

EC plans strict guideline for local election observation groups

Seeks feedback by Sept 25

UNB, Dhaka

The Election Commission (EC) is working on a draft guideline for local polls observation groups to further streamline them for greater transparency.

In the draft guideline, the EC has tightened some rules and made registration of the interested groups mandatory with the commission.

The EC has already sent the draft guideline to all political parties and observation groups and asked them to place their feedback in writing by September 25.

The commission is interested to finalise the guideline by October.

The EC held a meeting with development partners and election monitoring groups on September 11 about the rough outline of the guideline.

The meeting, chaired by Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda, decided that there shall be different guidelines for domestic and foreign election observers, and the observation groups must be registered with the commission for accreditation.

The accreditation will remain valid for one year, the meeting decided.

About the procedures for accreditation, the draft guideline reads that the polls observation groups shall assemble and submit their application attaching all required information along with profiles of all observers to the commission within the time specified in the public notice issued on its behalf.

"The commission shall scruti-

nise all applications with reference to the criteria set in the guidelines and notify its decision to grant or deny accreditation submitted by an observer organisation if its chief executive or a member of its board of directors or a member of its management committees is a candidate or an activist for any candidate or political party that is seeking public office in an election during the period for which accreditation is being sought," it reads.

According to the draft copy, the commission shall issue a certificate of accreditation to the accredited observer organisations no later than seven days following the decision to grant approval.

It mentioned that each organisation's accreditation shall be valid for one year from its date of issuance unless revoked earlier.

"During the validity of accreditation, the observer organisation may propose replacement of individual observers by furnishing their profiles in the prescribed forms," it further reads.

The guideline says the commission may revoke an accreditation granted to an observer organisation upon credible evidence that the observer organisation has violated any provision of the code of conduct.

"Prior to revoking accreditation, the commission shall provide the observer organisation with advance written notice of the alleged violation including its factual basis," it says.

An accredited observer organisation shall be responsible for the selection, training and development of individual observers,

monitoring their performance and preparing report on observation findings for submission to the commission, the draft says.

About the qualification of the individual observers, the guideline notes that an individual must be a citizen of Bangladesh with at least 25 years of age. He/She must have SSC or equivalent level of education and must be nominated by an accredited observer organisation," it says.

About the deployment of election observers, the draft guideline mentions that not more than two observer organisations shall be permitted access in an upazila/metropolitan thana or a constituency to field stationary observers unless otherwise authorised by the commission.

"Each authorised organisation shall be allowed to field a minimum of one observer per polling station and maximum of one observer per polling booth," it says, adding that one from amongst them would be allowed access to the ballot counting room and one observer at the office of the returning officer during the consolidation of results.

In addition, each authorised organisation will be allowed to operate two mobile teams during the polling hours consisting of five members each, the guideline says.

The observer organisation shall maintain a list of all of its authorised observers by upazila/metropolitan thana or constituency.

"It shall inform the presiding officers of the polling stations and returning officers well ahead of time as to who are its designated observers respectively for counting

and consolidation of result," it says.

The guideline says that the returning officer shall make the list available for inspection by the contesting candidates.

"If any objection is raised by any such candidate about the neutrality of any observer, the returning officer shall inform the observation organisation about such objection with a request for suitable replacement," it says.

The commission is the sole authority to issue observer identification cards. Observers shall at all times during observation of the electoral process prominently display their observer identification cards.

While conducting an observation, observers shall at all times respect the rights of voters and the need for commission officials to efficiently and effectively administer the election.

"Observers shall not interfere with the electoral process and may be assigned seating within the polling station provided their observation of electoral process is not thereby impeded."

The guideline reads that the observer organisations shall prepare report on the basis of their own guidelines and criteria. The commission does not want to interfere in this process for the sake of maintaining the objectivity and neutrality of election observation.

However, to assist the commission in pursuit of capacity building and institutionalisation for better election management, each observer organisation is required to file the following reports to the commission.



People of low-income group buy new clothes for their near and dear ones from footpath hawkers as Eid is drawing nearer. This photo was taken near Motijheel Ideal School in the city yesterday.

EXTORTION, HARASSMENT ON HIGHWAY

Transport owners threaten to launch movement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bus-Truck Owners' Association and Bangladesh Road Transport Workers' Federation yesterday protested the murder of a transport worker by extortionists and demanded punishment to the killers and security of the transport workers.

The transport owners and workers also strongly criticised the highway policemen for their alleged involvement in harassing the drivers at night and demanding money from them.

Extortionists killed transport worker Mohammad Parvez on September 11 in the city.

The association leaders threatened to paralyse the transport sector on October 14 if the government fails to arrest the killers and stop harassment by the police on highways by October 13.

At a press conference at the National Press Club in the city, they announced a series of programmes to realise their demands immediately.

They said the bus owners and workers at Gabtoli Bus Terminal

will wear black badges tomorrow and will observe a strike from 3:00pm to 5:00pm interrupting road communications on September 22.

Criticising the dubious role of police and Rab men, they said the bus owners, receiving death threats from extortionists over cellphones, filed general diaries (GDs) and complaints with respective police stations, but the law enforcers have not taken any steps to protect them and to save the lives of the workers.

Presided over by Chairman of Bangladesh Bus Truck Owners' Association GM Siraj, the press conference was addressed by Bangladesh Road Transport Workers Federation Executive President Shajahan Khan, also former lawmaker, and Joint Secretary Golam Morshed Pintu.

Siraj said a highway wing of the police department was formed to check robbery in transport at night, but in most cases the policemen take papers from the drivers in the name of examining those, but later they return the papers in exchange for money.

Bangladeshi job seekers

FROM PAGE 1

jobs in many Middle Eastern countries, because we can send to these countries skilled and semi-skilled workers who can earn higher," the official said.

Bangladesh has a good number of workers with skills and experience in the garment and construction sectors. Many more are getting trained every year, he noted.

"But, the problem is that our workers tend to run away from workplaces. A few incidents are enough to destroy our labour market in the European countries," the official said.

Therefore, the foreign ministry has asked the Law Commission to draft a law to prevent overseas workers from fleeing their workplaces violating contracts they sign with their employers, he added.

An inter-ministerial meeting held on Tuesday at the expatriates' welfare ministry adopted a resolution that a law should be framed so that the government can sue the runaway workers.

When contacted yesterday, Expatriates' Welfare Secretary Abdul Matin Chowdhury, who chaired the meeting, said, "We are trying to collect laws of other countries that bring overseas workers under certain obligations."

The meeting recommended making it mandatory for the guardians of each worker going for over-

seas jobs to submit a bond worth Tk 10 lakh and fixed deposit receipt of Tk 1 lakh to the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training.

"If any worker flees their workplaces violating contracts, the money will be confiscated," Matin said, adding that government officials would also be engaged in the process of selecting workers for overseas jobs.

The foreign ministry official told The Daily Star that the meeting also recommended preserving fingerprints of all workers going abroad so that they can be identified upon their return. "Fleeing workers will be arrested when they return to Bangladesh and punished as per the law," he said.

"When European employers negotiate for hiring workers from Bangladesh on bilateral basis they want to be sure that our workers will return after their contracts expire," Matin said. "Europe is a new market and we must make the best use of it."

He said, "As sending workers under WTO arrangement is difficult for its multilateral approach, we should deal with the labour market issue very carefully with European markets."

Bangladesh received nearly \$8 billion last fiscal year from overseas Bangladeshi workers, the largest net remittance earning sources of the country.

Gas crisis to put a stop to new projects

FROM PAGE 1

projects were in the process of re-tendering.

Contract for Sirajganj project was awarded to Summit group in 2004 but it was cancelled by the then prime minister Khaleda Zia. During her rule in 2006, contract for Meghnath-2 project was awarded to scamster Obaidul Karim's shell company BON Consortium through irregularities. BON Consortium ultimately failed to arrange the project's finance.

Petrobangla says it will not be able to install gas pipeline and gas compressor for Sirajganj project before 2012, and it is not sure if gas can be supplied to the project before 2013.

The public sector projects that are now uncertain due to gas crisis are Chandpur 150 MW, Haripur 360 MW, Khulna 210 MW, Khulna 150 MW peaking unit, Sirajganj 150 MW peaking unit, Bheramara 450 MW, Konabari 350 MW and Chandpur 50 MW power projects.

Of these, Chandpur project is being re-tendered. During Khaleda Zia's rule in 2005, Chinese company Harbin was awarded contract for this project controversially and by hiding project cost by \$10 million. Harbin ultimately backed out

of the project when it sought additional \$10 million last year but the government refused to pay.

"It is so surprising that Chandpur project even now does not have assurance of gas supply. If the project was timely implemented, it would have started power generation by now," a PDB source said.

Retendering for this project will be completed by December with the aim of implementing it by June 2010. Petrobangla officials at a meeting with those of the PDB and power ministry said as the Harbin deal was cancelled, it had dropped a project to ensure gas supply to Chandpur plant site. Now, it will have to take up a fresh project.

Petrobangla mentioned that in that case, it will not be able to import a gas compressor before 2012 and it does not know when it will be able to ensure gas supply to this power project.

Petrobangla says it cannot supply gas for Haripur 360 MW power plant before 2014. It further says it can supply no gas for Khulna 210 MW scheme but it may be able to supply it to Khulna and Sirajganj peaking power plants of 150 MW capacity each in 2012-13.

Unless a new gas field is discov-

Govt fails to curb corruption

Says B Chowdhury

A CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury yesterday said the government has failed to fulfil its commitment to eliminate corruption from the society.

As a result, it is releasing all corrupt people one after another, he added.

The BDB chief made the remarks at a discussion meeting at Mirkadam under sadar upazila of the district.

Expressing doubt over holding national election in a free and fair manner, he said the people will never forgive if the government fails to hold the parliament election as per electoral roadmap.

"It is our bad luck that the power often goes to bad rulers and conspirators," he added.

Prof Chowdhury said thousands of people are starving even in the month of Ramadan.

He said a suffocating situation is now prevailing in the country.

Presided over by Shahidul Islam Shahin, the meeting was also addressed by local municipal Mayor Mohammad Hossain.

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) during separate drives yesterday seized banned piranha fish, foreign currencies and Indian Phensidyl and arrested nine people in Rajshahi and Joypurhat districts.

A mobile court in an anti-adulteration drive seized 56 kilograms of banned piranha fish and arrested three businessmen on charges of selling them in the local market in Joypurhat.

Rab sources said the drive was conducted by the members of Rab, district administration and Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institute (BSTI).

The arrestees were identified as Shahmin Ahmed, 40, Sohag Hossain, 25, and Abu Hena, 40, of Shanti Nagar village of the district.

During another drive, Rab Joypurhat team seized foreign currencies and arrested three people on charges of purchasing illegal Saudi riyal at Nayapara.

Rab men in another drive seized 250 bottles of Indian Phensidyl from Rajshahi and Joypurhat districts and arrested three people in this connection.

Obituary

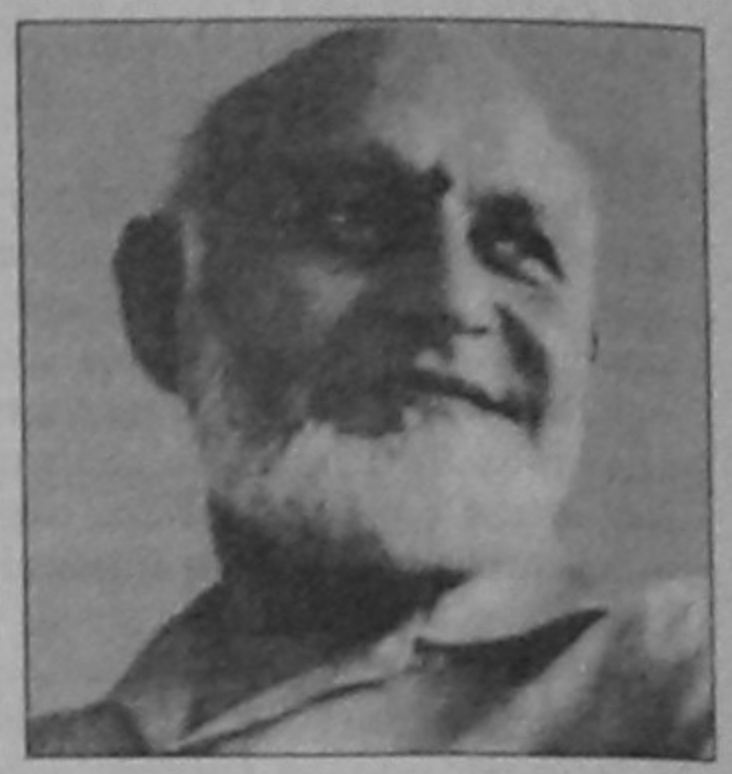


Rowshan Ara Ismail, wife of late Mohammed Ismail, a director of State Bank of Pakistan and resident director of Karna-phuli

Paper Mills, passed away due to old-age complications on Thursday at the age of 88, says a press release.

She was born in West Bengal. She left behind two sons, two daughters, grandchildren, great grandchildren and a host of admirers and well-wishers.

Her namaz-e-ijanaza will be held at Gulshan Azad Mosque after Zohr prayers today.



Death anniversary of Abul Khair Muslehuddin today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

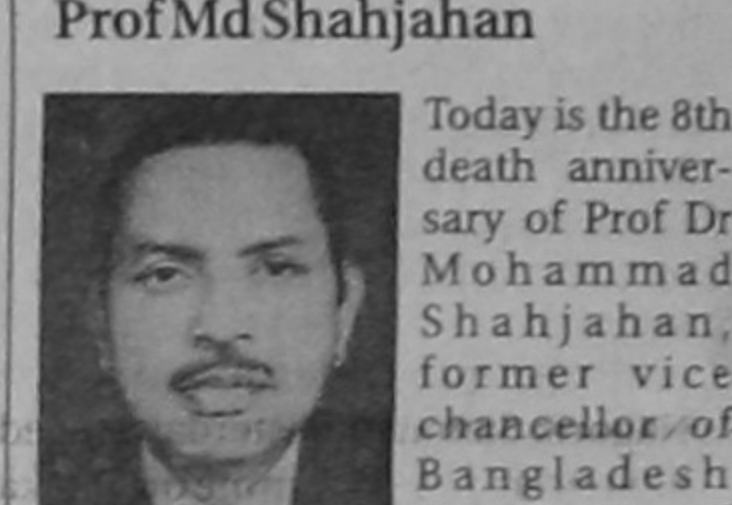
Today is the 6th death anniversary of poet and litterateur Abul Khair Muslehuddin, says a press release.

He was also the director general of now-defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption and chairman of BTMC.

Muslehuddin, who authored more than hundred books, earned many awards in recognition of his contribution to literature.

On the occasion of his death anniversary, Abul Khair Muslehuddin Foundation will hold Qurankhwan and doa mahfil at his village home in Comilla.

Prof Md Shahjahan



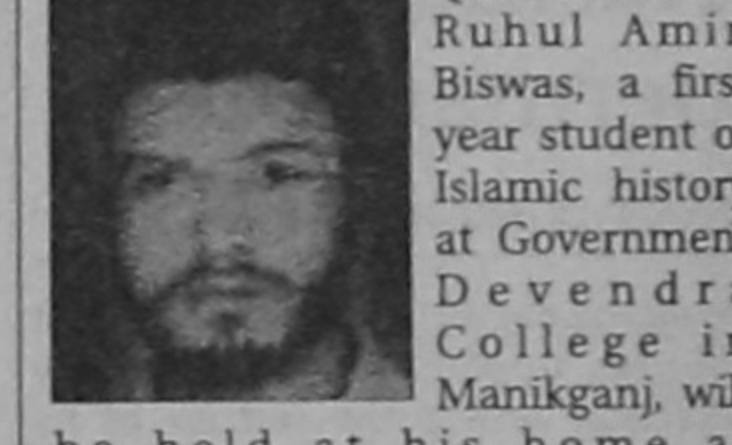
Today is the 8th death anniversary of Prof Dr Mohammad Shahjahan, former vice-chancellor of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), says a press release.

He was also a former president of the Institute of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB).

His family members requested all to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

Qulkhwani

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj



Qulkhwani of Ruhul Amin Biswas, a first year student of Islamic history at Government Dendra College in Manikganj, will be held at his home at Gandhushuria in Gala Union under Haripur upazila after Maghrib prayers today.

Ruhul died of kidney failure at Sidhewasari Emdad Setara Clinic in Dhaka on Tuesday. He left behind his father, mother, a brother and a sister.

Relatives, friends and well-wishers have been requested to attend the qulkhwani.

STORM IN BAY

150 fishermen still missing

UNB, Bagerhat

Over 150 fishermen, who along with 40 trawlers went missing in the Bay on Monday night, are yet to be traced.

A fishing trawler with 23 fishermen on board reached the local ferry ghat yesterday.

Trawler operator Abul Hossain said his fishing boat with 23 fishermen aboard went out of order after it was caught in the storm on Monday night. "I managed to steer the trawler towards Bagerhat," he said.

He further said over 150 fishermen on board 40 trawlers were missing as they were caught in the storm.

The missing fishermen hailed from Bagerhat, Barguna, Patuakhali, Cox's Bazar and Chittagong districts.

Meanwhile, the Coast Guard members on Thursday night rescued 40 fishermen from a trawler in Baleshwar area of the Sundarbans. Search for the missing fishermen is going on.

Housewife stabbed to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Armed miscreants yesterday stabbed a housewife to death at her house at Charghat upazila in the district yesterday.

The victim was identified as Champa Begum, wife of Saidur Ali, of Barkatpur village.

She succumbed to her injuries at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH).

Sources said taking the opportunity of her husband's absence, the miscreants burst into the house and found Champa at the kitchen. Then they started chopping her.

As the local people rushed to the house hearing her screams, the miscreants fled away.

They rushed her to Charghat Health Complex and later shifted to RMCH as her condition deteriorated.

Police said the incident might have been occurred as a sequel to previous enmity with relatives of Saidur's first wife over his second marriage.

Fake medicine factory unearthed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) unearthed a spurious medicine factory at Shibrampur in the town on Thursday.

Rab seized spurious medicine, raw materials and machinery worth about Tk 50 lakh from there.

However, its owner Md Haidar Ali managed to flee before arrival of the team who later sealed it off.

The fake factory was being operated for the last eight years, sources said.



Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon speaks at an extended meeting of the party in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 16)

Edible oil, onion prices fall in Ctg market

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Prices of essential commodities like edible oil and onion came down further in the port city.

Prices of palm oil, soybean and super palm oil dropped by Tk 130 to Tk 450 per maund (37.32 kg) in wholesale market. Retail price of edible oil, however, remains stable.

At Khatunganj wholesale market, price of palm oil came down at Tk 2130 from Tk 2420 per maund on Thursday afternoon. Soybean was also selling at Tk 3550 per maund in the same market while the price was at Tk 3680 two days ago. Price of a maund of super palm oil came down at Tk 2240 against Tk 2700 in last week.

Traders said fall of price in international edible oil market and its poor demand helped reduce the local price.

Shahed Chowdhury, a wholesale trader at Khatunganj market, said both the retailers and customers are observing the market and are waiting for more fall in price.

Shoaeb Riad, managing director of M/S Elias Brother (MEB) Group, an edible oil importing company, said following such poor sale the demand might grow up at any time and the price could be increased due to natural law of market, adding that it could be happened before the Eid or immediate after the festival.

Retailers were found charging the same prices for different edible oil they charged last week.

At different kitchen markets, soybean was selling at Tk 100 to Tk 104, super palm oil at Tk 75 and palm oil at Tk 70.

Gias Uddin, a retailer at Karnaphuli Market, said it would take one or two days more to get down the price as most traders have previous stocks.

Meanwhile, onion price dropped by Tk 3 to Tk 5 per kilogram.

At different kitchen markets, normal quality onion, imported from India, was selling at Tk 10 per kg against Tk 15 two days ago.

Murad Siddique, Khandaker Mahub freed on bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Khandaker Mahub Hossain, son of detained former BNP minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, and transport leader Murad Siddique, younger brother of Kader Siddique, were released from Dhaka Central Jail on bail yesterday.

"Khandaker Mahub and Murad were freed separately at about 7:30pm," Jail Super Towhidul Islam told The Daily Star.

The joint forces arrested Khandaker Mahub from his Gulshan residence on September 2 in connection with a case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) on charges of misappropriating Tk 48.51,080 from the government fund, abusing power and fraud.

Murad was first arrested at Tangal on January 30 last year. He was released from the jail on bail on August 12 only to be arrested under section 16 (2) of Emergency Power Rules (EPR) soon afterwards.

Arrestee shot while trying to escape

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Police yesterday opened fire on an arrestee during his attempt to escape from the police custody at Genuir village under Adamdighi upazila in Bogra.

The arrestee was identified as Moazzem Hossain, 30, son of Sunny from Khudiadanga village under Manda upazila in Naogaon.

He is now undergoing treatment at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital.

Police said Moazzem along with his three cohorts were arrested on charges of robbery.

Following their confessional statements, police along with the arrestee were going to the village to recover the looted goods.

But on their way to the village, as Moazzem tried to flee, police fired on him.

Healthcare service for farmers today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 16th healthcare programme for farmers, organised by Hridoye Mati O Manush of Channel 1 and Japan-Bangladesh Friendship Medical Services Ltd., will be held at Atikgram in Manikganj today.

Specialist doctors will provide free treatment for farmers and their family members. Besides, water purification tablets and oral saline and vitamin-enriched biscuits for children will be distributed.

Besides these services, farmers across the country can seek advice from doctors by calling at 10601 from any mobile phone.

WEATHER TODAY

Moderate rain likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at many places over Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong and Dhaka divisions and at a few places over Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions in the next 12 hours as of 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy rainfalls are also likely at places during the period, Met Office said in a forecast.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, it said.

Yesterday's highest temperature of 35.5 degree Celsius was recorded at Sylhet and the lowest of 24.6 degrees at Rangamati.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:57pm today and rises at 5:47am tomorrow.

The highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.0	26.4	76	88
Chittagong	30.8	25.4	77	82
Rajshahi	34.4	26.0	85	82
Khulna	32.0	26.2	84	82
Barisal	33.5	26.0	79	80
Sylhet	35.5	26.2	78	72
Cox's Bazar	32.3	25.5	71	80