



Emergency should be lifted 2 months before local body polls: CEC

UNB, Dhaka

Emergency should be lifted at least two months before the polls from places where election will be held, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda said yesterday.

EC has proposed for holding election to the city corporations where it is due from early next year.

Huda said emergency is required to be lifted from areas where local body election will be held to facilitate the electoral campaign by the candidates.

"What I visualise is that I don't expect much that the government will lift emergency from across the country," Huda told reporters when asked to clarify his earlier statement that emergency should continue until the general election.

He said the election will be scheduled in way keeping more

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UK foreign office director links fair polls with free politics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Visiting British Foreign Office Asia Director John Dennis yesterday said holding free, fair and credible elections requires an open and transparent environment, which the government can create through specific measures to remove restrictions on political activity.

"What is important is when the election takes place it should take place in open and transparent environment...It's a matter to be decided by the Bangladesh government and particular measures need to be taken by the government," Dennis said on the first day of this three-day visit.

The British Foreign Office director yesterday met Foreign Secretary Touhid Hossain at the foreign ministry. After the meeting he told reporters that the lesser the restrictions on political activity, the more are the chances of holding the elections in fair and free environment.

"We hope as time goes on the government will do as much as possible to create the environment

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Govt to buy SUVs for UNOs from Pragati

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The adviser committee on public purchase yesterday approved buying 150 brand-new sport utility vehicles (SUVs) for the upazila nirbahi officers (UNO) through state-owned auto assembling plant Pragati Industries Ltd.

Presided over by Finance Adviser Mirza AB Azizul Islam, it also approved proposals for purchase of electricity from rental power plants and import of fertiliser and rice.

The government will buy the four-wheel drives, Mitsubishi Pajero, each for Tk 26 lakh from Pragati without any tender.

Replies to a query, the adviser said the public procurement regulations do not oblige the government to invite tender in the case of buying anything through its own entity.

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AUG 21 MASSACRE

**Given top priority, still probe didn't move an inch**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although the present government soon after assuming power put the case of August 21, 2004 grenade attack on an Awami League (AL) rally on the top of its priority list, the investigation of it still remains at the startline.

The deadly grenade attack on the AL rally and party chief, Sheikh Hasina, which left 24 killed and over 300 maimed, apparently got lost from the government's radar, as the investigation of the case remains exactly where it had been

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MONEY LAUNDERED BY TOP GRAFT SUSPECTS

## Govt mulls treaty with UK to get back money

EMRAN HOSSAIN

In an effort to recover the money siphoned offshore from the country, the interim government is planning to sign a treaty with the British government for getting assistance from New Scotland Yard.

Popularly known as The Yard, the British law enforcing agency is responsible for policing the Greater London area as well as for helping other countries in investigating criminal offences.

Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) Secretary Mukhles Ur Rahman yesterday told the Daily Star about the plan.

"We are working to strike a deal with the Scotland Yard for recovering the money siphoned off from

the country," said the ACC secretary adding that an agreement must be signed between the two countries for the cooperation to take place.

The ACC secretary also said before signing the treaty the Bangladesh government needs to promulgate some laws giving the specific bilateral relation legality for getting regular assistance in the future.

"A dialogue is on regarding various strategic issues as the matter is between two states. It is also necessary to give the effort legality to yield long-term results from such a treaty," said the ACC secretary.

A few weeks ago, while ACC Chairman Lt Gen (retd) Hasan

Mashhud Chowdhury was visiting the Scotland Yard, the British law enforcement agency assured him of its assistance in recovering the money smuggled off from Bangladesh.

The ACC in its application sought stay order on the HC decision following a writ petition filed by the detained former prime minister and BNP chairperson challenging the legality of filing and continuing the graft case against her.

The SC chamber judge also fixed tomorrow for hearing of three other ACC applications seeking stay order on the HC decision of staying proceedings of the ACC graft cases against BNP leaders Tarique Rahman, Moudud Ahmed

SC now to hear Khaleda appeal Thursday  
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) chamber judge yesterday did not deliver any order following Anti-Corruption Commission's (ACC) appeal against the High Court (HC) decision of granting bail to Khaleda Zia in a graft case and fixed tomorrow for hearing of the matter in the full bench of the Appellate Division.

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## Power ministry power being decentralised

Bid to make 7 companies more dynamic

SHARIER KHAN

bureaucrats also included their power in the legal framework to ensure absolute authority.

"The power sector has been almost crippled due to excessive centralisation of power in the ministry. How can the power companies (like Desa) function when one person (power secretary) holds the chair of five companies?" said a top official of the ministry.

This is why the power ministry on July 3 initiated a decentralisation process amid resistance from a section of bureaucrats.

Though originally the power secretary was not supposed to head the companies, bureaucrats in the recent years increasingly took control of affairs of all the power service bodies for petty personal gains, sources said. These

(PGCB), Ashuganj Power Company, Dhaka Electric Supply Authority (Desa), Dhaka Electric Supply Company (Desco), West Zone Power Distribution Company (WZPDC), South Zone Power Distribution Company (SZPDC) and Electricity Generation Company of Bangladesh (EGCB).

The ministry recommended that a secretary from any other ministry or a retired secretary or an eminent citizen could represent the government in the boards of these organisations.

The proposal further said that from now on, the power division would not be a party to decisions of each of these companies. Representatives of shareholders of the companies will take decisions.

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ZIA FERTILISER COMPANY

## Amonia pollution poses health risk in Ashuganj

SHEIKH MD SHAHIDUL ISLAM, Bheria

Zia Fertiliser Company Limited (ZFCL) in Ashuganj is causing immense ammonia pollution, leaving at least 200 families of Charatala village and ecological balance of five other villages under serious threat.

The ammonia tank of the ZFCL is continuously emitting gas and badly polluting the environment. As a result, about 200 acres of surrounding crop land are losing fertility.

The affected villages are Charatala, Sharifpur, Shariatnagar, Panchbhittha, Madhupur and Lalpur.

Villagers allege they cannot lead a normal life any more as the ZFCL tank is emitting excessive volume of gas every day. Most of them are suffering from suffocation, ailments and respiratory and skin diseases.

Suffocation problem is severe in Charatala. When the level of gas emitting increases panicked villagers start fleeing in fear of suffocation and take shelter in a faraway place for fresh air.

Md Abbas Uddin has long been suffering from suffocation problem. He said sometimes situation becomes so worse that they fear they are going to die of suffocation.

Amina Begum, who is suffering from skin diseases, said she recov-

ers whenever she goes to a distant village and stays there for some time.

Fishermen of the village said they often find dead fish floating in the water bodies around the ZFCL. They said no one has ever seen anything like this in the village before the launch of the ZFCL.

The farmers said at least 200 acres of land around the ZFCL are becoming sterile day by day, resulting in poor harvest. During dry season paddy does not grow well and its green plants turn to be yellowish. Trees face the same fate as shoots die and leaves fall prematurely.

Several housewives of Charatala

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