

EC's directive

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Shamsul Huda and Election Commissioner Muhammad Sohul Hussain however rejected the AL delegation's arguments and said the restrictions were imposed legally.

If central leaders of political parties campaign for local government poll candidates, that will destroy the non-partisan character of the polls and such activities will definitely violate the code of conduct for electioneering, meeting sources elaborated the EC position.

The EC also told the AL delegation that it stands by the restrictions imposed on political leaders 'according to the laws' for ensuring holding of the polls in a non-partisan manner.

According to the new electoral rules and the code of conduct for electioneering, polls to city corporations and municipalities are non-partisan. Use of candidates' political affiliations in campaigns will constitute a criminal offence punishable by imprisonment and fine, and even cancellation of candidacy.

Electoral experts said political parties' ongoing activities centering the upcoming local government polls are in violation of the electoral rules and the code of conduct for electioneering.

As central and local level leaders of political parties had started campaigning for candidates in August 4, the EC on July 20 issued a circular barring political party leaders from campaigning for local government candidates.

The circular said central and local level leaders of some political parties had violated the electoral code of conduct by campaigning for local government election candidates, and it directed the returning officers (RO) to take actions against such violations.

Two senior leaders of AL were already barred from campaigning for their party nominees in Sylhet and Barisal city corporations, sources in the EC Secretariat said.

Against such a backdrop, AL which formally nominated candidates for offices in the four city corporations ignoring the electoral code of conduct, yesterday sent its legal team to the EC to let the commission know that it does not intend to abide by the restrictions imposed on political leaders in the upcoming local government polls.

Asked about the EC's July 20 circular, Suranjit Sengupta said it was issued 'without any lawful authority'.

'We asked the commission to show the laws that allow it to impose such restrictions. But the commission could not show any specific provision', he claimed.

Asked whether AL central leaders will refrain from campaigning for candidates in the August 4 local government polls, Suranjit said there is no question of abiding by the restrictions issued unlawfully. 'Will you follow any illegal order?' Suranjit asked The Daily Star correspondent.

But EC sources said the EC and another election commissioner rejected the AL delegation's arguments and said the electoral rules clearly state that local government polls are absolutely non-partisan. Those will lose the non-partisan character if central leaders of political parties campaign for the candidates.

Contacted by The Daily Star after the meeting, Election Commissioner Muhammad Sohul Hussain said the commission requested the AL leaders to refrain from campaigning for candidates in the local government polls.

'If a central leader of a political party campaigns for a local government election candidate, the candidate will automatically be publicised as a partisan candidate. It will destroy the non-partisan character of the polls', Sohul said.

He said the commission told the AL delegation that a central leader of a political party may campaign for a candidate in the local government polls only if the leader refrains from using his political identity and if the person is registered as a voter in that area.

'A person may campaign for his or her local representatives', he added. Sohul said for example Abul Mal Abdul Muhit, a member of AL's advisory council, is campaigning for a candidate in the Sylhet city corporation polls.

'We did not bar him from campaigning since he is a voter of that city corporation', Sohul added.

The unscheduled meeting between the EC and the AL delegation took place after a leader of the party in the morning communicated

Saudi envoy

FROM PAGE 16
Delwar said he wanted to know about the Bangladeshi workers in Saudi Arabia.

'He (the envoy) has told me Saudi Arabia is always sympathetic to our workers, and they are being treated properly', Delwar said.

About Khaleda's possible visit to Saudi Arabia after her release, the BNP secretary general said, 'I don't know anything about it, it's up to her.'

'She had visited Saudi Arabia during her premiership and there was a good relation with the country during the rule of Ziaur Rahman. Saudi Arabia will welcome her if she wishes to visit there', he said.

The BNP leader however said he was not clear if Khaleda would take any such decision after her release.

On a recent comment by Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman that the government was discussing with the BNP about Khaleda's release and dialogue, Delwar said he had no idea with whom the discussion was on.

'I am the secretary general of the party and the chairperson is in jail, but I don't know anything about it', he said.

BNP leaders RA Gani, Chowdhury Tanvir Ahmed, Shaukat, Sarwar Rahman, Selima Rahman, Nazrul Islam Khan and Rizvi Ahmed were present during the meeting with the Saudi ambassador.

with the staff of CEC's office and expressed the party's desire to meet the poll chief. The CEC gave the party an appointment for a meeting at 2.30pm, without having any knowledge of the agenda, the sources said.

Senior officials in the EC Secretariat said in 2004 the erstwhile EC formally requested political parties to start campaigning for local government poll candidates.

But this time around, the current EC did not make any such move although following the announcement of the August 4 local government election schedule on June 20, AL-led 14-party coalition nominated partisan mayoral candidates and announced the nominees publicly.

The EC did not take any action against political parties, although they had been blatantly electioneering for the upcoming local government polls.

Instead it maintained that it was overlooking the matter in efforts to create an electoral mood.

AL OPPOSES LARGE NUMBER OF POLL OBSERVERS

At the meeting with the EC, the AL delegation also questioned the commission's move of allowing a large number of observers to monitor the August 4 polls. The EC is allowing over 5,500 local and international observers to monitor the upcoming polls.

'The huge number of observers will create obstacles to holding the polls in a free and fair manner. Besides, many of the local observers might even have political affiliations', Suranjit said.

The EC however assured the AL delegation that the names of local observers will be disclosed at local levels allowing the candidates to check the authenticity of those.

'If any candidate's objection to an observer turns out to be genuine, the disputed person will be taken off the list of observers', Sohul assured.

AL POLLS CAMPAIGNERS TO FOUR CITIES

Four AL campaign teams will go to the four cities where city corporation polls will be held on August 4, to campaign for 14-party nominees and to observe the polls. Sources said AL Presidium Member Amir Hossain Amu will lead a team that will go to Barisal, Abdur Razzak will lead a team in Khulna, Tofail Ahmed will lead a team in Rajshahi, and Suranjit Sengupta will lead one in Sylhet. AL is organising secretaries responsible for overseeing divisional organisational activities and several other central leaders who are from the regions will also be included in respective teams.

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JU heats up

FROM PAGE 16
The syndicate sat on implementation of policies against sexual harassment. I do not know anything more about the incident and trial procedures have begun against me. I have replied to the queries of the investigation committee, sent my representative to it and I also gave written statement regarding the allegation brought against me,' said Associate Prof Ahmed Sunny.

Meanwhile, a notification issued by the acting registrar yesterday afternoon banned processions and meetings on the campus. The confinement has led to law and order slide, it reads.

The notification says law enforcement agencies can take action if anyone is found ignoring the ban.

The campus burst into protests after four female students of drama and dramatics department brought allegations of sexual harassment against Chair Prof Sunny.

In an unusual move, the authorities formed separate probe bodies like a 'fact-finding committee' and 'stronger fact-finding committee'.

In the wake of further agitation the authorities were forced to form a high-powered probe body headed by the VC. The committee is investigating the allegations now.

Home adviser

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said but added that release on bail does not mean that case proceedings against the accused would die down.

Matin said it was not wrong for the government to arrest politicians and businessmen for alleged corruption as the administration acted according to the law.

He brushed aside the suggestion that the anti-corruption drive has stopped. 'Who said the operation has stopped? It's still on.'

On the development of releasing BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and her son Tarique Rahman, he said, 'I do not know about it.'

7-yr-old killed
FROM PAGE 16
detected the body while looking for their lost football around 3:00pm.

The girl's mother Jayeda Begum, a construction worker, told The Daily Star that before going to work she saw her daughter playing in front of their house.

'In the afternoon, our manager asked me to go home because my daughter was seriously ill,' she said.

On her way home Jayeda saw a crowd surrounding something just 50 yards ahead of her house. 'When I moved through the crowd I found my lovely child lying on the road,' Jayeda said bursting into tears.

Dulu's elder sister Reshma Akter, who works as a domestic help, told The Daily Star that like any other day Dulu went out of the house for playing. 'When I called her she said she was coming shortly but did not return,' Reshma said.

Finding no trace of her sister as of 12:00noon on Tuesday, Reshma went to her work. 'While returning home I heard the news,' she said.

Jayeda Begum said she lost three of her four children in the last 11 years. Her son Abul Bashar drowned in a pond 11 years ago at the age of five and her younger son Shukkur died of pneumonia two years ago at the age of one and a half months, she said.

Her husband lives in Faridpur. Jayeda filed a murder case with Cantonment Police Station yesterday. None was arrested as of filing this report at 8:00pm yesterday.

Rahul Gandhi
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son of Nehru-Gandhi family and son of Congress President Sonia Gandhi described his visit to Bangladesh as a 'private' one. It will however be a 'learning' trip for Rahul, they added.

Though there is no official word on postponement of the visit, it is understood that it has been done largely to accommodate time for Rahul's possible interaction with some senior leaders and officials of Bangladesh government.

Had Rahul gone to Dhaka tomorrow, some of the top leaders and senior officials of Bangladesh would have been away in Colombo for the 15th Saarc summit, which ends on August 3.

The young legislator seeks to have first-hand knowledge of rural development models followed by Brac and Grameen Bank.

The Nehru-Gandhi family has been involved in various micro credit projects in Amethi and Rae Bareilly, parliamentary constituencies of Rahul and his mother Sonia respectively. His sister Priyanka Gandhi too has been promoting women's self-help groups in Amethi.

Zilla Parishad
FROM PAGE 1
enacted the Local Government Commission Ordinance and the commission will be formed soon so that the process of strengthening local government continues in future.

The commission will give suggestions to local government institutions on how they can operate effectively and strongly under a central government.

Education and Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman conducted the dialogue.

Over a thousand people including academics, freedom fighters, businessmen, farmers, journalists, NGO workers, local government representatives and aborigines from 16 districts of Rajshahi division joined the dialogue.

Nasim
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The court also fixed August 5 for further hearing on the bail petition.

On October 8, 2007, the Special Judge's Court-1 sentenced Muhammad Nasim to 13 years' imprisonment in a graft case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) for illegally acquiring wealth and concealing information.

The joint forces arrested Nasim at midnight on February 4, 2007. ACC Deputy Director Akhter Hossain filed a case against the former home minister and his wife with Dhanmondi Police Station on March 21, 2007 for amassing illegal wealth worth Tk 1.26 crore.

Nasim has been undergoing treatment at LabAid Specialised Hospital in the city after he suffered brain haemorrhage.

Nasim filed an appeal with the HC in May this year against his conviction handed down by the special judge's court in the graft case. He filed the bail petition on July 28.

Bhuiyan freed

FROM PAGE 1
Mohammad Nasim, Mirza Abbas, Tariqul Islam, Salauddin Quader Chowdhury and Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim.

Bhuiyan came out of jail at about 5:35pm yesterday after the High Court on Monday granted him two months' ad-interim bail in the Gato scam case.

A huge number of party leaders, workers, supporters and relatives received him outside the central jail on Nazimuddin Road in the city's Chankarpur area.

Later, talking to reporters at his residence, Bhuiyan said on party unity that there is no alternative to being united. 'I always spoke for unity in the past and am still speaking for it. The party will have to be united to win the upcoming election,' he said.

He also asked the government to implement the jail reforms and release all VIP prisoners, saying they would not go into hiding after being released.

He will place a floral wreath at the grave of late president Ziaur Rahman, the founder of the BNP, today.

The Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court sent Bhuiyan to jail after he surrendered to the court on May 18.

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami and BNP leader MK Anwar, two other accused in the case, had already been set free on High Court bail.

Mannan Bhuiyan emerged as one of the top leaders of the reformist faction of the BNP following the declaration of the state of emergency on January 11, 2007.

Later, he announced proposals to bring changes in the party constitution to make the party democratic but Khaleda Zia did not endorse him.

Khaleda expelled Bhuiyan from the party just before her arrest on September 2 last year and appointed Khandaker Delwar Hossain as the party secretary general.

Bhuiyan, however, refused to accept the decision of his expulsion.

UK minister
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She will meet senior government officials and members of civil society and British-Bangladesh community during her stay.

The British minister will also visit a number of UK-funded projects on women's empowerment and access to education, said a British High Commission press release.

'People-to-people links embodied by nearly half a million British Bangladeshis are at the heart of our countries' relationship,' said Blears in a statement.

'Rightly, there is no contradiction in being both British and of Bangladeshi origin,' she said, citing the involvement of British-Bangladeshis in government, politics, business, law and education in Britain.

Blears said all political stakeholders must work together for a smooth transfer of power to an elected government by the end of this year because 'sustainable democracy has to be the ultimate goal for Bangladesh.'

'The UK's interest in Bangladesh, and those of the Bangladeshi people, depend on establishing a stable and democratic Bangladesh,' she said.

'What's at stake the future development of Bangladesh and its people is too important to risk a return to the politics of violence and confrontation,' Blears added.

Bangladeshi workers

FROM PAGE 1
on the basis of his experience.

He said, 'In some cases it was found that some workers were withdrawn from job without any reason or prior notice. They are kept idle for several months without salary and food. Workers who speak out their grievances are invariably victimised.'

He said instances are there that the supervisors, foremen and managers abuse and beat up them with hands and if the matter is reported to the Arab bosses, they even kick them. Vocal workers are victimised and deported with false cases, he noted.

The former embassy official said, 'If some of the workers make complaints to the Social Affairs Department of Kuwait, it takes several months to reach a solution. By this time the workers are sacked or their residency permits are cancelled. Eventually, the poor workers fall in more trouble and are forced to return home without a solution.'

These statements are fully reflected in the recent incidents where thousands of Bangladeshi workers protested against low salaries and other abuse and the Kuwaiti government has started deporting many of them on charges of instigating demonstrations.

The demonstrators who were employed by cleaning companies and assigned under government projects said they were promised of KD 50 but were paid only KD 18 a month.

and tried to organise the faction to implement the reforms in the party.

The party standing committee at a controversial meeting held at Saifur Rahman's Gulshan house reinstated Bhuiyan as its member and appointed Saifur the acting chairperson and Maj (ret'd) Hafizuddin Ahmed the acting secretary general of the party.

The pro-Khaleda faction refused the meeting decision.

However, Bhuiyan's initiatives failed when Saifur himself declared his leadership ineffective before leaving the country for Singapore and blamed party leaders 'with background in left politics', hinting at Mannan Bhuiyan, for splitting the party.

Before leaving his house for surrendering to the court, Mannan Bhuiyan, a veteran freedom fighter, trashed his new political mission and urged BNP leaders, workers and supporters to be united under the leadership of Khaleda Zia.

Truth Commission
FROM PAGE 1
commission would start functioning in 10 days.

Meantime, the government has set up its office over three houses--Totine, Tonmoy and Uttarayan--and appointed necessary staff.

There might be six sub-commissions to cover the entire country and reduce workload on the commission.

According to the ordinance, the commission will exist for only five months, but the proceedings initiated during its term will continue until disposal of the cases.

The military-backed caretaker administration, which launched a massive crackdown on graft suspects after taking over in January last year, aims to curb corruption and ease backlog of graft cases through quick adjudication.

More than 200 suspects, mostly political bigwigs from Awami League (AL) and BNP, have been detained in the drives.

Persons willing to voluntarily disclose their ill-gotten assets will be exempted from prosecution and imprisonment, subject to surrender of the property or equivalent amount of money to the state exchequer.

As per the ordinance, one must apply to the commission for mercy in a prescribed form, giving details of his/her moveable and immovable property and other relevant information. Those already charged with corruption or convicted however will not be able to reap the benefits.

The commission will have the authority to summon any persons believed or found to be involved in corruption on the basis of such disclosures. It will also have the authority to confiscate their ill-gotten wealth.

The commission will not generally sentence anyone after disclosure of his/her corruption to any prison term. But violation of the commission's directives will constitute an offence punishable with imprisonment for a maximum period of five years.

Persons disclosing their graft will be debarred from national or local elections and disqualified for public office or executive positions in any collective bargaining agencies, associations or banks or financial institutions for five years.

The ordinance provides for giving information about others involved in corruption, and the commission can launch an investigation on the basis of the information.

Three-tier security

FROM PAGE 1
and order, the government yesterday notified that carrying any licensed weapons in the four city corporations and the nine municipalities will be banned from August 2 midnight through August 5.

Any violations of the government order will be subject to legal actions under the Arms Act 1878, the home ministry notification warned.

The ban, however, will not apply to law-enforcement agency members and security personnel at government offices, institutions and installations.

'Operation is on to recover illegal firearms,' Home Secretary Abdul Karim yesterday told reporters after a meeting on election-time security, chaired by Home Adviser MA Matin at the home ministry yesterday afternoon.

The ministry has also slapped a ban on motorcycles, three-wheelers, microbuses, pick-ups and any other mechanised vehicles in the election areas from August 3 midnight to 6:00am of August 5, in order to ensure security. Inter-district highways, however, have been excluded from the ban.

The home secretary said operations to round up possible trouble-makers are also on.

On steps to keep cadres of extremist outfits from creating any trouble, Inspector General of Police Nur Mohammad said law enforcers are watching out for their activities.

'We've already given instructions on how many law enforcers would be deployed at each polling station,' the home adviser told reporters at the shipping ministry earlier in the day.

He could not confirm whether mobile-phone communication would be off on the polling day in the areas.

'Let's see what happens later,' he said.

Our Khulna correspondent reports that the Khulna Metropolitan Police (KMP) will deploy 14 policemen and 16 Ansar members at each vulnerable centre on the polling day.

KMP sources said 195 out of the 239 centres in the city's 31 wards have been identified as vulnerable and 96 centres as most vulnerable.

Amin Huda
FROM PAGE 16
medical grounds.

He also said the government would file appeals with the Supreme Court against the HC orders as soon as possible.

Petitioner's counsel advocate Anisul Huq told the court that Amin Huda is seriously ill and he should be granted bail for treatment abroad.

Rab arrested Amin Huda from his Gulshan office with 130,000 Yaba tablets on October 25, 2007.

The law enforcers also held Huda's close aide Ahsanul Haque Hasan, 34. Rab seized over 5,000 ice pills, a drug similar to Yaba, ice pill preparing chemicals, foreign liquor, phensidyle, over Tk 46 lakh and currencies of six countries.

Illegal voice over internet protocol (VoIP) equipment worth over Tk 5 crore was also seized from his Manticor Technology Ltd office. Rab said Huda had long been running illegal businesses using the office.

Police filed two cases with Gulshan Police Station the same day.

DAG Zahir said the HC earlier had granted bail to Amin Huda on another ground in the cases. Later, the Supreme Court had stayed the HC bail orders, he added.

Nanak
FROM PAGE 16
ACC Deputy Assistant Director Abul Kashem, investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, showing 16 people as prosecution witnesses.

The IO prayed for issuance of arrest warrant against Nanak, and order to attach his properties as he has been absconding since filing of the case.

In the charge sheet, the IO said the charges brought against Nanak were primarily proved and he should be brought under trial.

On March 25 this year, the ACC filed the case with Ramna Police Station.

According to the case statement, Nanak had submitted statement about wealth worth Tk 76 lakh. But the ACC found that he had illegally amassed wealth worth Tk 18,27,109 and concealed information about wealth Tk 12,02,109.

7 JMB men
FROM PAGE 16
release them unless there are separate cases pending against them.

CNG conversion

FROM PAGE 16
use local cylinders made by welding metal pipes or cylinders meant for other gases such as oxygen.

Although some of the workshops use authorised parts, they lack the expertise to install the CNG conversion system ensuring all the safety features intact, leading to accidents, the sources added.

Amid a growing concern about hazardous CNG-converted vehicles running in the city, especially after Tuesday's fire incident on a bus at Farmgate, The Daily Star contacted the explosives department and the RPGL authorities for their comments on the cause of the fire.

They all insisted that the fire was originated in the engine of the bus.

When asked what the explosives department was doing to curb illegal CNG conversions, Engineer AHM Nuruzzaman, assistant explosives inspector of the department, said yesterday, 'So far [since February this year] we shut down at least 20 unauthorised workshops that were engaged in installing substandard cylinders. We also seized about 30 substandard cylinders.'

'No one was arrested or no case was filed in this connection, he said adding, 'Our drive against illegal conversion centres and motor workshops is still on.'

Asked how the department would ensure that the closed down businesses would not resume their illegal activities in future, he said after shutting down an illegal workshop with the help of police, they 'request

police' to ensure that the businesses do not start illegal activities again.

He could not however explain how the department would effectively deter the crime of illegal CNG conversion without arresting anyone or filing any case. Nevertheless, he insisted on mass awareness to curb the illegal conversion work.

RPGL is the government organ responsible for licensing CNG conversion workshops after proper scrutiny.

'The cylinders that exploded in the country so far were all substandard and none of the standard cylinders exploded till date,' claimed Shafiqul Alam, a director (operation) of the RPGL.

'The explosives department is responsible for monitoring whether any unauthorised workshop is installing CNG cylinders. Also, it is their duty to make sure the authorised conversion centres are not installing substandard cylinders,' he explained.

Currently, the country has 192 authorised CNG conversion centres and over 200 CNG filling stations.

The number of CNG-driven vehicles across the country stands at nearly 1.5 lakh while 6 lakh vehicles run on petrol or diesel. Over 1 lakh of the CNG vehicles are registered in Dhaka, according to BRTA and RPGL sources.

The authorities of Department of Explosives or the RPGL could not provide any figure of unauthorised CNG conversion centres in the country.

Khaleda denied bail

FROM PAGE 1
Magistrate Golam Rabbani, and argued on the issue. But the court rejected the petition.

The court however allowed the lawyers -- Masud Ahmed Talukder and Sanaullah Miah -- to meet Khaleda at the sub-jail on the Sangsad Bhaban premises for discussion on the case.

ACC Deputy Assistant Director Harunur Rashid filed the case against Khaleda, her son Tarique Rahman and five others on July 3 on charges of embezzling over Tk 2.10 crore by forming a fake organisation named Zia Orphanage Trust.

The five other accused are former BNP lawmaker Qazi Saleemul Huq Kamal, Sayeed