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ECs vow not to be nat'l traitors

CEC insists on polls within timeframe, bins nat'l govt talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday said the election commissioners do not want to become national traitors by reneging on the commitment to the nation for holding the stalled ninth parliamentary election before the year end.

"We are fully committed to the electoral roadmap. This is a do or die situation...the election must be held within the timeframe stipulated in the roadmap," CEC Huda said assuring an Awami League (AL) delegation.

"We are in if there is an election, and if it is not there, then we are out," CEC Huda asserted in response to AL acting chief's doubts about holding of the parliamentary poll within the timeframe stipulated in the electoral roadmap

announced by the EC.

When his attention was drawn to the much talked about issue of forming a national unity government before the parliamentary election, the CEC said the ongoing discussion on the matter is giving rise to unwarranted problems, which are meaningless. "We have no link with that," Huda asserted.

Acting AL President Zillur Rahman, who led the party delegation to the second day of the second round of electoral reform dialogues with the EC, asked the commission to announce immediately a tentative schedule for holding the parliamentary election, dispelling the doubts in the public mind about its fate, and also not to hold polls to any local government before the national election.

Zillur also called upon the

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EC TALKS

AL wants state to foot party poll bill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) yesterday proposed that the state provide funds for political parties and their candidates to contest the next general election.

Placed before the Election Commission (EC) during the second-round talks on electoral reforms, its proposal says parties that obtained at least 10 percent of the vote in last election should be allocated Tk 15 lakh for each candidate they would field while Tk 50 crore for central electioneering.

"The state should finance the election expenditure for the organisations and their candidates," said AL Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed.

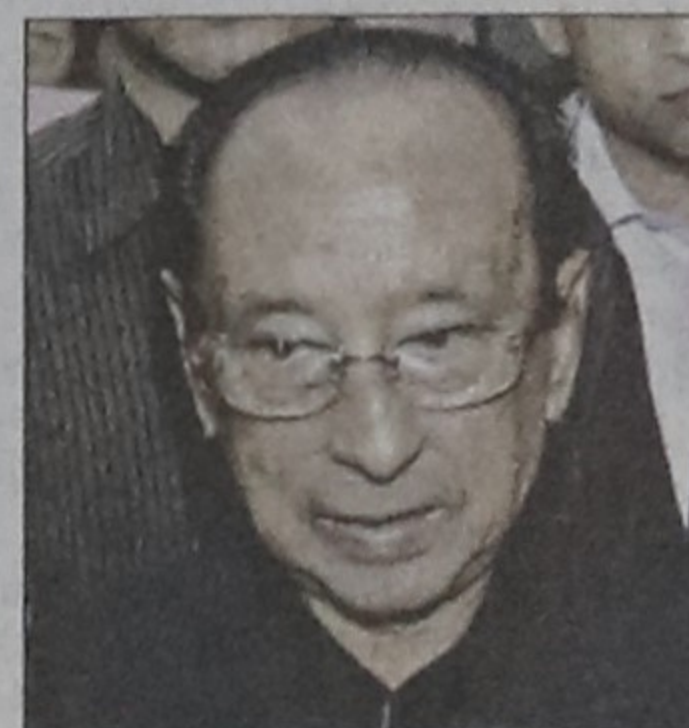
According to the proposal, only AL and BNP qualify for the funds

AL PROPOSALS

- Announce specific date for polls
- State should give election funds
- EC to arrange projection meetings
- Raise proposed ceiling of donations
- No observers to enter polling booths

from public purse since no-one except them polled 10 percent of the vote in the 8th parliamentary election.

The AL however opposed the EC's proposal to put a ceiling on election costs. The commission in its proposals said a registered



political party with over 200 candidates should not be allowed to spend more than Tk 3 crore.

The ceiling would be Tk 2 crore if the number of candidates ranges between 100 and 200, and Tk 1 crore if it is below 100. Expenses of

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Cast votes judiciously

CA urges people UNB, Mymensingh

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday urged the people to cast their votes judiciously in local body and national elections, and elect honest and dedicated candidates to fulfill the nation's aspirations for a strong and sustainable democracy.

"It's imperative to elect such capable and honest people who can be the genuine public representatives to drive the nation to its desired goals," he said.

The head of the caretaker government made the remarks at a largely attended opinion-exchange meeting of government officials, professionals and common people from Mymensingh, Sherpur, Netrakona, Kishoreganj and Jamalpur at the local stadium.

Around 2,500 people, including elected local government representatives, teachers, farmers, businessmen, journalists and NGO representatives were present at the meeting.

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AUG 2007 CAMPUS VIOLENCE

Three DU teachers challenge conviction

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The three Dhaka University (DU) teachers convicted in connection with the August, 2007 campus unrest and then released on presidential clemency filed separate appeals yesterday challenging their conviction.

Prof Sadrul Amin, president of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (DUTA), Prof Anwar Hossain, general secretary of DUTA and Prof Harun-or-Rashid, dean of the DU Social Science Faculty, filed the appeals at the court of Metropolitan Sessions Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque.

After a long hearing, the judge accepted the appeals and fixed April 2 for the next hearing.

Moving the appeals, advocates Masud Ahmed Talukder, Shafiqul Bashir Bhandari, Mosleuddin Jasim and Abdul Mannan Khan told the court that they filed the appeals against the conviction

order but not against the president's order.

The president's order only ensured that the teachers would not have to serve jail terms and their conviction was not set aside, the lawyers said adding that the teachers would be unfit to contest any election if their conviction is not quashed.

The lawyers cited different decisions and rulings of the higher courts, which would help the trial court to admit the appeals for hearing.

Opposing the appeals, Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Ehsanul Haque Samaji told the court that the appeals would not be maintainable at this stage, as they had come to a higher court against the president's order.

Convicts can go only to the High Court as the president had exercised his constitutional power, he added.

On January 22, 2008, Third

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Moeen for new era of alliance with India

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

On his maiden visit to India, Bangladesh army chief Gen Moeen U Ahmed yesterday met Indian army chief Gen Deepak Kapoor and Indian Air Force chief Air Marshal Homi Major and promised to usher a new era of close defence cooperation with India.

Gen Moeen, who also had a meeting with the vice-chief of Indian Navy, held extensive military talks with his Indian counterparts.

"I propose to usher in a new era of close cooperation between the two armies," Moeen told reporters in a brief interaction on his arrival at South Block.

Setting a positive tone to his six-day visit, Indian army presented two stallions and four mares to Bangladesh army as a gesture of goodwill and friendship.

The reins of the thoroughbreds, worth more than Rs 4 crore, were handed over by Gen Kapoor to Gen Ahmed at a spectacular presentation ceremony yesterday. Lt Gen

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PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Rajdhani Unnayan Kartipakkha with joint forces' assistance demolishes illegal structures on Elephant Road in the capital yesterday.

Hasina verdict hearing starts amid high security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hearing on the government's leave to appeal petition against the High Court's landmark judgment that quashed a Tk 2.99 crore extortion case against former prime minister and Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina began yesterday in the Supreme Court (SC) amid stepped up security around the court.

After partial hearing, the six-member full bench of the Appellate Division of the SC headed by Chief Justice Mohammad Rulul Amin adjourned it till this morning.

Additional security measures centring the hearing also created an unwanted situation in the court area, and this issue was brought to the notice of the SC by Hasina's counsels later.

A large number of police, armed police and BDR personnel were deployed at the entrances to the court and around it. And restriction was imposed on entry of people to the court premises, which was unusual.

Some lawyers, litigants and

journalists seeking to enter the court compound were harassed by law enforcers while checking their identities. Police also beat up some people and misbehaved with many others.

Lawyers had to enter the court showing their identity cards but journalists had to list their names at the entrance to the courtroom even after showing their identity cards.

Many uniformed and plain-clothes officials from law enforcement agencies were also present in the court building. At least 12 platoons of police were deployed in the court area, sources mentioned.

When the hearing was adjourned, one of Hasina's counsels barrister Shafique Ahmed raised the issue of extra security and restriction on entry. He told the court that in the name of security, lawyers, their assistants and litigants were harassed.

In response, the court said the steps taken were intended to ensure security. In many developed countries, a court building comes

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SABBIR MURDER CASE Babar interrogated in hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A team from the Criminal Investigation Department of Police (CID) yesterday interrogated detained former state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar in a prison cell in Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) Hospital in connection with Sabir murder case.

Babar has a graft case against him for taking Tk 20 crore as a bribe from the chairman of Bashundhara Group in exchange for dropping a murder charge against the latter's son Safiat Sobhan Sanbeer in connection with the killing of Sabir.

"A three-member team of CID interrogated the former state minister from 3:45pm to 5:00pm in the prison cell in connection with Sabir murder case," Maj Shamsul Haider Siddique, deputy inspector general of prisons (DIG-prisons), told The Daily Star last night.

Assistant Superintendent of



Police Arman Ali, also the investigation officer of the case, led the team.

Sources said Sanbeer got into an altercation with Bashundhara Group Director Humayun Kabir Sabir over a female executive of a mobile phone company in the former's Gulshan flat on July 4, 2006. At one stage of the altercation

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Titas staff thrived on evil industry links

Tampered meters saw over 150 turn tycoons

KAILASH SARKAR

Over 150 supervisors and meter readers of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Ltd became millionaires by tampering with bills, depriving the government of crores of taka in revenue income.

Sources say Titas meter readers, supervisors and some other staff were carrying out the job for a long time in the industrial and commercial zones.

These racketeers used to tamper with the bills for bribes to help unscrupulous owners of mills and industries evade the actual cost of the national asset.

Sources in the Taskforce set up at the Titas Gas building said those involved in metre tampering have several groups and have 'under-table' relations with the owners of several mills and industries.

The Taskforce launched a massive drives against the staffs involved in meter tampering and arrested four, including an assistant supervisor, in and around the city.

The arrestees are Mohammad Sadequr Rahman, 38, assistant supervisor, who hailed from Gharmora in Homna, Comilla, Mohammad Shawon Ahmed, 31, of

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

AUG 21 GRENADE ATTACKS Zandal contradicts Hannan confession

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Contradictory information provided by detained leaders of Harkatul Jihad Al Islami (Huji) left investigators of the August 21, 2004 grenade attack clueless about the masterminds of the attack.

The information gleaned from Huji leader Mufti Moineddin alias Abu Zandal regarding the masterminds does not match with the confessional statement given by Huji boss Mufti Abdul Hannan, said investigators.

Hannan in his confessional statement before a magistrate on November 1 last year said Zandal and another Huji militant Ahsanullah Kajol collected the grenades from Mohammadpur residence of Moulana Tajuddin, the brother of former deputy minister

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Proteas end Tigers' resistance

SPORTS REPORTER

The defeat was inevitable for the Tigers as South Africa completed their task in 45 minutes on the fourth morning of the first Test of the two-match series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Bangladesh's hero of the match Shahadat Hossain, who finished with a match haul of nine wickets, picked up the day's lone wicket by trapping left-handed batsman Ashwell Prince that only reduced the losing margin to five wickets.

It was mere formalities for the Proteas as they needed only 27 runs on the fourth day with six wickets in hand and it took them 10.5 overs to reach 205 for losing

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Jacques Kallis: Man-of-the-match

Rejoinder, our reply

Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday issued a rejoinder to a report headlined "Only Jamaat opposes EC plan for poll fund transparency" published in The Daily Star on February 24.

The rejoinder signed by Ali Ahrad, senior assistant publicity secretary of the party, said Jamaat is not against the EC's plan for ensuring transparency in collecting and spending election funds of political parties.

"Jamaat-e-Islami believes in transparency in collecting and spending the election fund. But the conditions imposed by the Election Commission on collecting and spending the election fund of political parties are very complicated. For this, Jamaat-e-Islami proposed making the conditions simple so that political parties can easily follow them," said the Jamaat

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