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Half of UZ poll budget sought for security

Army may be deployed as more political parties oppose govt decision

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission (EC) Secretariat has proposed that Tk 100 crore, over half of the estimated total cost for upazila elections, be spent to ensure foolproof security. Of the amount, Tk 50 crore has been asked for the army and the rest for the law enforcement agencies, said EC sources, citing the draft budget for the polls. This would be the highest security expenditure on record for any election in Bangladesh, a senior EC official said. The EC is working to start holding upazila polls in October amid the political parties' opposition to any other polls before the national election planned for December. In the budget drawn up by the

commission secretariat, around Tk 100 crore has been set aside to meet the other expenses for organising polls to 482 upazila parishads. "On getting the commission's okay, we will send the budget to the finance ministry for disbursement," an EC Secretariat official said. The funds for security measures will be given out to the armed forces and the law enforcement agencies while those to cover the other costs will be paid out directly to the EC, he added. With an allocation proposed for the army, it is now quite obvious that the forces will be deployed to maintain law and order during upazila polls, observed senior officials at the EC Secretariat. The draft rules for upazila elections give the forces on election

duty the power to arrest anyone without warrant for violation of electoral rules. Meanwhile, the EC meets tomorrow to settle on the number of upazila parishads going to polls in the first phase. To hold the elections in October, it will have to announce the schedule by the middle of next month, said sources. At the meeting, the commission might also set a time limit for registration of the political parties. Election Commissioner Muhammad Sohul Hussain yesterday told The Daily Star that they would discuss the upazila election issue at tomorrow's meeting. Asked if they would press on with efforts to hold polls to over 300 upazila parishads in October brav-

ing resistance from the political parties, he said they still stand by their plans. Political parties including Awami League (AL) and BNP argue that holding the local polls first would delay further the parliamentary election tentatively slated for the third week of December. PARTY REGISTRATION About registration of the political parties, Sohul said the commission would discuss the issue tomorrow. Citing time constraints, he said they will have to begin the registration process soon. Sources said the commission aims to complete registration by October. According to the electoral

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAMAN

This road is a burning example of how the city's canals were gradually filled up, worsening the waterlogging situation. It was once Gopibagh canal where boats used to ply 12 years ago. At that time, it helped drain out city's rainwater.

Janmashtami today

UNB, Dhaka

Hindus will celebrate Janmashtami, the birthday of Lord Krishna, today amid festivity and religious fervour. The day's programmes include worship of Lord Krishna, puja, Geeta Jagna, Kirtan, dance, discussion, drama and peace processions. President Iajuddin Ahmed and Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in separate messages greeted the Hindu Community on the occasion. The day is a public holiday. Bangladesh Puja Uddhayan Parishad and Dhaka Mohanagar Sarbajanin Puja Committee announced a two-day programme to celebrate the day. The traditional Janmashtami procession will be brought out from Dhakeswari Temple at 3:00pm. Other programmes of the temple include recitation from the holy Geeta and 'Geeta-jagna' seeking divine blessing for peace and

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Zardari to run for Pak presidency

AFP, Islamabad

The widower of Pakistan's assassinated former premier Benazir Bhutto has decided to run for president in the wake of Pervez Musharraf's resignation, a senior party official said yesterday. Asif Ali Zardari on Friday won the backing of lawmakers from the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) to contest the September 6 poll to choose a successor to Musharraf, who stepped down on Monday amid the threat of impeachment. "Mr Asif Zardari has accepted to contest the election for the office of president of Pakistan after the party unanimously drafted him to do so," PPP deputy secretary general Raza Rabbani told reporters. Rabbani said Zardari had been chosen in part in tribute to the sacrifices of his wife, who was killed in a suicide attack at an election rally in December.



Asif Ali Zardari

The party official said the PPP, which is the main party in a fragile coalition government, had consulted its partners before announcing that Zardari was their choice to lead the nuclear-armed nation.

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UNREST 2007 DU teachers, students observe 'Black Day'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) teachers and students observed 'Black Day' yesterday marking last year's campus unrest that led to the arrest of several teachers and students on charges of breaking the Emergency Powers Rules. They wore black badges protesting repression of teachers and students last year and demanding withdrawal of the case against seven DU students. Two senior teachers Prof Md Anwar Hossain and Prof Harun-ur Rashid were detained from the DU teachers' quarters on this day last year while several university students were held at different places. Later, Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) President Prof Sadrul Amin and Prof Nimchandra Bhownik were also arrested.

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Waterlogging worsens as remedial steps stagnant

Four major problems need to be addressed

HELEML ALAM

Inadequate and faulty drainage network, filling up of drainage canals and lack of proper cleaning of drains are the main reasons behind waterlogging in the capital, experts said. The drainage system in the city was not upgraded keeping pace with the rapid urbanisation while around half the canals in the city dried up or have been illegally filled in and occupied over the last two decades causing waterlogging in many parts of the city during the rainy season. According to experts, Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) has to deal with 150 square km of the capital, less than half the actual city size, and it requires around 350km of rainwater drainage pipes. It, however, only has

265km of drainage pipes. "About 90km more rainwater drainage lines are needed at different areas of the city to strengthen the drainage system. The width of the existing pipes should also be increased," said an official of Wasa. Dhaka Wasa had 135km of drainage lines in 1990 and it has been extended to 265km. However, the population of the capital city was 68.44 lakh in 1991 and now it is 1.20 crore. The number of houses in the city has more than doubled, said officials at Wasa and Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (Rajuk). Experts say that the drainage system was inadequate in the late 80s and early 90s but the waterlogging problem was not that visible since the canals, jheels and other water bodies had not been filled up then. Most parts of Uttara, Gulshan,

Banani, Badda, Manda, and large sections of Khilgaon, Bashabo and Rampura are still outside the Wasa's drainage system coverage, officials said. In places where there is no drainage network of Dhaka Wasa, the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) covers the area with drainage pipes or surface drains, they said. Due to the lack of proper cleaning of the existing drainage systems of both Wasa and the DCC the network does not function properly, experts say. Even though Wasa is mainly responsible for maintaining the city's drainage system and cleaning the drains once a year, most of the time nearly half the drains remain clogged as the cleaning is done manually and improperly, said Architect Iqbal Habib, mem

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35 new UNOs appointed

UNB, Dhaka

The government has appointed 35 new upazila nirbahi officers (UNOs) in a latest reshuffle in the field-level administration. Five senior assistant secretaries under the establishment ministry and six senior assistant commissioners have been appointed UNOs in the reshuffle. Besides, the government has transferred 19 UNOs. According to the notification, M Mehedi Hasan, UNO of Muladi, Barisal, has been transferred to Dashmina, Patuakhali, while AKM Nurunnabi Kabir, UNO of Chouhali, Sirajganj, to Rajbari Sadar, Khandaker Oliur Rahman, UNO of Tarash, Sirajganj, to Sadarpur, Faridpur, Abu Ahmed Siddiq, UNO of Burichang in Comilla, to Ukhia, Cox's Bazar, AKM Sohel, UNO of Comilla Sadar, to Tongibari, Munshiganj, AKM Renjabin Raji, UNO of Matlab, Chandpur, to Madhupur, Tangail, and

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Archives of neglect

HISTORIC LOSS-II

EMRAN HOSSAIN

Over the last 30 years, successive governments' reluctance to formulate a policy for Bangladesh Film Archive (BFA), prepare a decent organogram for it and their use of the BFA for political purposes turned it into a poorly functioning institution. The BFA, a department under the information ministry, is an example of how governments can make one of the departments non-functional and keep it ineffective year after year. BFA officials, filmmakers and film experts said the BFA can also be an example of how successive governments can make political use of an institution which was established to pursue excellence in film-making through research and to take the film industry to international standards. A recent decision of the information ministry made regarding the BFA is the latest manifestation of the government's approach to BFA. The ministry observed that the BFA does not have the necessity of an ordinance or policy and the BFA would be considered as a department attached to the ministry and be operated by government rules and regulations. The information ministry added that the effort the BFA made to have an ordinance or policy and redo its organogram is nothing but a sign of the BFA's lack of knowledge of its own responsibility, information ministry minutes read. The BFA sent a proposed ordinance to the ministry in 2003 that also included a proposal to bring balance in its organogram. All the guidelines or outlines the BFA has is just a brief incom-

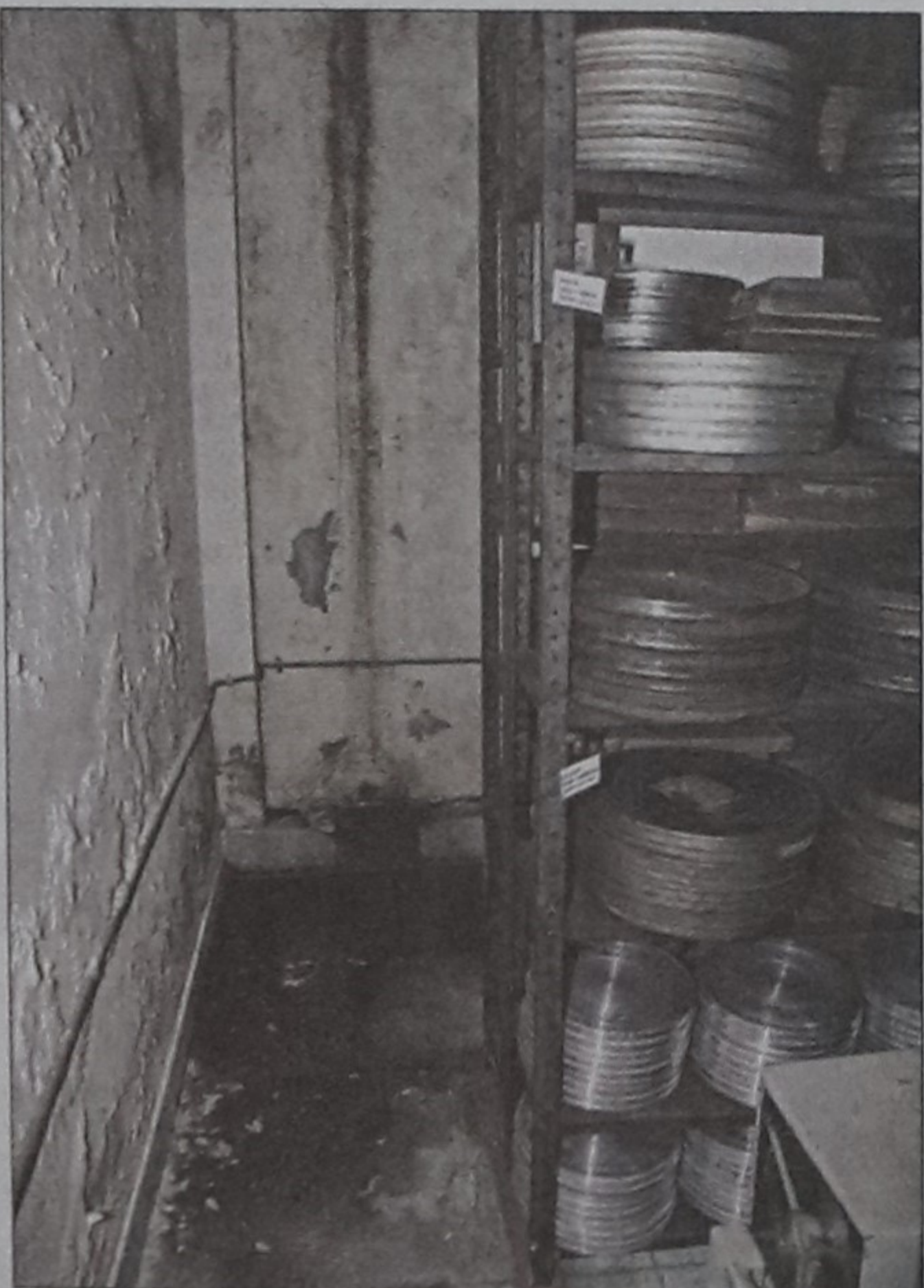


PHOTO: STAR

A patch of damp on the wall of the film vault at the BFA in Mohammadpur. The wall leaks water into the vault when it rains.

plete four-page 'report of the martial law on organisational set up' formulated in 1984 by the Enam Committee, which the then president Hossain Mohammad Ershad formed. BFA officials and film experts said the Enam Committee report restricted BFA's work mainly to collecting and preserving films and film related publications and exempted it from the responsibilities of

conducting research, arranging film appreciation courses and technical training programmes. The Enam Committee report did not have any specific or detailed guideline on collecting films from local and foreign sources. This hindered film collection and preservation and exposed films to damage and in some cases absolute destruction of films.

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JS election by Dec, reaffirms CA

Voters urged to choose honest, capable candidates

UNB, Sunamganj

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed has reaffirmed that the general election will be held before the end of next December and urged voters to elect honest and capable candidates, taking it as their social responsibility. He said the government and the Election Commission (EC) will extend all-out support to the voters so that they can vote for their chosen candidates. The head of the caretaker government made the call at an opinion-exchange meeting at Shaheed Abul Hossain auditorium here yesterday. Lawyers, freedom fighters,

teachers, journalists, business leaders, women representatives and fish farmers spoke at the meeting organised by the district administration. Referring to the recently held city corporation and municipal elections, the CA said spontaneous participation and turnout of voters in these elections will remain as an exemplary example and help expedite the process of transition to democracy. Regarding upazila elections, he said the government and the EC want to hold the upazila polls in near future. The EC is making necessary preparations to hold the polls.

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Move to regularise 72 RCC staff sparks controversy

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

A fresh controversy is racking Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) as the corporation authorities are getting ready to give permanent appointments to 72 temporary staff just ahead of the new mayor-elect's induction to the office. The temporary staff had allegedly been hired on political consideration during the tenure of former mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu, a BNP leader currently in jail on charges of corruption. RCC Mayor-elect AHM Khairuzzaman Liton is scheduled for

taking the oath of office on August 29, and the recruitment move just before his induction has given rise to some questions in the city. RCC officials said current Acting Mayor Rezaunnabi Dudu, who also claims to be a member of BNP, has been pressuring them to complete the recruitment process 'in a hurry'. Liton, who won the recent mayoral election with an Awami League ticket, condemned the move and termed it a part of RCC authorities' 'recruitment business'. He already complained to

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