



Officials are showing the operation of an Electronic Voting Machine to voters at Enayet Bazar Mahila College (Chattogram-9) in the port city yesterday. The Election Commission has launched a display of EVM machines at all the polling centres in the constituency to let voters know about their use.

PHOTO: STAR

## Atmosphere is good: CEC

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the CEC in Rangamati yesterday said, "Mahbub Talukdar did not speak the truth. The overall election atmosphere is good."

He made the comment while talking to reporters after a meeting with officials of district administration, law enforcement agencies, army and election officials at Rangamati Cultural Institute Hall on law and order in the three hill districts -- Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari -- before the polls.

"All the candidates are campaigning. No one is being obstructed. Everybody is enjoying equal opportunities," claimed the CEC, adding that army would be deployed at each polling station in hilly areas as the situation there was different from other areas of the country.

According to media reports, at least 13 BNP candidates and 900 supporters were injured in attacks allegedly by ruling party men since December 10, when the electioneering formally began.

As per the reports, Awami League men allegedly attacked campaigns and motorcades of at least 28 BNP and Oikyafront candidates. Police detained around 255 BNP men during the time.

In the afternoon, the CEC held another meeting with field-level administrative and election officers and law enforcers of Chattogram division at a convention centre in the port city.

In the meeting, most of the officials said a congenial and peaceful atmosphere was prevailing in their areas, but the media was presenting different sporadic incidents exaggeratedly.

Journalists were present at the meeting.

"The media has brought many false allegations against me ... but if you [CEC] visit my area, you will find that level playing field cannot get any better," said Mohammad Mohsin, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station.

Deputy Commissioner of Noakhali Tanmoy Das said tensions between

contestants were presented with exaggeration and in most of the cases, the allegations were found to be false.

In response, the CEC said no candidate faced any hindrance during electioneering. So, how could it be said that level playing field was absent, he added.

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) Shahadat Hossain Chowdhury said, "No officer should do anything with overenthusiasm that may raise question."

Addressing the function, Election Commission Secretary Helal Uddin Ahmed said they had a plan to control the social media during the election. But he did not go into detail on how and when it would be enforced.

### BGB DEPLOYMENT

In another development, Election Commissioner Rafiqul Islam said they decided to deploy BGB forces in advance as the media was reporting deterioration of law and order, while some political parties were alleging that election atmosphere in the field level was worsening.

The EC primarily made the decision to deploy BGB members on December 22 and they would be in the field until January 2.

Talking to reporters at the Nirbahan Bhaban in Agargaon, Rafiqul said some political parties were demanding immediate deployment of armed forces, but it was a time-consuming matter. This is why they decided to deploy BGB members early.

Mohsin Reza, public relations officer of BGB, told The Daily Star that they sent 1,016 platoons of BGB personnel across the country.

An EC joint secretary said BGB personnel would reach their camps and set up their camps, where they do not have camps, by today and start patrolling tomorrow.

BGB sources said each platoon has 20 to 30 members.

Earlier in the day at another programme, Rafiqul asked field-level EC officials to remain cautious while preparing election results.

"Work cautiously while preparing results so that the commission does not face an embarrassing situation," he said while speaking at a training programme at the Nirbahan Bhaban.

Our Chattogram staff correspondent and Rangamati correspondent contributed to this report.

## Saidul Anam

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radio even before independence. He acted in the first production of Dhaka Theatre called *Shongbad Cartoon* and also their renowned production

*Muntasir Fantasy*. His role in *Roktokorobi*, under the direction of Mostafa Monwar, was well received by the audience and earned him a lot of fame. He later went on to get the coveted degree on film from the Pune Film Institute in India.

The Dhaka-born director had many memorable tele-fictions to his name, including *Nishi kabbo, Bokhate, Helicopter, Shiu mala, Aporajita, Mallyodan, Moddhobortini, Rubai er diary, Gobra chor and Bayanno golir ek goli*. He also made his presence felt as an actor and was the editor of many notable films including *Guiddi, Dukhai, Surja dighal bari, Dohon* (1985) and *Dipu number 2*. He won the National Film Award as the editor of *Surja dighal bari*. Among his popular tele-fictions were *Bondhu boreshur, Ashtamadal and Dokhiner janala*. The only cinema that he had directed was *Adhiyar*, which was based on the 'tebhaga' movement which looked to restore farmers' rights.

"He wasn't just my cousin, he was my life's biggest inspiration," says Tariq Anam Khan, "I was inspired by him to become an actor and I followed his footsteps."

Saidul Anam Tutul was the first General Secretary of the Directors' Guild, and a lifetime member. Recently, he had been directing his second film *Kaalbela* funded by the government. Tutul is survived by his wife and two daughters.

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leems," he said, adding, "After the re-demarcation of the constituency, it has become difficult for us to win the seat as there are some 1.2 lakh minority voters here."

He, however, said they would follow the party's decision.

BNP leaders said, the minorities are often considered as AL vote bank.

Masood Sayeede said since BNP is a big party, it has many eligible candidates and that they would be frustrated if denied nomination.

"But, we have personally and through the party talked to all of them and most of them have agreed to work with us. There might be a few exceptions," he added.

He said they were facing obstacles to begin the campaign and at least 30 party men came under attacks when they went for either hanging posters or campaigning. Besides, several others have been arrested, he claimed.

AL candidate Rezaul Karim refuted the allegations.

"They are campaigning and carrying out other activities at night. It is difficult for them to campaign at day time as most of them are accused in different cases," he said.

### QUESTION ABOUT AWAL'S ROLE

Awal, president of district AL, hit the headlines on many occasions for controversial activities. He allegedly worked against the party nominees in the last district and union council elections.

MA Hakim Howlader, general secretary of district AL, alleged that Awal was disconnected from people for his activities and not keeping his promises.

Replying to a question, he said, "Although he agreed to work for our party candidate, it is difficult to believe him as he worked for Sayeede in 1996 and 2001 elections."

"It's up to him to what he wants. However, I did not get any information when he is working for me," Rezaul said when whether Awal was working for him.

The Daily Star could not reach Awal over phone for comments.

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## 'GUNFIGHT' WITH RAB Two 'criminals' shot dead in Munshiganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Two suspected criminals were killed in a "gunfight" with Rab in Munshiganj yesterday.

The dead are Khasru Miah alias Lengra Khasru, 37, and Md Sumon alias Kana Sumon, 35. The duo were accused in at least 10 cases, Rab claimed.

Five law enforcers were also injured during the "gunfight".

Rab-11 SP Enayet Hossain Manna, who led the drive, said the two "criminals" went near Ballabari mosque in Munshiganj Sadar upazila around 1:45pm.

On information, Rab conducted the drive, he said.

He claimed the criminals opened fire on Rab first forcing them to retaliate.

During the "gunfight", the two criminals were hit with bullet and died on the spot, the Rab SP added.

Titu Chowdhury, a witness of the incident, backed up the Rab's statement and said locals were shocked as the incident took place in broad daylight.

During the "gunfight", two Rab officials - Deputy Assistant Director Mokaram Hossain and Lance Nayek Safayet - were hit with bullets. They were sent to Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Dhaka for treatment. The other three injured received first aid at Munshiganj General Hospital, Manna said.

The bodies were sent to Munshiganj General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

The law enforcers recovered two foreign made pistols, five rounds of bullets and 39 pieces of yaba tablets from the spot, the law enforcers claimed.

The family members of the dead could not be reached for comments after repeated attempts.

## Hatred blamed

and the situation is now critical," said the organisation's head, Christophe Deloire.

"The hatred of journalists sometimes very openly proclaimed by unscrupulous politicians, religious leaders and businessmen... has been reflected in this disturbing increase," he said.

RSF did not directly point the finger at US President Donald Trump, who regularly rails against journalists and has branded some "enemies of the people".

But Deloire said "expressions of hatred legitimise violence, thereby undermining journalism and democracy itself."

### US JOINS BLACKLIST

The US also became the fifth deadliest country in the world for reporters in 2018 after the shooting of five people at the Capital Gazette newspaper in Maryland in June.

Afghanistan was the most dangerous country for journalists, with 15 killed including AFP's Shah Marai, followed by Syria with 11 deaths and Mexico with nine.

Deloire said the hate stirred up against journalists is "amplified by social networks, which bear heavy responsibility in this regard."

"Murders, imprisonment, hostage-taking and enforced disappearances have all increased," he said, with the death toll of professional journalists up 15 percent after three years of a falling casualty rate.

"Journalists have never before been subjected to as much violence and abusive treatment as in 2018," Deloire said.

The murders of Khashoggi in the Saudi embassy in Istanbul and the young Slovak data journalist Jan Kuciak and his girlfriend "highlighted the lengths to which press freedom's enemies are prepared to go," he said.

Khashoggi's murder in October caused an international outcry and showed the extremes to which "some people will go to silence 'trouble-some' journalists", RSF said.

More than half of the journalists killed were deliberately targeted, the other 31 were caught in violence.

The RSF report said the number of non-professionals killed almost doubled from seven in 2017 to 13 this year.

It said citizen journalists now played a key role in helping get news from countries at war or with oppressive regimes, "where it is hard for professional journalists to operate."

The overall toll does not include 10 deaths of media workers that the RSF said it was still investigating.

### CHINA, TURKEY WORST JAILERS

China continues to be the world's top jailer of journalists, the report said, with 60 behind bars, 46 of them non-professional bloggers, some of whom are held in "inhuman conditions for nothing more than a post on social networks."

The report also condemned "Turkey's despotic regime" for the "Kafka-esque trials in which journalists are accused of terrorism on the basis of a single word or phone contact."

With 33 journalists behind bars, it has more professional reporters incarcerated than any other country despite a fall in the number in prison.

The sentencing of three journalists aged 65, 68 and 74 to "aggravated life sentences... under the severest form of isolation, with no possibility of a temporary release or a pardon" was inhuman, it added.

The Daily Star could not reach Awal over phone for comments.

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## HC shuts door

FROM PAGE 1

eligible to participate in elections in five years after serving the jail term, Sazu mentioned.

Talking to this correspondent, Bodruddoza Badal, a counsel for Khaleda, said they were yet to decide on moving an appeal on her behalf before the Supreme Court, challenging the HC order.

The HC bench of Justice JBM Hassan passed the rejection order after hearing arguments from Attorney General Mahbub Alam.

None of Khaleda's lawyers was present to place arguments at the hearing on the writ petitions.

Earlier, the same HC bench rejected Khaleda's petition expressing "no-confidence" in the bench assigned by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain to dispose of the three writ petitions.

Khaleda's lawyers AJ Mohammad Ali and Bodruddoza Badal submitted the "no-confidence" petition to the HC bench, requesting it to send her writ petitions to the CJ.

The judge rejected the "no confidence" petition, and said the CJ assigned the bench to hear and dispose of the petitions. He asked Khaleda's lawyers to start placing arguments on the writ petitions.

Ali then requested the bench to adjourn the hearing and send the petitions to the CJ.

The bench turned down the plea and asked him to place arguments, saying it would be held accountable if the petitions were not heard and disposed of.

At this, Khaleda's lawyers left the courtroom.

Talking to this correspondent, Badal said Khaleda has no confidence in the bench of Justice Hassan as he is junior to Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed, who presided over the two-member HC bench that passed dissenting orders on the three petitions.

Justice Refaat, senior judge of the bench, stayed for three months the EC's rejection of her appeals against cancellation of the nomination papers for Bogura-6, 7 and Feni-1.

The judge ordered the EC and the ROs to allow Khaleda to complete all necessary formalities to contest the December 30 polls.

He also issued a rule asking the EC and the government to explain in two weeks why Khaleda should not be allowed to run and why the decisions of the ROs and the EC about her nominations should not be declared illegal.

On the other hand, Justice Iqbal, junior judge of the bench, summarily rejected the writ petitions on four grounds, including one that Khaleda's petitions were not acceptable as she was convicted and sentenced to 17 years in prison in two cases.

The bench then sent the petitions, along with the orders, to the CJ for a decision.

On December 12, the CJ assigned the HC bench of Justice Hassan to hear and dispose of the petitions.

Khaleda landed in jail on February 8 after a special court in Dhaka sentenced her to five years' imprisonment

in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case. The HC later extended her jail term to 10 years.

On October 29, she was sentenced to seven years' rigorous imprisonment by the same court in the Zia Charitable Trust graft case.

### 3 BNP MEN LOSE CANDIDACY

A total of 11 BNP candidates have lost candidacy following orders from the SC and HC in the last two days.

Yesterday, the apex court gave orders, disqualifying BNP contenders M Rashiduzzaman Millat, Tahsin Rushdir Luna and Syed Jahangir Alam from contesting the polls from Jamalpur-1, Sylhet-2 and Dinajpur-3.

A seven-member SC bench headed by the CJ passed the orders following separate petitions filed by three of their rival candidates.

On Monday, eight other BNP candidates lost candidacy following SC and HC orders.