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AUG 4 POLLS

Rules violators to face stern action: CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) will take instant punitive actions against electoral candidates, including cancellation of candidacies, if they violate the electoral rules and the code of conduct for electioneering, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda said yesterday.

"Stern actions will be taken against candidates who will break the electoral rules during campaigns. Candidacies will be cancelled if they are found breaking the rules," the CEC said during a news briefing in his office.

"We will implement the electoral rules and the code of conduct firmly," he told reporters adding, "Elections free from the influence of black money and muscle could not be held in the past as electoral laws were not firmly implemented."

Asked whether the EC will sit again with political parties if they want, the CEC said, "We are holding the local government polls as per the request of the government, and if anything has to change, the government and political parties have to discuss the matter and reach an agreement first."

As the local government elections including upazila polls are being held first according to the will of the government, the political parties should discuss their resentments with the government, he quipped.

Asked about the political parties appeal to hold the parliamentary election before local government polls, the CEC said, "We don't understand why they are opposing holding of the local government elections before the parliamentary

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Pakistan PM likely to visit Bangladesh

UNB, Dhaka

Pakistan Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani is likely to visit Bangladesh sometime in August.

This was primarily agreed as Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed invited the Pak premier during a bilateral meeting at Hotel Hilton on the sidelines of D8 summit in Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday.

As the matter of terrorism came up during the discussion in the meeting, the Pakistan prime minister said terrorism is bad news for Muslim countries.

He said Pakistan always fights against terrorism, but their leader Benazir Bhutto was killed by the terrorists.

The chief adviser said Bangladesh is firm and strong in its stand against terrorism and mentioned that not a single bomb was exploded or a single bullet fired in Bangladesh in last one and a half years, according to CA's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim who was present at the meeting.

Gillani said around three million refugees in Pakistan have become security concern for the country.

Two successive floods and cyclone Sidr, climate change and local government election in Bangladesh were also discussed in the meeting.

Foreign Affairs Adviser Iftikhar Ahmed Chowdhury and Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi were also present at the meeting.

Ctg mayor sued for tax evasion

UNB, Chittagong

Another case was filed against detained Chittagong Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury yesterday on charge of evading about Tk 27.58 lakh income tax.

Additional Tax Commissioner of Chittagong Ziaul Haque filed the case with Chittagong Senior Special Judge's Court under Income Tax Ordinance 1984 and Emergency Power Ordinance 2007.

According to the case statement, Mohiuddin concealed information of wealth worth Tk 1.13 crore in his statement submitted recently to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), causing a loss of Tk 27.58 lakh to the government exchequer.

He had submitted false affidavit and income tax statements during 2004-07, it said.

Mayor Mohiuddin, arrested on March 7 last year on corruption charges, now will face a total of eight cases.

CITY CORPORATIONS

Persons with criminal charges run in polls

STAR REPORT

The Election Commission (EC) has accepted a good number of nominations filed by mayoral and councillor aspirants having criminal records.

Mostly incumbent ward commissioners belonging to Awami League (AL) and BNP, a few of them have even been convicted by local courts. Out on bail granted by the High Court, they now seek reelection.

Of six city corporations, four are going to polls on August 4.

BARISAL
Several of the 14 mayoral candidates whose nominations have been okayed by the district election office have allegations of unlawful activities against them.

Showkat Hossain Hiron, city AL convener, is among the graft suspects listed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC). He also stands accused in several cases including one for vandalising local BNP office.

Rezaul Haque Harun, joint secretary of district AL, is listed as a loan defaulter with Rupali Bank. His nomination was adjudged 'all right' as the bank list of defaulters did not reach the election office timely, said an official of the district election commission.

Ahsan Habib Kamal, a former mayor and expelled city BNP leader, has allegations against him of torturing and filing false cases against journalists. He has however been cleared of the charge in party worker 'Mudee' Shaheen murder case.

Ebaidul Haque Chan, president of Barisal Chamber of Commerce and former general secretary of district BNP, is an accused in the case for killing Barisal College student union vice-president Faruq.

Another case was filed against him last year for defaulting on electricity bill.

Besides, he has been charged with constructing 'Oviruchi', a cinema hall, on khas land.

Kabir Uddin Hannu, another mayoral candidate, was expelled from JP for grabbing the land of a temple and assaulting journalists for reporting about him. He was imprisoned for several times on varying charges.

At least 14 incumbent candidates for BCC councillor's posts are accused in cases on various charges including murder, extortion, and illegal possession of firearms and government property.

Immediately after promulgation of the state of emergency last year, the joint forces raided the house of BNP leader and ward No. 25 commissioner Ziauddin Sikder. They failed to capture him but arrested his two brothers with illegal firearms.

Ziauddin had gone into hiding for a long time after the raid. A local court has sentenced him to five years in prison for vandalism and arson. But the judgment has been stayed on orders from the High Court.

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138 polling centres in Khulna 'risky'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) has identified 138 polling centres as vulnerable to violence out of 239 in 31 wards of Khulna City Corporation (KCC), scheduled for elections on August 4.

Sources said the KMP now has a different list of criminals to arrest before the KCC polls as many on the previous list are running in the election after their nomination papers passed the Election Commission scrutiny.

The 138 vulnerable polling centres are under five police stations.

Forty-one out of 57 polling centres under Sonadanga Police Station have been identified as vulnerable, the highest among the five police stations.

Thirty out of 78 polling centres under Khulna Police Station, 37 out of 67 under Khalishpur Police Station and 30 out of 37 under Daulatpur and Khan Jahan Ali police stations were identified as vulnerable to violence.

A high official of KMP told The Daily Star that there would be a security ring covering the entire

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HC stays Niko case against Khaleda for 2 months

Quashes proceedings against family members of several graft suspects

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday stayed the proceedings of the Niko corruption case against detained BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia for two months.

Another HC bench, meanwhile, quashed case proceedings against the family members of several corruption suspects including former foreign minister M. Morshed Khan, former deputy minister Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dulu and ex-Awami League lawmaker Kamal Ahmed Majumder.

The HC bench of Justice Khademul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Mashuque Hosain Ahmed issued a ruling asking the government and the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to explain within two weeks why the Niko case proceedings should not be quashed, following a writ petition filed by Khaleda.

The same HC bench on July 7 stayed for two months the proceedings of the Niko and barge-mount power plant cases against former premier Sheikh Hasina. The court also issued separate rules asking the government and the ACC to explain within four weeks why the cases should not be quashed.

The government, however, filed separate petitions with the Supreme Court (SC) to vacate the HC orders on Tuesday. Hearing of the petitions will be held in the full bench of the Appellate Division today.

The HC bench yesterday directed Khaleda Zia's counsels to dispose of the rule in two months saying that if the rule is not disposed of within the period, the stay order will be vacated.

Khaleda's counsel advocate Khandker Mahbub Uddin Ahmed

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Barisal, Khulna mayors charged with ill-gotten wealth; extortion

STAR REPORT

Charges have been pressed against Barisal City Corporation (BCC) Mayor Mojibar Rahman Sarwar and Khulna City Corporation (KCC) Mayor Sheikh Tayabur Rahman in two separate cases filed against them in connection with ill-gotten wealth and extortion.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) pressed charges against BCC Mayor and president of district BNP committee Mojibar Rahman Sarwar and his wife Nasima Sarwar in a case filed for amassing wealth worth over Tk 9 crore illegally and giving false wealth information to the commission.

Sub Inspector Golam Rabbani of the Detective Branch of Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) submitted the charge sheet against KCC Mayor and three others in connection with an extortion case.

BCC MAYOR
ACC Assistant Director Asrafur Islam, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet against Sarwar and his wife Nasima to the Barisal Chief

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The picture shows shabby condition of Mirpur Road at Science Laboratory intersection in the capital. Most of the city streets are in similar condition. More pictures on page 15.

A city of potholes

HELEML ALAM

Bumpy roads, encroached road widths and missing manholes lids all this is making life for the common city resident more and more difficult each day, especially now with the monsoon rains.

The number of uncovered manholes over the entire stretch of the city poses serious threat to the safety of people using these roads.

A large number of lanes and by-lanes in the city, including those at Mirpur section-1, 6, 7, 10 and 11, Senpara Parbata, Kazipara, Shewrapara, Monipur, Modhyabagh, Ahmed Nagar, Pirebagh, Shantinagar, Rampura, Nakhlaipara, Tejkunipara, Arjapara, Colony Bazar, Karwan Bazar, Tejgaon Truck Stand Road, Shahidnagar, Islambagh and many roads in Mohammadpur remain in extremely poor condition to use.

These also are some of the more populated areas of the capital and are used by people who have to commute distances on foot.

On the other hand, added to the pain of bumpy and narrow roads is the missing manhole lids in the city -- a large number of manholes remain uncovered at different places in the city especially at Shantinagar and Old Dhaka due to lack of attention by authorities concerned.

These open holes become death traps for people even in good weather -- leave alone when the

roads are inundated by rainwater.

Md Abdul Gafur, owner of Asia Automatic Dry Cleaners at 10-A, Shantinagar, said he had an iron pipe put over an uncovered manhole in front of his shop to partially cover it. That was two years ago after a few accidents occurred with this manhole, a few people including a pregnant woman, walked into the uncovered hole and were badly hurt.

And that's how it remained till date.

There are about 20 uncovered manholes in the Shantinagar area alone. Yunus, a resident of the area, says that with waterlogging during rains, these manholes become death traps.

On Thursday alone last week, Yunus said, three men fell over in the waterlogged streets due to open manholes in the area. On the same day, the wheel of a school-van was caught in an open manhole.

The driver of the van somehow managed to balance the van, carrying children, in time to prevent what could have been a horrible accident.

It is not only the uncovered manholes but also the general condition of the roads that pose grave danger to all commuters, points out Nurul Amin, another resident of Shantinagar.

Like Shantinagar, many roads of Modhyabagh, Pirebagh, Shewrapara and Arjapara are in

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ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH Arrest warrant issued against Mirza Azam

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued arrest warrant against Jubo League General Secretary Mirza Azam in a case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) for amassing wealth worth over Tk 53 lakh illegally and giving false information to the commission.

Arrest warrant was also issued against Momtaz Ahmed, wife of detained former state minister Redwan Ahmed, in a case filed for accumulating wealth through illegal means and concealing information of the assets to the ACC.

AZAM CASE
Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court took the charges into cognisance for trial after scrutinising case docket and other relevant documents.

The judge directed the authorities concerned to send copy of the arrest warrant to the address of the accused and fixed July 15 for returning it to the court.

The court also discharged Azam's wife Aleya Azam from charges following an appeal submitted by the investigation officer (IO) of the case.

On Monday, ACC Deputy Director SM Mofizul Islam, also the IO of the case, submitted the

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BIMSTEC MINISTERIAL OPENS IN CITY CA for regional move to fight poverty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed has put emphasis on the necessity of large-scale regional cooperation to ensure better life for people through poverty alleviation in the Bimstec region.

"We must assess the challenges and opportunities for economic cooperation in our region and reaffirm our resolve for collaboration to strengthen Bimstec's ability to find ways and means for addressing those challenges and

opportunities efficiently and effectively," he said.

The chief adviser was addressing the inauguration of the Bimstec Ministerial Conference on Poverty Alleviation at a city hotel yesterday.

In this context, Fakhruddin asked the member countries to consider the impacts of global warming and climate change and the increase in the prices of energy and food.

"Measures should be taken not only by the Bimstec countries but

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Work together to overcome crisis

Khaleda asks all parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday urged all political parties to work together to overcome the ongoing political crisis in the country.

"This is not the time for quarrelling among ourselves, rather it's a time for working together for the country. In this critical juncture we should work together to save the nation from the current crisis as

well as to ensure a free and fair parliamentary election," she said.

The former premier was speaking to reporters in a special court after the trial proceedings in the Gato graft case against her, her youngest son Arafat Rahman Koko and 22 others.

Queried about the commerce adviser's Tuesday's statement that the government is trying to convince BNP to join the ongoing

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6-hour wait to death at DMCH

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and SHAMIM ASHRAF

A 48-year-old farmer lost his life yesterday after awaiting medical attention at the emergency unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for over six hours, as his family ran to and fro from one unit to another to find the right doctor to attend the ailing man.

It took another half an hour from the time of the man's death before a doctor saw him, only to declare him dead.

The apparent negligence of the DMCH unit claimed the life of Kazi Abul Hashem, a 48-year-old farmer whose family rushed him from Brahmanhata village in Koshba, Brahmanbaria in the early hours yesterday.

The incident yet again brings to light the plight of helpless patients who rush to the busy emergency unit of the hospital for help in dire circumstances.

Hashem's brother and sister were inconsolable yesterday as they talked to The Daily Star about how they were sent to and fro from one department of the hospital to another with their brother on their own shoulders in search of some medical help.

The fatal journey for help began in the small hours of the morning when Hashem complained of severe breathing problems. His brother and sister, both in their mid forties, rushed him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in the capital city so that they could get the best of medical help.

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Middle-aged Kazi Abul Hashem dies after waiting six long hours for doctors' attention at Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday.

Shop owners take to street to protest robbery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shop owners and employees at Shah Ali Shopping Complex in the capital's Mirpur formed a human chain yesterday demanding the arrest of robbers and recovery of gold ornaments looted from a jewellery shop at the market on Tuesday.

About 250 shop owners and employees of the shopping complex formed the human chain in front of the market at about 10:30am.

Meanwhile, police and intelligence agencies have started investigation to track down the robbers and recover the looted gold ornaments.

The law enforcers arrested two employees of the jewellery shop -- Wahidur Rahman Mamun and Khagen -- for interrogation in connection with the robbery of 700 tolas of gold and Tk 4.7 lakh in cash at Dewan Jewellers at Shah Ali Shopping Complex at Mirpur-1.

The employees informed the shop owner, who was at the owners' association office of the market at the time, about the hold-up after the robbers left the place.

A security guard who was on duty at the entrance to the market during the robbery said he did not suspect anyone.

It is quite unusual that the robbers left the busy place on foot, said an investigator seeking anonymity.

"We are taking every aspect into consideration to track down the

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