

“Without action, lives will be lost, and despair and extremism will grow.”
UN chief
Antonio Guterres
on Afghanistan humanitarian crisis

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16 PAGES PLUS TOGGLE : Tk 12.00



B1

Dhaka Metro Rail Project
Locally made steel products being used



P5

Torture, abuse, separation
The story of how elephants are domesticated



P7

Tensions in eastern Europe
Russia says US failing to address security concerns



P10

Tamim extends T20I sabbatical
To skip cricket's shortest format for next 6 months

EC bill passed, snubbing all concerns

Opposition MPs protest the bill, say it's to form the EC as per govt's will; PM says it's a law by the opposition parties

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and RASHIDUL HASAN

It took almost 50 years to initiate a move to have a law on forming the Election Commission, and a bill to that end was passed in parliament in only about 180 minutes yesterday, amid protests from the opposition lawmakers.

The bill was passed just 10 days after the cabinet approved the draft in a meeting on January 17.

Following the incorporation of a few minor changes, Law Minister Anisul Huq tabled the "Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners Appointment Bill, 2022" for passage around 11:15am yesterday, with Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury in the chair.

Joining a discussion on the bill, 14 MPs, including those from BNP, Jatiya Party, Workers Party, and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, slammed the move, saying the law was being formulated hurriedly and without holding discussions with political parties and other stakeholders.

They said the proposed law is actually meant for constituting a search committee, not for forming the EC.

Besides, they claimed it contradicts the constitution, which prescribed making a specific law on EC formation. But the bill aims to form a search committee instead.

Ten lawmakers from the BNP, JP and Gonoforum as well as an independent MP opposed the bill. They demanded that it be withdrawn and sent to the parliamentary standing committee concerned for public opinion.

The demand was, however, muffled by voice votes since the ruling Awami League holds an absolute majority in parliament.

The bill was then passed, around 1:50pm.

Speaking against the bill, BNP MPs demanded forming a polls-time neutral caretaker government to hold the next general election, due late next year, in a fair manner.

The law minister and MPs from JP, JSD and Workers Party, however, spoke against the caretaker government system, terming it unconstitutional.

As per recommendations of two opposition MPs, the bill underwent some minor changes before it was passed.

Now, a female member has to be included in the six-member search committee, which will recommend names to the president for appointing the chief election commissioner and other commissioners.

Earlier, the bill said the search committee would get 10 working days from its formation to recommend the names. Now, it will get 15 working days to complete the task.

The bill was previously called "Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners Appointment Bill, 2022". It was later renamed "Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners Appointment Bill, 2022".

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



JAN 17

Cabinet approves draft law

JAN 23

Bill placed in parliament

JAN 23

Bill sent to standing committee on law ministry

JAN 26

Standing committee places the report on bill in JS

JAN 27

Bill passed in parliament



Workers and officials watch as the final segment of the metro rail's viaduct is being installed near the Jatiya Press Club around 11:15am yesterday. The entire stretch of the 20.1km viaduct -- from Uttara to Motijheel -- became visible following the installation. Story on Page 2.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Post-Covid conditions may last even a year

Study finds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Post-Covid conditions may last for as long as a year, found a study by the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) -- raising the stakes for maintaining health and safety guidelines to avoid catching the novel virus.

Also known as long Covid, the conditions are a wide range of new, returning or ongoing health problems people can experience four or more weeks after being infected with the virus that causes Covid-19.

These conditions can present as different types and combinations of health problems for different lengths of time.

As much as 78 percent of the patients had post Covid-19 conditions even

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

I didn't see it

CEC says on allegations of ballot-box stuffing in 2018 nat'l polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission could do nothing as no aggrieved person went to the court with allegations of ballot-box stuffing the night before election day, Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda yesterday said.

Elections under the current EC were fair, competitive and held amid festivity. Some quarters were criticising the commission as they were not given "work" and for their personal interests, he claimed.

He made the comments during a discussion organised by Reporters Forum for Election and Democracy at the EC office.

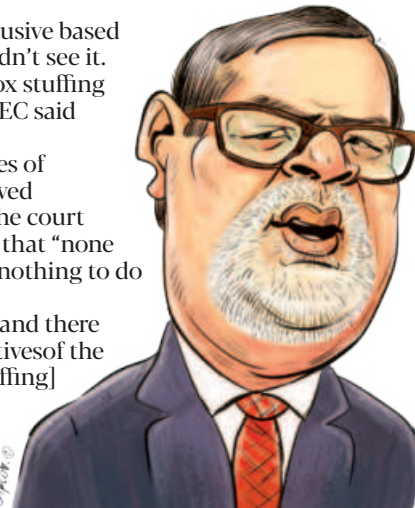
Huda said that the election held on December 30, 2018, was free and fair.

"I cannot say anything conclusive based on the allegations. Because I didn't see it. You didn't even see it [ballot-box stuffing the night before voting]," the CEC said responding to a question.

After publishing of the names of winners in gazettes, any aggrieved candidate could have gone to the court within 30 days, he said, adding that "none had gone to the court. We had nothing to do as none went to the court".

"Had they gone to the court and there was a probe based on the directives of the court, the thing [ballot-box stuffing] could have been revealed.

"Elections across the country could have been



SEE PAGE 6 COL 7



BNP must explain source of money given to lobbyists

PM tells parliament

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said the BNP has to explain the source of crores of dollars it has given to lobbyists as part of its anti-state conspiracy.

"The BNP has to answer and explain from where they have got lakhs or crores of dollars to give foreign firms and how the money has been siphoned off abroad," she told parliament yesterday.

Hasina, also the leader of the House, was speaking on the thanksgiving motion on the president's speech. This was also her closing speech in the 16th session of the 11th Jatiya Sangsad.

She said the lobbyists have been hired

SEE PAGE 2 COL 8

No impact on EU business interest in Bangladesh

Envoy says on letter seeking sanctions against Rab

UNB, Dhaka

EU Ambassador to Bangladesh Charles Whiteley has said he does not see any sign that a European Parliament member's recent letter seeking sanctions on Rab was having an impact on European business interest in Bangladesh.

"I would say business is business, and they [investors] pay attention to whether they can make money in the country and whether there are attractive business climates. So, I haven't seen any signs yet that these developments

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Thick layers of dust gather on impounded motorcycles kept under the capital's Moghbazar flyover. These motorcycles, seized by law enforcers from different parts of the city, are left this way due to a lack of designated space for them. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Doing everything necessary for police

Home minister says on the last day of Police Week; high-ups demand separate division, elevation of IGP's rank to four-star general's

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Police high-ups yesterday placed before the home minister a slew of demands, including a separate division for them at the ministry and upgrade of the IGP's rank to that of a four-star general.

They also demanded appointment of police officials at different government organisations on deputation and on foreign missions as liaison officers, and establishment of a university and a training academy around Dhaka.

An increase in the inspector general of police's expenditure limit to Tk 50 crore from existing Tk 5 crore was also asked for since the post is equivalent to a senior secretary.

Officers of the SP rank and above met the home boss yesterday -- the final day of the five-day police week.

Speaking to reporters after the

meeting, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said the demands were for the welfare of the police.

"We can implement some of them at the ministry. The rest can be met after discussion with the prime minister."

Praising police for their role in tackling militancy and during pandemic, he said, "We've been doing whenever anything is needed for them."

At the meeting, police officials said a separate division is needed to expedite police works at the ministry. The minister, however, did not respond to this demand, sources said.

Earlier in the day, the officials met the state ministers of housing and public works and public administration, where they placed demands including residential facilities for the IGP, Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner and deputy

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1