

DCs told to be totally neutral

CEC warns them against their 'roles in past polls'; directs them over loan defaulters, EPR convicts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday censured deputy commissioners (DCs) for their 'roles in past elections', and asked them to work with complete neutrality for the December 18 parliamentary poll.

He was addressing the second election training workshop for DCs in the National Economic Council

auditorium as part of the EC's preparation for holding the upcoming poll in a free, fair, neutral and credible manner. The first workshop was held on Saturday.

"You'll have to work in a completely neutral manner...as the upcoming election will be held in the interest of the country's people."

Strongly criticising the role some DCs played in the 2001 par-

liamentary election, the CEC said he has some anecdotes about how dangerous DCs can get in an election environment. "But I don't want to mention those, and don't want to see a repeat of those," he added.

He said some of the DCs were 'too aggressive', giving a bad name to the whole administration.

The CEC asked the DCs, who

TAX RETURN Submission deadline now Nov 6

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has again extended the deadline for submitting income tax return up to November 6 from October 31.

However, the time limit for legalising undeclared income, which will expire on October 31, remains unchanged.

"We have extended the deadline for submitting income tax return for six days considering long Eid and Puja vacations and also requests from various business chambers," National Board of Revenue (NBR) Chairman Muhammad Abdul Mazid told The Daily Star yesterday.

"But we have decided not to

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8 'toxic' milk brands pulled off shelves

Govt yet to receive melamine test results; traders question fate of the seized items

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law enforcers and mobile courts seized a huge amount of banned powdered milk of different brands from stores in the capital and elsewhere in the country yesterday and collected Tk 2.31 lakh in fines for displaying and selling those.

A mobile court in Chapainawabganj also burnt 171 tins and packets of these brands of baby formula.

The melamine test results of the eight brands due yesterday did not arrive from three laboratories at

home and abroad.

An official of the commerce ministry said they were not sure exactly when the results would arrive. A press release of the ministry said the results would be made public as soon as they arrive.

Meanwhile, although the High Court (HC) gave a ruling on October 23 banning sales and display of the eight brands until receipt of the test results from abroad, the government took any effective measure only yesterday.

The commerce ministry press release said the government has

asked businesses concerned to comply with the High Court (HC) order that banned display and sales of Diploma, Red Cow, Dano, Anlene, Nido fortified instant, Yashili 1, Yashili 2 and Sweet Baby 2 brands until receipt of the test results from abroad.

The police headquarters also sent messages to the divisional ranges, metropolitan and district headquarters to gear up drives, Assistant Inspector General (AIG-media) Nazrul Islam told The Daily Star.

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Implement 7-point demand before November 2

4-party asks govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led four-party alliance yesterday called on the government to implement their seven-point demand, including lifting of the emergency rules before announcing election schedule on November 2.

They warned that they will not take part in any 'arranged and staged' elections.

The alliance made the call at a meeting at the Diploma Engineers Institute in the city, presided over by Jamaat-e-Islami Assistant Secretary General ATM Azharul Islam.

"We'll take part in the December 18 national election after the government meets our seven-point demand," BNP Secretary General

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BARAPUKURIA CASE HC bench did not refuse to hear petitions

Say 2 SC lawyers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Advocate Habibul Islam Bhuiyan and barrister Abdur Razzaq, two senior lawyers of the Supreme Court, in a statement yesterday said the High Court (HC) bench comprising Justice Md Muzammel Hossain and Justice Afzal Hossain Ahmed had not refused to hear the petitions filed by five former ministers and one state minister for quashing the proceedings of Barapukuria coalmine case filed against them.

They said a section of the press on October 28 had reported that the HC bench had refused to hear the petitions filed by former ministers M Saifur Rahman, Motiur Rahman Nizami, Khondoker Mosharraf Hossain, Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahid, Altaf Hossain Choudhury and former

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Many malpractices to be put to rest

Says CEC after receiving transparent ballot boxes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday said the use of translucent ballot boxes in the upcoming general election will prevent many of the past electoral malpractices.

He was speaking at the launching ceremony of translucent ballot boxes, at Radisson Water Garden Hotel in the city.

At the request of the Election Commission (EC), 240,000 translucent ballot boxes were procured at over \$5 million through a UNDP project funded by the Canadian government.

"Since the ballots inside (the boxes) are visible from outside, it will not be possible to place filled-up boxes in the booths or take away half-empty boxes to be filled later

on by tricking polling agents or election observers," Huda said.

The CEC said each of the boxes is numbered and can be tracked centrally through a computer programme, adding that miscreants will not be able to seal the boxes in the prescribed manner because of the unavailability of serially numbered plastic strings.

He said the thugs may also lack the training required to lock the boxes.

The CEC pinpointed seven problems evidenced in the past elections: flawed electoral rolls, difficulties in casting votes, steel ballot boxes, deliberate miscounting, musclemen taking over polling stations, vote-buying and exhibiting ballot papers in the public.

Stating that the EC is well aware

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CG lenient with Jamaat-Shibir in enforcing EPR, says AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) leaders yesterday blamed the caretaker government for 'leniently' applying emergency power rules for Jamaat-Shibir and communal forces.

"State of emergency is strictly enforced in our case, but it is relaxed for Jamaat-Shibir and extremist communal forces," AL Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed said at a rally in the capital.

Tofail deplored the government's talks with the Jamaat secretary general recently despite arrest warrant against him, 'inaction' against communal forces who staged violent demonstrations opposing the move for a policy for women and demanding reinstallation of Baul sculptures near the airport.

The rally was organised to protest the killing of some Jubo League

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PHOTO: STAR

Rab personnel seize banned powdered milk from a city shop yesterday during a raid as the government enforced the High Court order stopping sale and display of eight brands of 'melamine-contaminated' milk.

Militant patrons stay safe for lax law

JMB backers to come out clean eventually, fear many law enforcement officials

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK and SHARIFUL ISLAM

Despite repeated pledges made by the interim government early last year to punish the masterminds and patrons of outlawed Islamist militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), no effective measures have been taken so far.

Some high-level officials in the law-enforcement agencies involved in investigations into rise of militancy and its patronisation say the existing laws are not adequate to bring the patrons or masterminds to book.

MILITANCY-3

"We need new laws or amendment to some existing laws to take legal actions against the patrons," says a top official desiring not to be named.

As the issue is sensitive and linked to the policy, the government, though at one stage thought of bringing the JMB patrons to justice, has changed its mindset later.

But eminent jurist Dr Shahdheen Malik told The Daily Star: "Definitely there are sufficient laws. But usually those laws are not

applied as our focus has always been on the main perpetrators, not on their abettors, facilitators, helpers or others involved."

Dr Malik however observed, "It's usually difficult to gather evidence about the persons facilitating or helping criminals from distance. This is more because of weakness in investigation and evidence rather than the laws."

The law-enforcement official, on the other hand, reiterated, "The issue is linked to policies of the government. The government must take a decision prior to bringing the patrons to book whether

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One shot dead, two wounded in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gunmen shot dead one and injured two employees of a transport company at its office in the city's Wari area last night.

Murad, 20, died on the spot. The injured—Mahbub, 35, and Titu, 37—have been admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Police said a gang of four stormed Ilish Paribahan's main office on Folder Street at around 8:00pm, and made off after firing indiscriminately at the employees.

Tofazzal Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of Sutrapur Police Station, said they suspect the criminals might have made the attack after failing to extort money from the transport line that operates service on Dhaka-Mawa route.

DMCH sources said Murad was shot in the chest, Mahub in his

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Reshmi takes its toll on crops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Incessant rains and gales brought on by Cyclone Reshmi have destroyed vast swathes of crops and vegetables in southern districts including Barisal and Patuakhali.

The storm that struck the country early Monday washed away around 20 kilometres of flood control dam in Patuakhali. Three fishermen were still missing in the

coastal district.

Our Patuakhali correspondent reports: Besides 20 km of flood control dam, 120 km of dirt roads have been wrecked.

District Relief and Rehabilitation Office said three fishermen—Milon Majhi, 24, Faruq, 23, and Khokon, 18—all from Kuakata under Kalapara upazila, were still missing.

It yesterday sent a report to the

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Talking polls and beyond

Menon for bidding confrontation bye

SHARIFUL ISLAM and SURANJITH DEARBATH

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon has said the next government should uphold the democratic character of politics, shunning its confrontational nature.

"Confrontational politics, as we have seen, never goes forward. It rather hinders economy and affects social relationship," Menon said in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star.

About the dialogue between Awami League President Sheikh Hasina and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia he said political leaders should sit together in times of crisis and if the two top leaders sit together, that will bring some results.

He also said mutual understanding could be strengthened through the election, elected parliament and its effective functioning.

Menon said the anti-corruption drive of politics, shunning its confrontational nature and corruption has now shifted to institutions from politics because of the drive.

The veteran politician said although some reforms have been made in the Election Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission and Public Service Commission, the much-needed reform was not brought to the administration.

Menon criticised the government for showing "serious

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Find details of the interview on page 11

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