

No compromise over fair polls

Says CEC in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda said that he would not compromise with anyone for the sake of arranging the next general election in a democratic manner.

"We are determined to arrange the upcoming national polls in line with democratic norms and electoral code of conduct. We will not compromise with anyone under any circumstances," Huda said while addressing a function at Mymensingh town yesterday noon.

The CEC underscored the need for a collective effort from people from all walks of life for holding the next general election in a free, fair and inclusive manner.

"The Election Commission cannot arrange a successful election alone. We will be able to do so if cooperation is given from all quarters," he added.

The CEC was in Mymensingh to inaugurate the voter list updating campaign held at the Advocate Tarique Memorial Auditorium.

He also called upon the grassroots level officials engaged in voter list updating activities to carry out their duties sincerely and honestly so that they can prepare an accurate voter list ahead of the 11th parliamentary election.

"We will not accept any mistake or negligence in preparing an accurate and acceptable voter list. We will take tough action if anyone's negligence is found in this regard," the CEC warned.

2 'muggers'

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acting on a tip-off, went there to nab them. The duo was injured during their fire exchange, Shahabuddin Khan, commanding officer of Rab-10, told The Daily Star.

However, other muggers fled the spot in another car, he added.

The Rab also claimed to have recovered a car with a sticker of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, two pistols and two bullets from the spot.

On July 13, an alleged mugger, Alamgir, 35, was shot dead and another injured in a "gunfight" with Rab in the capital's Lalbagh area.

Dhaka to seek

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and expressed regret at the "lack of progress" regarding their return.

In an apparent ultimatum, the EU also asked Bangladesh to end the negotiations on the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) by the end of this month.

Bangladesh maintained its general position about bringing all the people with "irregular" status back. It also highlighted the need for "widening the scope of safe, orderly and regular migration".

Following the EU warning, Dhaka yesterday finalised the SOPs at an inter-ministerial meeting held at the Foreign Ministry with Foreign Secretary Md Shahidul Haque in the Chair. High officials from the Ministries of Law, Home, Commerce and Foreign Affairs and all law enforcing agencies and departments attended the meeting.

Meeting sources said Bangladesh has been assuring the EU that it will do everything possible to bring back its illegal citizens from Europe.

The EU submitted the SOPs on the return of irregular migrants to the Bangladesh government in June 2016. A Bangladeshi delegation at the July 12, 2017 Joint Commission meeting, submitted the draft SOPs with amendments.

Talking to The Daily Star, a senior government official who attended the meeting, said Bangladesh will not accept any ultimatum or specific timeframe to complete the return of illegal migrants but will expedite the verification process.

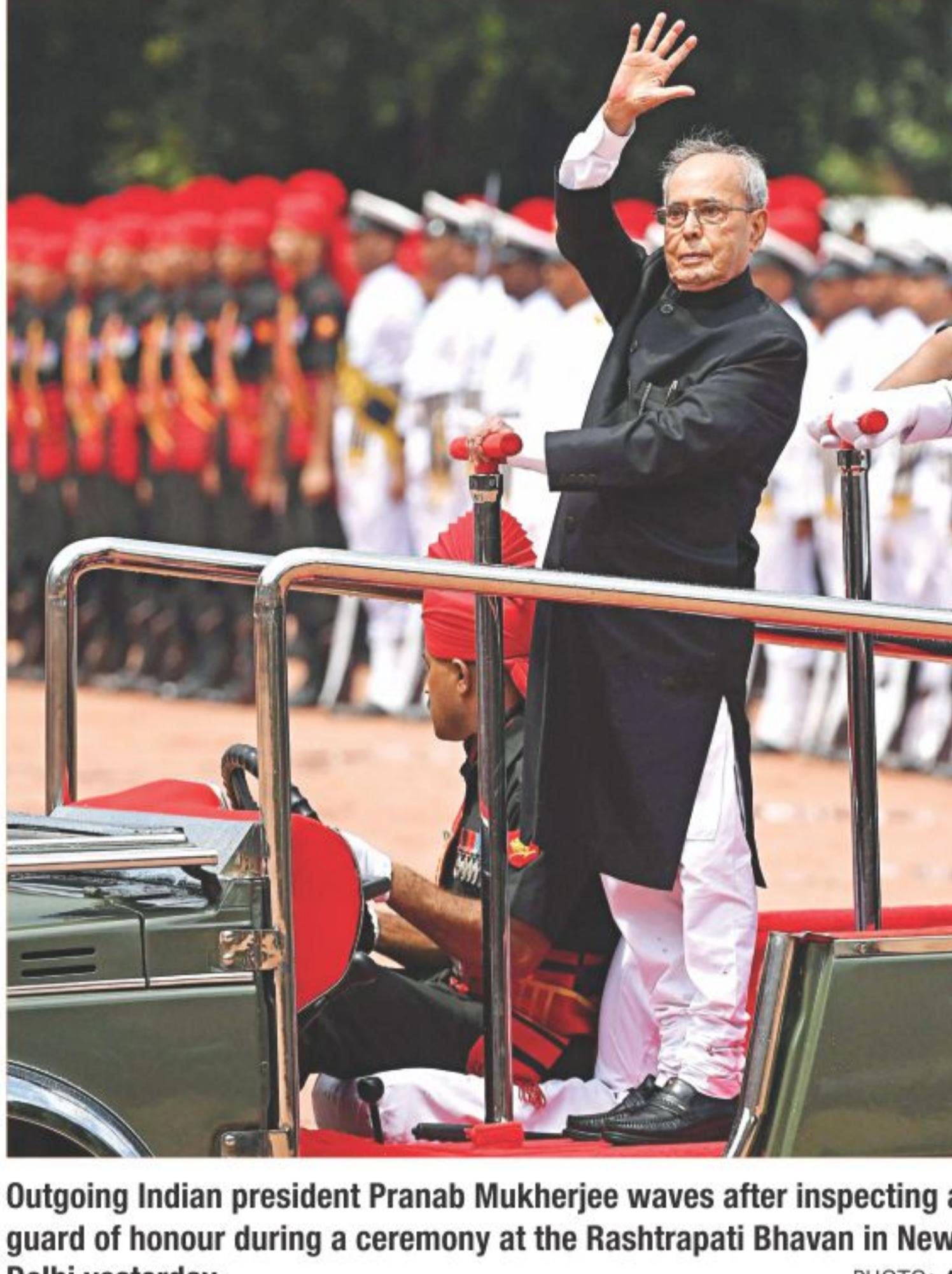
Though the EU has not yet given any list or specific number of the irregular migrants, one EU statistic puts the total number around 93,000.

But Bangladeshi officials said there is no concrete or specific figure in regards to the number of irregular migrants, but they suspect that the number could be 20,000 to 30,000.

According to the EU, the first 100 days of 2017 saw 4,645 Bangladeshi illegally arrive in Italy. During the same period of time in 2016, there were only three Bangladeshi making the same trip.

In 2016, a record high 8,131 Bangladeshi national were registered by authorities at landing points in Italy.

"We have sought the lists of the Bangladeshi illegal immigrants living in the EU countries. After we get the lists, we will verify if they all are Bangladeshi. We will then chalk out a plan to bring home the Bangladeshi illegal immigrants and the EU will cooperate with us in the process," said an official of the Home Ministry.



Outgoing Indian president Pranab Mukherjee waves after inspecting a guard of honour during a ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Ram Nath

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"Our diversity is the core that makes us so unique... We are so different yet so similar and united," Kovind said.

After the ceremony, Pranab Mukherjee gave the new President a tour of the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

In his farewell address as the outgoing President on Monday, Pranab Mukherjee had underscored the need for unity, pluralism and tolerance. "Gandhiji saw India as an inclusive nation, where every section of our population lived in equality and enjoyed equal opportunity. He wanted our people to move forward unitedly in ever-widening thought and action," he said.

India's prime minister wields executive power, but the president can send back some parliamentary bills for reconsideration and also plays a guiding role in the process of forming governments.

Kovind is the second Dalit president after K R Narayan, who held the post for five years from 1997.

The Dalit leader first stepped into politics in 1994 when he was elected as

a Rajya Sabha member from Uttar Pradesh. He served for two consecutive terms for 12 years till March, 2006.

He represented India in the United Nations in New York and addressed United Nations General Assembly in October, 2002, reported The Hindu.

During his parliamentary tenure, Kovind emphasised on development of basic infrastructure for education in rural areas and helped in the construction of school buildings in Uttar Pradesh and Uttrakhand under MPLAD (Member of Parliament Local Area Development) Scheme.

He has served as a member of several parliamentary committees, including the Parliamentary Committee on Welfare of Scheduled Castes/Tribes, Parliamentary Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment, among others.

Kovind served as a member of the Board of Management of Dr B R Ambedkar University, Lucknow. He was also a member of the Board of Governors of Indian Institute of Management, Kolkata.

directly at the demonstrators, then he would be responsible for it, he said.

"This is unexpected and saddening. Neither we nor the state can evade the responsibility," he said, adding that the state has taken steps for his treatment abroad and the police were helping.

The students of seven colleges -- Dhaka College, Eden Mohila College, Government Shaheed Suhrawardy College, Kabi Nazrul Government College, Begum Badrunnesa Government Mohila College, Mirpur Government Bangla College and Government Titumir College -- staged demonstrations at Shahbagh for their eight-point demand that include announcement of their exam dates.

The authorities of the colleges, affiliated with Dhaka University, announced the exam dates after the incident on last Thursday.

The police action on the students, especially on Siddiquur, during an apparent peaceful demonstration sparked huge outcry on social media, with a call to bring the responsible policemen to book.

Siddiquur said, "We had only placards-festoons and banner-posters. No one threw bricks at police. No one can prove anything like that."

But police that night filed a case against around 1,200 unnamed students of the seven colleges in connection with attempting to kill policemen, rioting with lethal weapons and damaging properties.

The protesting students believe that police filed the case to "misdirect attention from what they did to Siddiquur".

"On many occasions, different groups staged sit-ins at Shahbagh intersection and clashed with police but we have hardly seen any case filed by police," said a student of Kabi Nazrul College, preferring anonymity.

Students of seven government colleges yesterday demanded withdrawal of the case. They sought the prime minister's intervention after Inspector General of Police Shahidul Hoque on Monday said the case would not be withdrawn.

Punitive actions would be taken if the probe body found any policeman guilty. The image of the police force with two lakh personnel cannot be tarnished by a few, he said.

He said he had talked to Siddiquur twice and had seen the injury marks below his eyes. "For arguments sake, if we say that a canister or a brick chunk hit him, there should not be injury marks under both the eyes."

A person could get injured if he or she was caught in the line of a fired teargas canister, he said, adding that canisters were usually fired at 45 degree angle.

If a policeman had fired the canister

at the protesters, then he would be responsible for it, he said.

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