



Whopping success for EC

8 crore voters already registered, electronic database ready

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday achieved its target of registering eight crore voters with their photographs taken, within the deadline stipulated by the electoral roadmap, putting to rest all skepticism about the project's success.

The commission also has the electronic database of the eight crore voters ready, which perhaps will be one of the largest electronic databases of electoral rolls in the world while being definitely the largest among developing countries, claimed senior officials engaged in the mammoth project that began in August last year.

A few lakh more voters might still be added to the list by the June 30 deadline for wrapping up the field level work of voter registration, the officials added.

The entries are being checked and re-checked leaving no room for duplication, they noted.

Bangladesh Army has been helping the EC in the project since its inception.

Distribution of national identity cards for the voters, which are being prepared simultaneously with the voter list with photographs, will also be completed by the end of October, sources said.

Earlier, between 1994 and 1995 the state lost over Tk 100 crore as the erstwhile EC failed to deliver after it had taken up a project for distributing voter ID cards.

Given the size of the country's population, the current EC earlier estimated that the number of voters would be around eight crore.

Elated by the whopping success, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which has been assisting the EC in the job, is planning to celebrate the achievement at the end of July, sources said.

The previous list, prepared in 2006, the number was 9.30 crore, which was later scrapped due to a large number of duplications and other errors on it, costing the exchequer Tk 60 crore for nothing.

The violent dispute that raged

over the 2006 voter list was one of the pivotal reasons for the rather unorthodox changeover of power on 1/11/2007 and the subsequent stalling of the ninth parliamentary election, originally scheduled for January 22 of the same year.

Civil and military bureaucrats involved in the project, and officials of different foreign missions in Dhaka will also be invited.

According to a progress report prepared by the project headquarters, till June 22 a total of 7.97 crore voters were registered.

The field level work of voter registration is still going on in 41 areas with one lakh voters on an average being registered daily.

"We are sure that eight crore voters have been registered by today. However, we will receive a confirmation report from the field within two or three days," a senior official engaged in voter listing said yesterday.

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Diesel subsidy going to wrong pockets

SHAMIM ASHRAF

any idea how much the man withdrew.

Locals of Kharna alleged that Maznu in connivance with UP Member Zafar thus gobbled up diesel subsidy meant for several poor farmers in the area on April 30.

And not just influential locals like Maznu, a few UP members and even agriculture officials have misappropriated a portion of the subsidy by resorting to massive irregularities and corruption during distribution.

Government officials said although the project to provide cash subsidy directly to the farmers was successful to a great

extent in comparison to other programmes, more poor farmers could benefit from it if irregularities in the distribution process could be checked.

Seven UP members and agriculture officers have already been arrested in Dinajpur for their alleged involvement in the irregularities on April 30.

On May 20, poor farmers of Madaripur submitted a memorandum to the agriculture adviser, asking him to stop the "corruption and cheating" in distribution of the diesel subsidy.

Allegations of such irregularities have mostly come from the

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A fisherman works on a fish trap yesterday as the river Turag begins to flood low-lying areas, bringing in fish with its tide. This picture was taken from Trimohoni in Khilgaon in the city.

Matin clarifies his comments on anti-graft body's legality

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Adviser MA Matin yesterday clarified his statement of the previous day about the legal basis of National Coordination Committee (NCC) against Corruption and Serious Crimes, saying that his meaning was different.

Replies to a query on Tuesday, Matin, also the chairman of the committee, said that the NCC does not have any legal validity and its purpose is to assist the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), which created confusion.

The adviser was asked whether the committee would take up any new cases if any big corrupt person was found since it has decided not

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Sand traders use the Mirpur embankment as a temporary loading field. Boats, seen in the background, offload sand on the embankment, which is then transported by trucks to different selling points in the city.

No polls with emergency on, without Hasina
Asserts AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) yesterday said it won't take part in any elections amid the state of emergency and without party chief Sheikh Hasina, who is currently in the US for treatment.

"Elections can't be held under the state of emergency. Lift the emergency first and then we will think about taking part in the local government elections," said AL acting President Zillur Rahman while addressing a discussion at Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh.

The AL organised the discussion marking its 59th founding anniversary with Zillur in the chair.

The AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC) sits today to take a formal decision whether to take part in the city corporation and municipality polls at Hasina's political office in Dhanmondi.

Presidium member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury asked the government to lift emergency immediately and hold the general elections first.

AL presidium member Amir Hossain Amu said the people now want AL government for development of the country, as only during

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Govt likely to consider parole for ailing Nasim
Son appeals to CA for treatment abroad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Government is likely to take initiatives today to free or parole detained former home minister Mohammad Nasim, who is undergoing treatment at the city's Labaid Specialised Hospital.

Nasim's eldest son Tanvir Shakil Joy last night told The Daily Star that the jail authorities have assured them of the government's "positive" decision regarding the parole of his father for overseas treatment.

When contacted, Deputy Inspector General of Prisons (DIG-Prisons) Major Shamsul Haider Siddiqui, however, told The Daily Star, "We have also heard about the possible parole of him [Nasim] but we are yet to receive any government order in this regard."

He said, "The present government is sympathetic to the ailing prisoners and therefore a positive decision may come today."

Meanwhile, the physical condition of Mohammad Nasim has "improved slightly" and he can now eat and talk, hospital sources said.

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ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH
Scamster Obaidul Karim gets 13yrs

His Tk 50cr assets to be confiscated

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday sentenced Orion Group Chairman Obaidul Karim to 13 years' rigorous imprisonment for amassing wealth illegally and concealing information on assets in his statement submitted to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

Judge Khandaker Kamal Uzaman of Special Court-9 set up on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises also fined Obaidul Tk 10 lakh, in default of which he will have to serve one more year behind bars.

The court also ordered the authorities concerned to confiscate his illegally earned wealth worth Tk 50.92 crore.

Obaidul was handed 10 years' imprisonment for accumulating wealth illegally and three years for concealing information about his actual wealth.

The sentences will run consecutively.

As Obaidul has been absconding, the sentences will come into effect the day he surrenders or is arrested.

ACC Deputy Director Abdul



Obaidul Karim
Karim filed the case with Ramna Police Station on October 8 last year.

On December 27 last year, another special court sentenced Obaidul to life imprisonment in an embezzlement case.

OBайдул КАРИМ'S
CONTROVERSIAL RISE
Obaidul Karim's phenomenal rise in the business world happened during the two regimes of Khaleda

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Over 200 graft cases against bigwigs challenged in HC

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Over 200 cases filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) and National Board of Revenue (NBR) against some high-profile politicians and businessmen have been challenged in the High Court (HC).

Most of these cases have same charges of amassing ill-gotten wealth, concealing wealth information, taking bribes and evasion of income taxes.

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complex. Currently, at least 60 cases are running in these courts.

Sources say about 100 accused have so far been convicted and over 60 of them are behind bars, while the rest are on the run.

In 50 cases, wives and children of the accused have been involved on charges of aiding and abetting them in accumulating ill-gotten wealth.

Upon different appeals, the co-accused, mainly the wives and daughters of the main accused, are getting ad-interim bails in the cases from the HC.

Lawyers concerned say the accused challenged the cases by filing writs with the HC saying ACC had not maintained due legal process in issuing notices asking for wealth statements. The writ petitioners also claimed ACC has not completed investigation in due time and it cannot give sanctions for placing the cases under Emergency Power Rules (EPR).

The allegation is not correct that ACC maintains pick-and-choose policy in arresting the accused. Many accused are freely moving, but ACC doesn't instantly arrest them," he said.

For example, former premier Sheikh Hasina filed a writ with the HC in August last year challenging the legality of ACC notice asking her for

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Koko exempted from court appearance

Decision on Tarique's petition June 29

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday exempted detained Arafat Rahman Koko, BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia's younger son, from appearing in person during the trial proceedings of the Gato corruption case.

The same court on June 21 stayed for three months the proceedings of the case against Mahmudur Rahman following a petition for quashing the case.

However, the investigation officer (IO) of the case is yet to receive a copy of the stay order, sources said.

The other charge-sheeted accused are Shinepukur Holdings Ltd Chairman Sohel F Rahman, Vice-chairman Salman F Rahman and former director Iqbal Ahmed, former general manager of Sonali Bank Sheikh Amin Uddin Ahmed, its Deputy General Managers Abu Taher and Abu Saleh Mohammad Nurul Haque.

ACC Assistant Director Amirul Islam, also the IO of the case, in a probe found involvement of the accused in embezzling the money and submitted charge sheet against them to the Dhaka Chief

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Koko had submitted a petition to the court on Tuesday seeking exemption from appearing in person at trial proceedings in Gato corruption case on health grounds.

Tarique's counsels filed his

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Aug 21 attack case shifted to sessions judge's court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka, yesterday shifted the August 21 grenade attack case against former deputy minister Abus Salam Pintu, Harkat-ul-Jihad (HuJ) leader Mufti Abdul Hannan and 20 others to the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court for trial.

The case was filed for launching grenade attacks on an Awami League (AL) rally on August 21, 2004 that left 23 people dead and 200 others injured.

CMM AkM Enamul Haque had

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Germany sneak into final Oust never-say-die Turkey of Euro 2008

AFP, Basel

strike as Turkey had taken a shock lead.

This was Germany's first win over Turkey since May 1992 and Fatih Terim's battered side used their never-say-die spirit forced the Germans to work hard.

Having reached Basel's St Jakob Park semifinal by forging a reputation as the tournament's come-back kings with last-gasp wins over Switzerland, the Czech Republic and Croatia, Turkey threatened Germany with the same treatment.

In contrast, Germany had all 23 men fit and ready to go having responded to their shock 2-1 defeat by Croatia in the group stages by knocking out much-fancied Portugal with an impressive 3-2 defeat here last Thursday.

Germany striker Miroslav Klose had nudged his side into the lead in the 79th minute after Bastian Schweinsteiger's first-half goal had cancelled out Ugur Boral's early

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