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JP against EVM use in nat'l polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Main opposition in parliament Jatiya Party yesterday said they did not want the use of electronic voting machines in the next national election.

Leaders of JP said this at a views exchange programme on the EVMs with the Election Commission at the latter's office in the capital.

"We informed the commission that there is no need of using EVMs in elections," JP Secretary General Mujibul Haque Chunnu told The Daily Star after the programme.

"A public perception is that using EVMs in polls means there is a scope of manipulation and a special party can do something," he said at the event.

He added that if the EC holds the polls to all 300 constituencies via EVMs, it would create a "haphazard situation" as voters were not ready for that.

Sheikh Shahidul Islam, general secretary of another faction of Jatiya Party, said if the commission conducts polls through EVMs in some parliamentary seats and the rest with traditional ballot papers, it would be "discriminatory".

Bangladesh Nationalist Front President Abul Kalam Azad said the problem was "goons" forcibly pressing the EVM buttons for the voters, not the EVM itself.

At the programme, Shameem Haider, acting secretary general of Zaker Party, proposed introduction of e-voting so that people can cast vote from home.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

RISING COVID RATE Flood shelters left vulnerable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health directorate yesterday reported 7.38 percent Covid positivity rate, the highest in the last four months.

A top health official said the transmission might spread faster among people living in shelter centres in the flood-hit areas for not following health safety rules properly.

Most of the cases in the latest spike, however, show "mild illness" with lower hospitalisation rate and no mortality, the official said.

Prof Tahmina Shirin, director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research, told The Daily Star, "The transmission has been increasing. But it may be faster among those living in shelter centres."

"The rise in transmission was obvious as none of us was maintaining health rules, though the Covid-19 has not been eliminated from the country."

Urging people to wear masks, she stressed the need for taking extra caution for immunocompromised people.

The Covid-19 cases in the flood-affected Sylhet division, meanwhile, were not reported yesterday, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

The previous day, only 39 samples were tested in the division.

Yesterday, 596 new Covid cases were detected countrywide, which is also the highest after March 4 when 604 cases were logged.

Yesterday's positivity rate was the highest after February 20 when the rate was 7.82 percent.

Over 86 percent of the tests were done in Dhaka city yesterday.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



An under-construction bridge over the Louhajang river collapsed in Tangail town on Friday night. Locals allege it was due to poor construction work. The bridge is being constructed at the cost of Tk 3.6 crore.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL



A motorcyclist struggles to keep balance of his vehicle while going over fallen cables in front of the Wasa Bhaban in the capital's Karwan Bazar. The Dhaka North City Corporation cut off TV and internet cables installed illegally on both sides of Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue yesterday, but did not remove those from the paths.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

FINING JOURNOS UP TO TK 10 LAKH

Not all in press council on board

SUMON ALI

The Press Council Act 1974 is being amended with a provision of fining a journalist up to Tk 10 lakh for participating in illegal activities.

Bangladesh Press Council Chairman Justice Nizamul Huq Nasim confirmed it to The Daily Star.

"The work to amend this act began in 2016. I joined the Council in 2021... I have heard that this [proposed amendment] is with the Cabinet Division now."

Upon the cabinet's approval, it will be placed before parliament.

He further said all the journalist representatives in the Council have agreed to the proposed amendment. "Our records say so."

Justice Nasim said that this issue has been regularly discussed with the current committee as well.

"We have no record stating that the members have opposed this," he added.

Meanwhile, senior journalist Monjurul Ahsan Bulbul, who is currently a member of the Council, said that no such discussion took place during the meetings of the current Council.

"This Council was formed in late 2021 and this issue did not crop up. A discussion to increase penalties and empower the Council took place five years ago but I don't know when such an amendment was formulated. I don't know what was recommended."

"I cannot comment on it without seeing it," said Bulbul, who was also in the Council of 2017.

"The intention was to enhance the power of the council. As per the existing law, if a journalist gets accused, the council can rebuke them. The publications which will go against the sacred statute of journalism can be spared if they admit their wrongdoing. At the same time, repeat offenders can also be exposed to exponentially harsh punishments."

"However, Press Council cases can only be filed against organizations, not against any journalist."

Saiful Alam, editor of Dainik Jugantor, said, "The current committee had five meetings, but amending the law was not discussed in any of them. Individuals who were part of the committee five years ago had talked about enhancing the judicial authority of the council."

"However, I do not know anything about the 10 lakh taka fine issue being included in the amendment."

Regardless of the situation, journalists should always work independently, he opined.

He said, "We never move away from this demand. We are against each and every impediment that comes in front of independent journalism. It is not even appropriate to think about controlling journalism with so many different laws."

"There are many laws already. I am not putting

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Windies thump Tigers to take 1-0 lead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As expected, it did not take long for West Indies to wrap up the game against Bangladesh as the Caribbean side romped to a seven-wicket victory inside just 30 minutes on the fourth morning of the Antigua Test on Sunday.

With that win, West Indies also took a 1-0 lead in the two-match series, inflicting on the Tigers their fifth defeat in last six Tests. Bangladesh also linger at the bottom of the ICC World Test Championship 2021-2023 with 16 points from seven defeats, one win and a draw in nine matches.

Chasing a meagre 84-run target, the Windies overnight batters -- John Campbell and Jermaine Blackwood -- took only seven overs to take the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

INDO-BANGLA JCC MEET

Unity needed to see off hard times

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Bangladesh and India yesterday agreed to work closely to further strengthen cooperation in the areas of common rivers and water resource management.

The two countries have also pledged to expand collaboration on cyber security, IT and food security.

The decisions were taken at the seventh Joint Commission meeting, co-chaired by Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi.

The return of the forcibly displaced people (Rohingya refugees) to Myanmar from Bangladesh is of great importance, a joint statement said.

The two foreign ministers reviewed all areas of ongoing cooperation, including the implementation of decisions taken during the visits of Indian President Ram Nath Kovind in December last year and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in March 2021.

They also reviewed decisions taken at the virtual summit between the prime ministers of the two countries in December 2020 as well as the last virtual meeting of the JCC in September 2020.

This was the first in-person JCC meeting convened since the onset of the pandemic.

The ministers expressed satisfaction that despite challenges posed by the Covid-19

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

Boxing class in Mexico breaks Guinness record

AFP, Mexico City



Mexico City has set a world record for hosting the largest boxing class ever, with 14,299 people taking part in a massive lesson in the capital's central plaza. Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum announced Saturday.

That huge turnout easily surpassed the previous record, set in Moscow in 2017 when 3,000 people showed up for boxing class.

After Saturday's attendance figure was certified by a Guinness World Records team, Sheinbaum posted a video thanking "the champions and those who made this great triumph possible."

Hundreds of people had gathered early for

SEE PAGE 6 COL 8