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Kazi Awal at the EC helm



"After taking the oath, I will exchange views with my colleagues. We will see what is in the book. The national election is only about two years away. We have to be prepared."

New CEC Kazi Habibul Awal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former senior secretary Kazi Habibul Awal is the chief election commissioner for the next five years. The Election Commission will hold the 12th parliamentary election and polls to all the other tiers of the government with him at its helm.

President Abdul Hamid yesterday appointed him as the CEC.

The four other commissioners are: former district and sessions judge Rashida Sultana, Brig Gen (retd) Ahsan Habib Khan, former EC secretary Md Alamgir, and former energy and mineral resources division senior secretary Anisur Rahman.

The Cabinet Division yesterday issued two gazettes about the appointments. The commissioners are likely to be sworn in today, officials said.

In his immediate reaction, the new CEC said the general election slated for 2023 would be the commission's main focus.

"After taking the oath, I will exchange views with my colleagues. We will see what is in the book. The national election is only about two years away.

We have to be prepared," Awal told The Daily Star. "If I can hold elections acceptable [to all], maybe I will have the joy of success, or else, I will have regret."

The 66-year-old former bureaucrat is the son of the late Kazi Abdul Awal, the deputy inspector general of prisons who filed the case for the assassinations of the four national leaders in jail in 1975.

New CEC Awal retired as senior secretary to the defence ministry in 2015 and got two subsequent contractual appointments.

In 2009, the Supreme Court found his appointment as an acting secretary to the law ministry illegal. The appointment was challenged in a writ petition filed by a district judge.

Awal is the sixth bureaucrat to become the CEC. This is the first time an EC is formed under a law.

The BNP and some other political parties boycotted the process of EC formation, saying that forming the EC would be pointless because a fair election would be impossible without an impartial polls-time government.

REACTIONS OF COMMISSIONERS
Rashida Sultana said, "I will work

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Tariqat delivers, again!

PARtha PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Leave it to luck or wisdom or anything open to interpretations, the Bangladesh Tariqat Federation has seen its nominated candidate picked to lead the Election Commission for the second time in a row.

The president yesterday appointed former senior secretary Kazi Habibul Awal as the new chief election commissioner (CEC).

It is seen as an achievement for the political party.

Under the selection process, political parties recommend names, to be shortlisted by the search committee for EC posts. The president then cherry-picks from the shortlist.

Habibul topped Tariqat's list this year. Five years ago, the party recommended KM Nurul Huda for CEC and ultimately, he was handed the post.

A partner of the ruling Awami League-led electoral alliance, Tariqat also proposed the name of Brig Gen (retd) Ahsan Habib Khan. He has been made an election commissioner.

The name of Ahsan, a former vice chairman of the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission,

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Ukrainian service members look for unexploded shells after a fighting with a Russian raiding group in the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Kyiv repulses Russia attack

Fighting continues across Ukraine; France warns of long conflict as West sends weapons; 198 civilians killed; thousands flee country

AGENCIES

Ukrainian forces yesterday repulsed an attack on Kyiv, officials said yesterday, as Russian forces kept pounding Ukrainian cities with artillery and cruise missiles for a third day running.

A defiant Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky vowed his pro-Western country would never give in to the Kremlin even as Russia said it had fired cruise missiles at military targets.

With explosions echoing around Kyiv on the third day of Russia's

assault, Zelensky spoke in a video message, wearing olive green military-style clothing and looking tired but determined.

"I am here. We will not lay down any weapons. We will defend our state," he said.

Ignoring warnings from the West, Russian President Vladimir Putin unleashed a full-scale invasion that the UN refugee agency said has forced almost 116,000 people to flee to neighbouring countries.

The Kremlin, meanwhile, yesterday

accused Ukraine of prolonging the military conflict by refusing to negotiate.

On Friday, as Moscow's forces approached Kyiv, the Kremlin said Putin was ready to send a delegation for talks to Belarus, where Russia has stationed thousands of troops. It is one of the places from where Ukraine says it is being attacked.

A few hours later, Putin called on the Ukrainian army to overthrow the country's leadership whom he

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