BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia is contending from Dinajpur sadar constituency and this is why the caretaker government is set to fulfil BNP's forgotten election pledge.

They demanded immediate withdrawal of the 'biased decision'. Otherwise, they threatened to go for indefinite strike after the Eid holidays.

## Violence against women also affects children

### Speakers tell convention

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sonia (not her real name), a housewife in a middle class family, used to suffer physical torture at the hands of her husband but did not disclose her plights. She nearly fainted on one night after her husband beat and kicked her during an altercation.

The man then took Sonia, who was pregnant with their first baby, to her father's house by a rickshaw and left the scene. Her mother rushed her to a nearby hospital but could not tell the truth due to social stigma.

A few days later, Sonia gave birth to a mentally challenged child.

Violence against women severely affects not only them but also the next generation and most such incidents take place within the family and remain secret.

Speakers at a national convention against domestic violence observed this yesterday.

They said domestic violence takes place at every level of society and women are abused more or less by their near and dear ones. They are tortured physically,

mentally, economically and sexually.

The also said family members often conceal the incidents of domestic violence, leading to more such incidents.

The Action Network to Combat Violence Against Women organised the convention at Biam auditorium in the city, with the slogan 'We are united for a violence-free family'.

Representatives from rights organisations across the country took part in the convention while Shirin Haque of Naripokkho and Shaheen Anam of Manusher Jonno Foundation were present as special guests in the morning session.

The speakers said the issue of domestic violence has recently been incorporated into human rights movement.

As the movement has gained momentum, rights activists should not depend on donor agencies for assistance in carrying out the movement, they said. "Rather, we should move forward by mobilising our own resources."

The speakers also called for more discussions with all con-

cerned before enactment of any laws to curb domestic violence so that the victims can be protected properly.

They recommended that the professional organisations should address domestic violence issues among its members of the staff.

They also suggested identifying the families facing domestic violence and taking up programmes to raise awareness among them.

They recommended incorporating the domestic violence issue into education curriculum and portraying positive image of women through mass media.

Sessions on various topics such as 'Impacts of domestic violence on women's professional life', 'domestic violence and the next generation' and 'domestic violence and women's health' were held at the convention.

Executive Director of Ain O Shalish Kendra (ASK) Sultana Kamal, Action Network Chairman Syed Nurul Alam, Khaleda Khatun of AED, Prof Sadeka Halim of Dhaka University and Ruchira Tabassum of ICDDR,B also spoke at the convention.

## AL-Khelafat deal a bad news for democrats

Says UK lord

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chairman of the International Bangladesh Foundation and Vice Chair of UK All Party Human Rights Group Lord Avebury said the reported agreement between the Awami League (AL) and Khelafat Majlis is a bad news for democrats.

"Giving alems power to issue fatwa that would override the laws made by elected members would be to hand over rights that belong to the people, not to any Party," reads Avebury's statement issued on Tuesday.

The promise of blasphemy law is also a backward step, threatening religious minorities and secularists, and creating a weapon that will be used in private disputes as in Pakistan, he notes.

Termining mystery the AL's choosing to line up with "these reactionaries", Lord Avebury said, "I hope members of the Party, and others in the Alliance, will repudiate a deal that has been made behind their backs."

## RU plans to recruit 50 more on political consideration

RU CORRESPONDENT

Rajshahi University authorities have launched a new mission to recruit around 50 people as section officers under political consideration.

Some pro-BNP and Jamaat men, relatives of influential political leaders and dependents of teachers and officials of the university are likely to be recruited, sources said.

University authorities recently advertised in the newspapers for recruiting at least 50 vacant class II posts of the university.

Administration sources said sons and daughters of different influential pro-BNP teachers and officials including Social Science faculty Dean Prof Sadequul Islam, former Ruta president Nazrul Islam, Environmental Science faculty Dean Prof Sarwar Jahan, Philosophy Department Chairman Prof Abdul Hai Talukder and RU Zia Parishad president Abdul Hamid applied for the posts.

The university authorities have already started taking interviews at the residence of RU Vice Chancellor Prof Altaf Hossain.

Some prof and kin of Rajshahi Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu, city Jamaat Amir Ataur Rahman, former post and telecommunications minister Aminul Haque, Mather thana BNP President Anser Ali, General Secretary Mokher Hossain and some other Jamaat leaders were remaining in the top rank of the recruitment series, sources said.

According to the sources, many aged pro-BNP and Jamaat candidates, who could not obtain a job during the past six years, are most likely to be recruited.

The university authorities will convene an 'extraordinary syndicate' meeting during the vacation of Eid-ul Azha and their recruitment will be approved and legalised, sources added.

While talking to newsmen, Prof Altaf Hossain admitted of taking interviews at his residence. However, he brushed aside the allegation regarding appointment on political consideration and relatives of pro-BNP and Jamaat teachers were favoured. The candidates are being selected as per their merit, claimed the VC.

## 6 killed, 68 injured in road crashes

STAR REPORT

At least six people were killed and 68 others injured in separate road accidents in Tangail, Rajshahi and Jhenidah yesterday.

Our Correspondent from Tangail reports: At least three people were killed and eight others in a road accident on Dhaka-Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Link Road at Kalihati upazila in the district yesterday.

Of the dead, two were identified as cloth traders Azmal Hossen, 22, and Umar Faruque, 18, of Paikoshia village in Sirajganj.

The accident took place at around 10:00am when a Dhaka-bound cloth-laden speedy truck from Sirajganj collided head-on with a Sirajganj-bound speedy truck from Dhaka at Zogarchar area under Kalihati upazila, leaving three passengers of the cloth-laden truck dead on the spot, witnesses said.

Eight passengers of the both trucks were also injured in the accident. They were rushed to different hospitals.

Kalihati Police sent the bodies to Tangail General Hospital morgue for

autopsy. Our RU Correspondent adds: Two people were killed and 50 others injured in separate road accidents at Kapashia area in the city yesterday.

Of the injured, mostly NGO officials and staffs, at least 30 were admitted to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH), hospital sources said.

The dead were identified as bus driver Alam, 29 and bicyclist Alhaj Aftab Ali, 60.

Police and locals said the accident occurred when a Chapainawabganj-bound bus from Sylhet and a Pabna-bound bus collided head-on at Kapashia at around 7:00am, leaving driver Alam dead on the spot. The NGO staffs were going to Pabna to attend a workshop.

The injured were identified as driver Babu, NGO Chetona director Jafrul Alam, Abdul Gafur of Chapainawabganj, Latif, Abdul Karim, Alim, Karim -2, Umal Kumer Mandal, Mostafa, Ataur Rahman,

Delwar Hossain of Sylhet, Ratan Pal, Jalil, Noagaon army personnel Anwar Hossain, Bholahat armyman Nazrul Islam, Dilip Kumar Pal, Bhutto of Nababganj, Shumiya Khatun and Aminul Islam.

Meanwhile, one person was injured seriously when a bus hit a bicycle at Andherkotha area in the city.

The victim identified as Aftab was rushed to RMCH where he succumbed to his injuries.

A Correspondent from Jhenidah adds: A person was killed and 10 others were injured when a bus carrying bridal party fell in a roadside ditch near Kolomon Khali under Sadar upazila yesterday.

The dead was identified as Ziru Mia, 30, of village Kolomon Khali. The injured were rushed to different hospitals in Jhenidah and Magura.

Police said the bus fell in the ditch breaking the railing of a bridge at around 4:30pm, leaving Ziru dead on the spot and 10 others injured.

## Rajshahi BNP men threaten to resign en masse

RU Correspondent

BNP leaders and activists loyal to district BNP President Azizur Rahman in a press conference at Rajshahi Press Club yesterday threatened to resign en masse on January 3 if the nomination of outgoing lawmaker Kabir Hossain is not withdrawn from the same constituency.

In a written statement they alleged Kabir Hossain neither visited the constituency nor did ever try to attain any development scheme for the area.

Bagha thana BNP President Jamal Uddin, General Secretary Saiful Islam, Charghat thana BNP General Secretary Gias Uddin Mandal and other leaders of both thana and municipality BNP attended the press conference.

# WEATHER TODAY

## Rise in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Dry weather is likely to prevail over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderate fog may occur over the river basins of the country during early morning, Met Office said in a forecast.

Night temperature may rise slightly over the country.

Highest temperature 27.8 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and Jessore and lowest 9.7 degree Celsius at Ishwardi.

**The sun sets in the capital at 5:20pm and rises at 6:40am tomorrow.**

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature		Humidity in in celsius	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	26.5	12.8	91	65
Chittagong	27.4	15.2	84	65
Rajshahi	25.5	10.3	95	72
Khulna	27.3	13.0	95	77
Barisal	26.5	11.4	89	84
Sylhet	25.4	13.5	100	73
Cox's Bazar	27.8	15.5	79	66



Delta Life Insurance Limited takes out a procession at Motijheel in the city yesterday to mark its 20th founding anniversary.

## NOMINATION TO LITON AL faction observes hartal at Bagha

RU CORRESPONDENT

A faction of Awami League, loyal to former lawmaker Raihanul Haque, observed a six-hour hartal at Bagha and Charghat yesterday demanding withdrawal of the nomination paper of city AL Secretary AHM Khairuzzaman Liton from Rajshahi-5 (Bagha-Charghat) constituency.

Motor vehicles didn't ply any route while educational institutions and business establishments remained closed during the hartal hours.

In a rally AL leaders called upon the party high command to nominate Raihanul Haque and demanded withdrawal of the nomination of AHM Khairuzzaman Liton. They threatened to enforce tougher movement and foil the election if their demand is not met. Earlier, the agitators burnt an effigy of Liton and declared him unwanted in the areas.

## Army rolls out to control crime

FROM PAGE 1

In accordance with the election laws, the armed forces can also remove or issue order to remove multi-coloured posters or portraits of candidates, gates, arches or barricades, banners, microphones or loudspeakers, illumination as part of election campaign, writing in ink or pen on any wall etc.

"We are ready to extend assistance as we will be asked," Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen Moeen U Ahmed told reporters after a meeting with the Election Commission (EC) yesterday.

Asked when the armed forces will be deployed for election purpose, he said, "We have already been in the field. We will work in line with government decision."

Over 50,000 army personnel were deployed to maintain law and order ahead of and after the elec-

tion of 2001. Sources said the number may be increased this time.

At the high powered meeting with secretaries of several ministries, chiefs of three services, and heads of different security and intelligence agencies, the EC asked the law enforcement agencies to ensure a peaceful atmosphere for holding a free and fair election.

"The law enforcement agencies assured us of cooperating in holding a free, fair and neutral election," Acting Chief Election Commissioner Justice Mahfuzur Rahman told reporters at a press briefing after the meeting.

He said the law enforcers were instructed to perform their duties as they did during the last election.

Discussing the present law and order situation, the meeting observed that the situation may

deteriorate ahead of and after the polling day.

EC Secretary Abdur Rashid Sarkar said, "The army will be in the field for a few more days after the poll day to maintain law and order."

Rab Director General SM Mizanur Rahman told journalists that no decision was taken regarding Rab's role in maintaining law and order during or before the election.

"The decision on Rab's role will be finalised after the police sort out their programmes as the Rab is a part of the police," he said.

Yesterday's meeting also decided to strengthen the drive to arrest criminals and recover illegal arms.

The home ministry has already planned security measures for over 33,000 polling stations in 300 parliamentary constituencies.

## Internet crashes for Taiwan tremor

FROM PAGE 1

Thailand and Hong Kong was disrupted, Bangladesh's upstreams of SingTel and Hong Kong are also disconnected. Because of the disruption, internet users will experience a slow connectivity until these cables are fixed, the statement added.

Kamrul Hasan, bandwidth manager of IDS Bangladesh, another internet service provider, said many clients including corporate houses complained about data transfer being disrupted and of failure to get access to the internet.

Meanwhile, AFP reported from Hong Kong that internet and phone services were disrupted across much of Asia on Wednesday after the earthquake, leaving one of the world's most tech-savvy regions in a virtual blackout.

From frustrated traders seeking in vain for stock quotes to anxious newshounds accustomed to round-the-clock updates on world events, millions of people from China to Japan to Australia were affected.

The disruption was widespread, hitting China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong and elsewhere, with knock-on effects as far away as Australia for companies whose internet is routed through the affected areas.

South Korea's information and communication ministry said all six undersea fibre optic cables off Taiwan were hit, causing major disruption. All services, except for

exclusive business lines, returned to normal shortly afterwards as they were switched to other systems.

A 7.1-magnitude earthquake off the coast of Taiwan on Tuesday night, which was followed by several smaller quakes in the region, apparently damaged the vast network of underwater cables that enables modern communication.

"The internet capacity in Taiwan is about 40 percent now, so the service is jammed," said a spokesman for Chunghwa Telecom, Taiwan's largest phone company.

A spokesman for CAT Telecom, Thailand's communication authority, said internet services had been disrupted across the country.

"Those whose businesses mainly rely on internet communication have been affected. They can't do anything," he added.

Phone services in some countries were also disrupted, in particular for calls to the United States. "Several undersea data cables were damaged," said a spokesman for PCCW, Hong Kong's biggest telecoms company.

Service providers quickly tried to redirect customers to the cables that had not been affected but the reduced capacity was no match for the normal workload of users, leaving an internet service that was painfully slow or non-existent.

NTT Communications, the long-distance call business of Japan's

largest telecom firm Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Corp, said 1,400 toll-free phone lines and 84 international lines used internally by companies were affected.

The crux of the trouble seemed to be in the undersea routes near Taiwan, which providers would try to bypass in favour of other routes through Europe, said a spokesman for Japanese telecoms firm KDDI Corp, Satoru Ito.

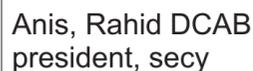
"If there is too much traffic on that route, it might get blocked up and further slow down internet connections," Ito said.

Another AFP report from Singapore said Singapore Telecommunications (SingTel) said Wednesday it was working to resume normal access to the internet after submarine cables were cut by the Taiwan earthquake.

"The Taiwan earthquake has affected several submarine cable systems in Asia, causing cable cuts near Taiwan late last night," SingTel said in a statement.

"As a result, some customers might experience slow data or internet access. Traffic diversion and restoration works are currently in progress," the company said but added it could not comment on how many customers were affected.

The city-state's largest telecommunications operator however said its submarine cables linking the US and Europe were not affected.



Anis, Rahid DCAB president, secy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Anis Alamgir of Aker Kagoj and Rahid Ezaz of bdnews24.com were elected president and general secretary of Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh (DCAB) for 2007 yesterday.

Of the 11-member executive committee, election was held only for the posts of president and treasurer while others were elected unopposed.

Other office-bearers are: Vice-president: Mahmuda Chowdhury of Dainik Dinkal, Treasurer: Mashhudi Haque, Joint Secretary: Imran Alam of Naya Diganta and Office Secretary: Farid Ahmed of bdnews24.com.

Executive committee members are Humayun Chowdhury of The New Nation, Sheikh Enamul Haq of Sangram, Masud Karim of Jugantar, Hazirul Alam of ntv and Shahin Raja of Inqilab.