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EC PROPOSES

Provision for 'no vote', 33pc woman office bearers in parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday disclosed a significant proposal for introducing a system for casting "no votes" in parliamentary elections to express voters' lack of confidence in the contesting candidates in a constituency.

The number of the "no votes" cast will not, however, affect the election results, the draft said, adding that this statistics might rather be used only for academic purpose.

The EC disclosed the proposals on electoral reforms at a meeting with the editors of different national dailies and senior journalists at the National Economic Council conference room.

The draft presented yesterday has a few new proposals included in the original draft of the EC upon the caretaker government's advice. The original draft was disclosed on April 5.

In a bid to empower women politically, the EC also proposed that every registered political party must have specific provision in its

constitution for including at least 33 percent women as office bearers of its central committee and other committees at different levels.

The EC also drafted a few provisions for imposing bans on political parties' having front organisations comprising students, teachers and workers. According to the proposal, the registration of a party would be cancelled if it violates any of these provisions.

In defence of the proposal for introducing the no-vote system, the EC said in the existing system voters cannot express their unwillingness to cast vote for any contesting candidate. As a result, a candidate is elected and made people's representative even when they do not have the support of the majority voters of the constituency concerned.

Sources at the EC Secretariat said this proposal was drafted after the EC's April 26 meeting with civil society personalities.

A few editors wanted to know what would be the poll result in a constituency where over 50 percent voters cast "no votes". They

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MP privilege for duty-free cars scrapped

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The council of advisers yesterday finalised the proposal to cancel the lawmakers' privilege of importing duty-free cars and also decided to form a committee to speed up the bureaucratic processes.

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim gave the information during the weekly press briefing at the Chief Adviser's Office.

The council gave its final approval to the Member of Parliament (Remuneration and Allowance) (Amendment) Ordinance, 2007, that ends the lawmakers' privilege to import duty-free cars.

Fahim also said that Chief

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Steps to make Biman PLC by June approved

RASHIDUL HASAN

The Council of Advisers yesterday approved some steps to turn Biman Bangladesh Airlines into a Public Limited Company (PLC) by June.

It asked the ministries concerned to prepare a phase-by-phase programme to make the huge loss-incurring national airlines into a profitable organisation.

At its weekly meeting, the council approved in principle a proposal to review Biman's possible manpower cut, audit its current financial state and sketch out alternatives to its fuel purchase arrange-

ments with Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC).

Earlier on April 25, the caretaker government had decided to turn Biman into a PLC within June under a re-structuring plan. A high-powered committee headed by the secretary of the civil aviation ministry in March made recommendations to this effect.

The national flag carrier now has a 4,800-strong manpower.

According to the government plan, Biman will have to undergo internal reforms before it becomes a PLC with 100 percent state ownership and its shares would be offloaded to the private sector once

the company becomes profitable, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim told newsmen yesterday.

Meanwhile, Biman will slash its manpower under a Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) and a revised organogram. It is also going to change its rules of business, highly placed Biman sources said.

As a PLC, Biman will be owned by at least seven public organisations through floating of shares.

A company board would be formed comprising these organisations that will take all decisions regarding Biman.

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EC plays safe with voter list timeline

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday said the Election Commission (EC) aims to prepare a credible voter list as soon as possible for holding the ninth parliamentary election.

"Considering all aspects of the work, we spoke of an 18-month timeline for preparation of a voter roll with photographs. We are trying our best to speed things up and might even be able to wrap it up within a year. And in that event, the very next day I will inform the government that I'm going to announce the election schedule," he observed.

"We hope to begin the field work in August though in the ground plan it was supposed to start later

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GAS LEAKAGE Bapex action betters Titas well situation

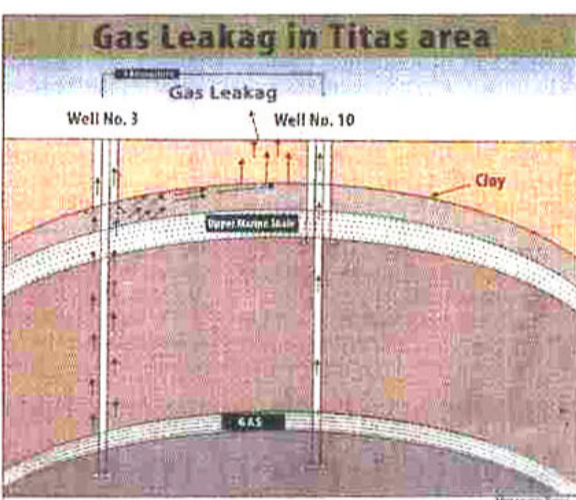
Experts now advise govt against unsolicited deal with blowout consultant

SHARIER KHAN

As the gas leakage situation at Titas field in Brahmanbaria has improved dramatically since last month's remedial action by Bapex, experts now say the government should take time to deploy the right international consultant through open tenders to address the gas field's problem.

Based on an unsolicited negotiation, the government last week signed an agreement with US company GSM involving a cost of about Tk 25 crore. The GSM was involved in both the

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Jalil for handing over voter registration job to army experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil yesterday suggested handing over of the voter registration activities to army experts.

When the army experts expressed their willingness to prepare the voter list within six months, the Election Commission's 18-month timetable will create "confusion" and lead to wastage of time, he told the reporters at his office in the capital yesterday.

If the people assist the army experts, the much-awaited voter list can be prepared within six months, he said.

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Death of youth in Rab action sparks protests

Rab says he was killed during clashes with kidnappers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Plainclothes Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel allegedly beat a youth dead and injured his family members and neighbours triggering protests at Chhoto Bongram Purbopara in Rajshahi city suburbs yesterday.

Police sources said the dead was identified as Quamrul Islam Majnu, 25, and there were no criminal records against him.

Protesting Rab's actions, angry locals brought out processions several times during the day and a large procession in the evening. They chanted slogans against Rab

and the caretaker government.

They demanded actions taken against those responsible. A large number of police were deployed in the area to prevent any untoward incidents.

Majnu's body was not handed over to his family members as of filing of this story, as doctors of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) declined to perform autopsy on his body after police mentioned in the inquest report that he had no torture marks.

Journalists were also not allowed to take photos of Majnu's body as the RMCH authorities

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Outlaw killed in 'shootout' with Rab

UNB, Rajbari

A leader of an outlawed party was killed in an encounter with Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) at Char Laxmipur village near the district town early yesterday.

The dead was identified as Faruq Hossain Dablu, 42, regional commander of Purbu Banglar Communist Party (PBCP).

Acting on a tip-off, members of the elite force went to a farm at the village where Dablu and his accomplices were holding a secret meeting at about 4:00am.

Sensing the presence of the Rab men, the outlaws opened, prompting the law enforcers to retaliate.

Rab sources said Dablu received bullets during the "shootout" and died instantly, while his cohorts managed to flee.

Dablu was wanted in a number of criminal cases, the sources added. A two-barrel gun and two bullets were recovered from the scene.

ISPR clarifies army's voter listing time

BSS, Dhaka

The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) yesterday said the time requirement estimated by the military technical team on preparing voter list should not be confused with the time mentioned by the Election Commission (EC).

"The six months' time mentioned by the team is only a part of the total time required by the EC," clarified the ISPR in a rejoinder.

The ISPR explains the military technical team's statement published in the media regarding the time required for preparing the voter list by them.

On May 16, a military technical team on request from the EC demonstrated the process of registering the voters in presence of some

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Sachin, Sourav hit tons in Ctg Test

BISHWAJIT ROY from Chittagong

Only 20 overs were possible on the second day of the first Test due to overnight drizzle and heavy rain in the morning, but that did not stop prolific India batsmen Sachin Tendulkar and Sourav Ganguly from completing their centuries at the Chittagong Divisional Stadium yesterday.

After waiting for more than six and a half hours, play on the second day began with the two overnight batsmen nearing their hundreds and they made no mistake to reach the milestones in front of their board president Sharad Pawar and other officials who arrived yesterday in the port city after being invited by their Bangladesh counterparts.

Resuming the day on 295 for

three, the visitors lost three more wickets before finishing the day on 384-six in 97 overs, having added 89 runs in 20 overs.

Both Sachin and Sourav were dismissed immediately after reaching their centuries as India gave the clear indication to score runs quickly in a bid to make up for the lost time.

Fast bowlers Shahadat Hossain and Mashrafe Bin Mortaza took the opportunity after the new ball was taken in the 82nd over to give Bangladesh some solace in the brief period of play.

Soon after scoring his 13th Test hundred, which came after twelve innings, the left-handed former Indian skipper Ganguly top-edged a Mashrafe short ball that was pitched outside off-stump and was

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