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HC suspends all polls for 3 months

Asks EC why it shall not be directed to prepare fresh voter list, ID card and transparent ballot box

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday suspended conduct of all elections including the next parliamentary polls for three months and ordered the Election Commission (EC) to explain why the existing revised voter list shall not be declared illegal.

The ruling came following a writ petition filed the same day by Kazi Mammur Rashid, a constituent of Dhaka-6.

Issuing a rule, the HC also directed the commission to explain why the present voter roll shall not be declared inconsistent with the provisions of Representation of the People Order (RPO), 1972 and the directives passed by the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in

2006.

The electoral register was updated to be used in the January 22 general election that was later cancelled.

The rule asked the commission to clarify why it should not be directed to prepare a fresh electoral roll for the general and other elections as per the provisions of the existing law, the SC directives of 2006 and as per articles 119, 121, 122 of the constitution.

Besides, it asked the EC to show cause why it shall not be ordered to introduce voter identification (ID) cards and arrange transparent ballot boxes for the national election.

The respondents—the EC, Chief Election Commissioner, and Secretary of the EC—will have to reply to the rule within two weeks.

Advocate Syed Mahmud Ahsan

moved for the petitioner. However, neither the petitioner nor his counsel was available for comment on the issue.

The petition was brought before an HC bench for hearing at around 3:00pm. At one point of the hearing that lasted for around 15 minutes, Deputy Attorney General Syeda Afser Jahan stood up and appealed for the hearing date to be set after seven days. But the bench did not respond to the plea.

Rashid in his petition mentioned that as there is no voter roll prepared as per the court directives, "holding a national election with the faulty voter list is wholly without jurisdiction and is of no legal effect".

The petition reads, "The existing voter list has not been made in accordance with the direction of

the judgment of the Appellate Division as such the present voter list published for the coming national election is erroneous and liable to be set aside."

It also said as the EC has not issued voter ID cards that are mandatory for an election to be free and fair, its preparing the voter list and conducting a national election on the basis of that list is illegal.

The petition further said currently when there is no voter roll prepared as per the judgment and direction of the apex court, in no way the election will reflect the people's wish and expression.

Rashid, the petitioner, prayed for holding of all elections including the general election by the EC to be stayed till disposal of the matter.



Rajuk bulldozes a sloping driveway to an underground car park of a shopping centre on Elephant Road in the capital yesterday.

Envoys meet chief adviser to talk latest situation

UNB, Dhaka

The envoys of America, Britain, India and the European Union (EU) meet Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhrudin Ahmed yesterday and discussed Bangladesh's latest political situation.

US Ambassador Patricia A Butenis, UK High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury, Indian High Commissioner Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty and an eight-member EU delegation, led by German Ambassador Frank Meyke, made separate courtesy call on the head of the caretaker government at his office.

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Importers to be punished for delay in import of fertiliser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday warned the fertiliser importers of blacklisting and stern legal actions if they failed to import fertiliser as per the scheduled time.

If necessary, the government will help them in importing fertiliser to ensure its availability in the country, a ministry official told the journalists after an inter-ministerial meeting chaired by Industries Adviser Safiya Choudhury at the industries ministry.

The meeting decided that stringent measures, including blacklisting and legal actions, will

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Holiday market planned for evicted hawkers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government has decided to introduce 'holiday market' to rehabilitate hawkers evicted from the footpaths and illegally built markets in the capital during the ongoing joint forces' drive.

The government in association with Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) will arrange alternative markets for the evicted hawkers primarily on two major city streets on Fridays as per the scheme taken up considering the inhuman conditions they are now facing.

More such markets will be

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Holiday Notice

The offices of *The Daily Star* will remain closed today on account of holy Ashura. Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper tomorrow.



PHOTO: STAR

A mobile court confiscates packs of industrial dyes being sold as food colour at a store of a wholesale market at Moulvibazar in the capital yesterday.

No interference with free press

Interim govt pledges, plans to talk with media representatives on the issue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the wake of a strong media outcry against restrictions on the media and its leaders' firm resolve to defy those, the caretaker government (CG) yesterday clarified that no restrictions have been imposed on the freedom or functions of the media.

The government would soon

invite media representatives for discussions to reach a workable solution on the issue, according to the home ministry.

Editors of some newspapers welcomed the government clarification but reiterated the demand for withdrawal of the relevant clause in the Emergency Power Rules 2007, published on January 25.

Taking note of similar concerns regarding normal activities of trade unions and professional bodies, the CG also decided to issue necessary instructions to allow indoor activities of such unions and bodies, the home ministry yesterday said in a clarification on a gazette notification published on Emergency Power Rules 2007.

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70pc Oriental Bank shares cancelled

BB asks the bank to replace those 'benami' shares owned by Obaidul Karim, his family

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The Bangladesh Bank yesterday cancelled 69.87 percent shares of the Oriental Bank's shares after its probe found that Obaidul Karim bought 'benami' shares through his family members, nominee companies and individuals in breach of the banking company laws.

In a letter to the Oriental Bank's managing director, the central bank ordered the cancellation and forfeiture of the shares with immediate effect and asked the scam-

tainted private bank to inform its current shareholders accordingly.

The 69.87 percent shares were listed under 13 names and companies that, the BB probe found, are either members of Obaidul's family, companies owned by them or foreign nominee companies.

The BB has asked the Oriental Bank authorities to issue fresh shares in its [central bank's] favour to replace the forfeited ones and send them to it forthwith.

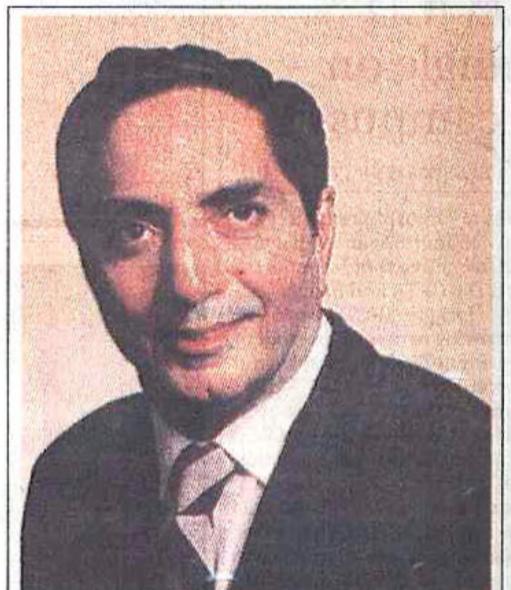
It has also directed the belea-

guered financial outfit to inform immediately the Registrar of the Joint Stock Companies and Firms and the Securities and Exchange Commission of the actions against the benami shares (the ones held by proxy).

The BB letter said the directive has been issued under section 45 of the Banking Companies Act, 1991 to advance the monetary and banking policy and also to ensure proper management of the Oriental Bank Limited.

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IN REMEMBRANCE



We fondly remember Late Aziz H. A. Sattar, the founding Managing Director of GMG Group of Industries, on his 14th death anniversary. He was a pioneer and a role model of industrialization in this country. His unfathomable depth of knowledge, vision, uphill struggle and firm determination inspires all of us. A doa mahfil has been arranged after Zohr on 31 January at GMG Industrial Corporation, Tejgaon to pray for the salvation of the departed soul. All his relatives, friends and well-wishers are cordially invited to attend.

Family members
all officers & employees of GMG Group

Major shakeup in police admin

Changes in army too; Maj Gen Manirul made new SSF chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Top echelons of the police administration saw a massive reshuffle last night as the caretaker government made changes to 20 top positions including inspector general of police (IGP) and commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP).

Meanwhile, several key positions in the army were also reshuffled.

Director General (DG) of Special Security Force (SSF) Major General Syed Fatemi Ahmed Rumi was

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Ashura today

UNB, Dhaka

The holy Ashura will be observed across the country today to commemorate the Karbala tragedy in which Hazrat Imam Hossain along with his family and followers embraced martyrdom.

On the tenth of Muharram, the fateful day, Muslims vent remorse over the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hossain, grandson of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (peace be upon him), at the hands of renegades over 1300 years ago.

While on a journey towards Kufa, Hazrat Imam Hossain, his family members and a number of his followers were killed by the forces of Yazid, son of Muslim ruler Muavia of that province.

They were deprived of food and water and many of them were put to death. Eventually, Imam Hossain

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14-party urges CG to hold polls early

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amari League (AL)-led 14-party alliance yesterday urged the caretaker government (CG) to hand over power to an elected government through holding a free and fair election in the country immediately.

"The chief adviser (CA) in his speech to the nation pledged that he would hold a free, fair and

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Ex-secy Anisuzzaman tipped to be new CEC

President may ask ECs to go tomorrow

RASHIDUL HASAN

Former secretary M Anisuzzaman Khan is likely to be appointed the new Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) for President Iajuddin Ahmed, sources said.

The President would request the acting CEC and the four other

election commissioners to resign when they meet him tomorrow at the Bangabhaban, added the sources.

If acting CEC Justice Mahfuzur Rahman stands down at the president's request, the other commissioners might follow his lead, the sources continued.

Meanwhile, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim told reporters last night that the Election Commission (EC) might be reconstituted within a couple of days.

The election commissioners had an emergency meeting on

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Yunus slates 'financial apartheid' against poor

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

Nobel Laureate and Grameen Bank founder Prof Muhammad Yunus has criticised the existing international financial institutions for shutting out the world's poor from receiving their credit.

While delivering the keynote address at the international conference to commemorate the centenary of Mahatma Gandhi's 'Satyagraha' form of political movement here yesterday, Prof Yunus also advocated the concept of social business to address socio-

economic problems.

"Two-third of the world's population do not have access to the financial services of these institutions. This is a form of financial apartheid," he said.

Prof Yunus said the significance of his getting the Nobel Prize for Peace was the relation between peace and poverty. "Poverty is a threat to peace," he said adding "it is impossible for us to think of peace when 60 percent of the world's population lives in poverty."

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Prof Muhammad Yunus

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