



Govt organs can’t interfere with EC functions: SC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in the full text of a verdict observed that none of the government organs, including the executive, can interfere with the Election Commission’s functions as the commission is independent under the constitution.

“From examination of the aforesaid provisions of the constitution, the cumulative effect is that the Election Commission is independent while exercising its power under Article 119 of the constitution, which does not include the power of appointment and terms and conditions of service of the employee under the Election Commission Secretariat,” the apex court said in the 29-page full text of the verdict which was released yesterday.

“According to Article 119, all deputy commissioners, superintendents of police and other officials concerned are placed under the control of the Election Commission during election for the purpose of holding election. Undoubtedly, none of the organs of the government, including the executive, can interfere with the functions of the Election Commission.”

On September 1 last year, a six-member full bench of the Appellate Division, headed by Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique, delivered a short verdict on this issue after filing of four appeals by the government challenging a judgement of the Administrative Appellate Tribunal.

Other five members of the apex court bench are Justice Md Nuruzzaman, Justice Obaidul Hassan, Justice Borhanuddin, Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Krishna Debnath (now retired).

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A Common Kingfisher displays its plumage on a bamboo in the capital’s Botanical Garden. Resident to much of its range, across Eurasia and North Africa, they tend to migrate during colder seasons where rivers are not frozen. Kingfishers are known to fly low and straight like bullets – reaching up to 25 mph. However, scientists are more excited by their beaks than their speed. Sharp, pointy and long, these beaks can silently slice through water without alerting fish. Japanese engineers have even designed high-speed bullet trains like the beak to prevent sonic boom upon entering a tunnel. Kingfishers are generally solitary birds and not quite fond of one another – an aversion they have to overcome during breeding season. While these birds are generally shy, they take advantage of human-made canals and waterways to fish and nest. Though Common Kingfishers are classified as “Least Concern” on the IUCN Red List, their numbers are still threatened by human activities like deforestation.

PHOTO: SHABBOSACHI DAS

3-YRS AFTER RETIREMENT

Why can’t govt officials run for MP?

HC asks govt, EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday questioned the provision that prohibited former government officials from contesting Jatiya Sangsad elections in the three years after retirement.

The court issued a rule asking the government and Election Commission to explain in four weeks why the provision of section 12(1) (f) of the Representation of People Order, (RPO), 1972, should not be declared illegal and unconstitutional.

The bench of Justice Zafar Ahmed and Justice Md Bashir Ullah issued the rule following a writ petition filed by Md Shamim Kamal, brigadier general (retd), challenging the provision’s legality.

His counsel, Hassan MS Azim, told The Daily Star that the right to

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Torture marks found on Gazipur trader’s body

OUR CORRESPONDENT, GAZIPUR

Police yesterday handed over the body of a yarn trader, allegedly tortured to death in police custody in Gazipur, to his family without performing an autopsy.

“Around 9:00pm Wednesday, we received the body from Dhaka Medical College Hospital without an autopsy,” said victim Robiul Islam’s brother-in-law Rafiqul Islam.

“We saw bloodstains on Robiul’s face, nose and soles of feet. His ankles were cracked. Usually, the bodies of road-accident victims do not bear such marks. Instead, such marks are created due to torture.”

The whole family is now shocked and panicked, and they do not have any courage to legally fight the police, Rafiqul further said.

Contacted, Abu Toraf Md Shamsur Rahman, deputy commissioner (crime) of Gazipur Metropolitan Police, said the body was handed over to the family without performing an autopsy following the victim’s family member’s application with Shahbagh Police Station.

“Police prepared the body’s inquest report. Evidence suggests Robiul died in a road accident. The bloodstains and injury marks on his body were caused by the accident.”

DMCH doctors, in their primary examination, also found evidence of a road accident, the police officer added.

Meanwhile, Robiul’s brother filed a case with Basan Police Station over the accident, he further said.

Robiul and three others were arrested on Tuesday evening for gambling, said Malek Khasru, officer-in-charge of Basan Police Station, on Wednesday.

“Robiul’s relatives received him from police around 10:00pm after the law enforcers discharged him. He was then hit by a truck on the way in Bhogra area,” he added.

According to the official register of deaths at DMCH, Robiul was brought dead to the hospital at 2:50am by a person named Sagar Miah.

Sagar’s address was not found on the record. A mobile

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Robiul Islam

CLIMATE GOALS Rapid scale-up of CO2 extraction crucial: report

AFP, Paris

Capping global warming at liveable levels will be impossible without massively scaling up the extraction of planet-warming carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, the first global assessment of CO2 removal warned yesterday.

The persistent failure to draw down greenhouse gas emissions – nearly 60 billion tonnes a year of CO2 or its equivalent – has forced once-marginal carbon dioxide removal (CDR) options toward centre stage in climate policy, investment and research.

Across methods ranging from tree planting to factory-sized machines that suck CO2 from the air and store it underground, CDR worldwide currently captures two billion tonnes of the gas each year, according to the State of Carbon Dioxide Report.

More than 99 percent is extracted through “conventional” techniques such as restoring and expanding CO2-absorbing forests and wetlands.

Only a tiny fraction – about 0.1 percent – is removed by “novel” technologies such as direct air capture, converting organic waste into rock-like biochar, or capturing the CO2 from plants grown and burned for fuel, more than two dozen experts concluded.

The UN’s climate science advisory body, the IPCC, has said carbon emissions must decline some 45 percent compared to 2020 levels by

the end of this decade, and to net zero by mid-century, if Paris Agreement goals are to be met.

The 2015 treaty enjoins nations to hold warming to “well below” two degrees Celsius compared to preindustrial levels. The IPCC later concluded that only the agreement’s aspirational 1.5C target could prevent severe, and potentially catastrophic, climate impacts.

“Regardless of whether we do a little or a lot of carbon dioxide removal, we will still have to do massive reductions in greenhouse gas emissions,” report co-author Gregory Nemet, a professor at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, told AFP.

But CO2 emissions in 2022 remained at near-record levels, thrusting CDR into an even more critical role.

By the end of the century, the report calculates for the first time, CDR must extract between 450 billion and 1.1 trillion tonnes of CO2.

The new report says that conventional, tree-planting CDR – even if emissions do drop sharply – must double by 2050 to keep the 1.5C target in play, and increase by 50 percent to hold warming under 2C.

Research, however, has shown that food, energy and climate needs could result in competition for land, even with efficiency gains in each sector.

A deeply changing climate with only 1.2C of warming to date could

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Don’t enrol students

UGC asks 4 pvt univs for not moving to permanent campuses

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The University Grants Commission has directed four private universities not to enrol students, as they failed to shift to permanent campuses.

The apex regulatory body overseeing public and private universities also gave 12 other universities time for their relocation to permanent campuses.

In a notification yesterday, the UGC said the four universities – Prime Asia University, Stamford University Bangladesh, Asha University, and Victoria University – failed to show any progress in construction of their permanent campuses within the stipulated time.

Besides, the UGC decided that State University and Manarat International University can only enrol students in their permanent campuses, said the notification.

Six other universities were given time till March 31 to completely shift to their permanent campuses, as they made progress in constructing permanent campuses.

They are Dhaka International University, Royal University, Southeast

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Nazi gold sparks Dutch village treasure hunt

AFP, Ommeren



Muddy holes dot the ground in a Dutch village where a map allegedly showing the location of Nazi loot buried in World War II has triggered an invasion of treasure hunters.

“It really fires up the imagination,” smiles Klaas Tammes, president of the foundation that owns the land in Ommeren in eastern Gelderland province at the centre of the search.

The Dutch National Archive unveiled the hand-drawn map in early January, featuring a tell-tale red ‘X’ believed to mark the spot where German soldiers stashed their hoard.

Documents held along with the map include testimony that the Nazis buried four ammunition boxes filled with jewellery, precious stones and

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CORRECTION

In our report run on page 12 on January 19 under the headline “37,000 River Grabbers: NRCC decision to withhold names draws flak”, we inadvertently misquoted Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, as saying, “The chairman of a constitutional organisation can’t act in a way that benefits the encroachers.” In fact, Rizwana didn’t say the commission is a constitutional organisation. We regret the error.

APBn not harassing Rohingyas

HRW report not based on facts, says home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Human Rights Watch’s allegation against APBn of arbitrary arrests and harassment of Rohingya refugees is not based on facts, said Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday.

“The Rohingyas indulge in killings in the camps and the APBn [Armed Police Battalion] officials have been deployed there to do routine work. What HRW is saying is not based on facts,” he said while talking to reporters after attending a programme in the capital.

“I think they [HRW] should prepare such

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PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Impounded vehicles left haphazardly on the street in front of the Adabar Police Station disrupt traffic flow. As the vehicles have taken up the entire footpath, pedestrians are forced to walk on the road.

INDIA’S MOVE ON ‘FAKE NEWS’

Proposal akin to censorship: editors

REUTERS, New Delhi

A major Indian journalist group urged the government to reject a proposal to police fake news on social media, saying such a change to the country’s information-technology rules would be akin to censorship.

The proposal would bar social media platforms from hosting any information that the authorities identify as false, the latest in a slew of measures by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government that are being seen as efforts to rein in big tech firms.

Information deemed “fake or false” by the Press Information Bureau or by any other agency authorised for fact-checking by the government would be prohibited under the draft amendment issued on Tuesday.

The government will hold a consultation with stakeholders to discuss the amendment

on January 24, and has also invited “comments from stakeholders and general public” until January 25.

The Editors Guild of India, in a statement yesterday evening, urged the government to scrap the proposal and begin “meaningful consultations” with stakeholders on the regulatory framework for digital media.

Saying the “determination of fake news cannot be in the sole hands of the government”, the guild warned that the amendment would “make it easier to muzzle the free press” and “force online intermediaries to take down content that the government may find problematic”.

“This will stifle legitimate criticism of the government and will have an adverse impact on the ability of the press to hold governments to account, which is a vital role it plays in a democracy,” it said.

It also said that already multiple laws exist to deal with content that is found to be factually incorrect.