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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.

The number of voters on the current list with photographs is set to drop by at least 1.2 crore compared to the previous list prepared by the immediate past controversial EC led by Justice MA Aziz.

On 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.

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.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, who inaugurated the field

level work of voter registration in Rajshahi City Corporation area in August last year, is expected to join the grand celebration as the chief guest.

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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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.

Replying 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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Diesel subsidy going to wrong pockets

SHAMIM ASHRAF

Kharna Union Parishad, Bogra. Farmer Bablu Mia of Dhawapara village comes to the union parishad (UP) to get his share of subsidy for diesel. He is told that it was already withdrawn. His brother Saiful Islam also had the same experience.

Landless Safura Khatun of the same village came to buy medicine but was caught up by Maznu Mia, a local with some influence. He took her to the distribution point by force and withdrew an amount against her name. Maznu gave Safura Tk 40. The woman, however, did not have

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.

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 Abdus Salam Pintu, Harkat-ul Jihad (Huji) 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

Defender Philipp Lahm's late strike put three-times European champions Germany in Sunday's Euro 2008 final and sealed a 3-2 win to knock out injury-ravaged and a desperately unlucky Turkey on Wednesday night.

Lahm's 90th minute goal made sure Vienna will be Germany's final destination after Turkey's Semih Senturk had forced an equaliser just four minutes from time to make it 2-2 to set up another dramatic finish.

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 Borak's early

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.

Coach Fatih Terim had said he wanted to put his team on the map and their battling spirit has reminded the footballing world again what Turkey can do having reached the 2002 World Cup semi-

nal.

Turkey were without the banned quartet of keeper Volkan Demirel, Middlesbrough's Tuncay Sanli, Arda Turan who scored their last gasp winner against the Swiss, and Emre Asik.

And captain Nihat Kahveci, whose pair of late goals sank the Czech Republic, was missing with a thigh injury.

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 coach Joachim Loew played the same line-up and 4-5-1

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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 on 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 Uz-zaman 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.

OBAIDUL KARIM'S CONTROVERSIAL RISE

Obaidul Karim's phenomenal rise in the business world happened during the two regimes of Khaleda

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Tk 118CR GRAFT ACC presses charges against Mahmudur Rahman

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday pressed charges against former managing director of Shinepukur Holdings Ltd Mahmudur Rahman and six others in a Tk 118 crore embezzlement case.

The High Court (HC) on June 19 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 Sohail 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 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 deferred the hearing on the Tk 21 crore bribery case against Koko's elder brother Tarique Rahman, former state minister for home Lutfuzzaman Babar and six others to July 2.

Meanwhile Tarique has also appealed for exemption from appearing in person in the trial of Tk 21 crore bribery case.

TARIQUE AND KOKO
Judge Shahed Noor Uddin of Special Court-3, set on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises, passed the exemption order of Koko and set June 29 for hearing on the exemption petition of Tarique.

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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