



‘We’ll see if any curb on media needed’

CEC says citing public interest

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal has said the Election Commission will see whether media activities need to be controlled in some cases for the sake of public interest.

“Our stance is never against the media. But in some cases, if there is a need to control the activities of the media, for the sake of public interest, we will see those things,” he said.

Addressing a views-exchange meeting with journalists at the EC secretariat, the CEC yesterday said they believe in free flow of information.

The EC held the event ahead of formulating a guideline on election coverage by the media.

Habibur said that the commission would ensure as much freedom as possible for the media to cover elections. The media can play a big role in making an election more acceptable by covering it responsibly and objectively, he added.

The CEC said the Jatiya Sangsad polls would become hugely controversial if slowing down of internet speed during elections is used as ill tactics. “The government or

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1



Organisers and footballers pose for a photograph during the official launching ceremony of Women's Super League, the first women's franchise football league in Bangladesh, at a hotel in the capital yesterday. The league is expected to kick off in May this year. Story on Page 11.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

MITU MURDER

Charges framed against ex-cop Babul, 6 others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The murder trial of Mahmuda Khanam Mitu, wife of former SP Babul Akhter, began yesterday at a Chattogram court with the framing of charges against seven accused, including Babul.

The court of 3rd Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge Md Jasim Uddin also fixed April 9 for recording testimonies after hearing the prosecution and defence, said court sources.

On June 6, 2016, Babul filed a case with Panchlaish Police Station after his wife was killed in the port city the day before.

The other accused are Kamrul Islam Musa, Ehteshamul Haque Bhola alias Haniful Haque, Motaleb Mia Wasim, Md Anwar Hossain, Md Khairul Islam Kalu, and Md Shahjahan Mia. Bhola is now out on bail while Musa is absconding.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 2



Tigers eye more history

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Having securing the three-match T20I series against world



champions England with a game in hand, Bangladesh will be eyeing yet another historic milestone as they attempt to whitewash England when the two sides lock horns in the third and final T20I at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today.

The match is scheduled to get underway at 3:00pm local time.

The Tigers turned the tables on the visitors after losing the first two ODIs of the three-match series, earning a consolation win in the third ODI before maintaining that winning momentum and stunning the visitors in the opening two T20Is to seal the series.

However, Jos Buttler's side will be determined to avoid a whitewash, especially considering the world champions had lost only one of 10 games in the shortest format ahead of their 2022 World Cup campaign.

But now the visitors are

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

CLASHES AT RU

Cops claim they didn't fire shots

Injured students say otherwise

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police claimed that they did not open fire during Saturday's clashes between Rajshahi University students and locals in Binodpur area, but injured students said the law enforcers fired shots at them.

Doctors said 20 students suffered shotgun pellet injuries.

The clashes, which took place over a trivial matter between students and locals, caused demonstration for two days in and around the campus and left 220 people injured.

The question of who opened fire arose when Anisur Rahman, commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police, said police did not use any firearms during the clashes.

“Parties involved in the clashes were injured by themselves. The police only fired tear gas shells to disperse the clashing groups,” he said while talking to journalists at the RU main gate yesterday.

Brig Gen FM Shamim Ahmed, director of Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, told The Daily Star that they found shotgun pellets in students' bodies.

Such pellets usually come from shotgun shells used by the law enforcers, he said.

Seventy-eight students out of 86 have already been released from the hospital.

The eight students, who were undergoing treatment at the hospital, include Moshir Rahman Mihad, a third-year student of social science department. He had at least 30 pellets in his body and one of them perforated his abdomen. He underwent a surgery on Sunday night and is now in the ICU.

RMCH referred Alimul Islam, Misbahul Islam and Al Amin to the National Eye Institute in Dhaka as they suffered “retinal injuries” with pellets.

In another development, RU VC Prof Golam Sabbir

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Govt rolls back almost all austerity measures

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government yesterday rolled back most of the austerity measures it imposed at the beginning of the fiscal year to better weather the economic upheaval although statistics indicate there has hardly been any improvement on the front.

The centrepiece of the austerity stance was the ban on the purchase of vehicles, aircraft, helicopters, ships, boats or barges. That ban has now been lifted.

In the annual development programme, projects were classified into A, B and C categories. The A-category projects could go on as normal, while up to 75 percent of the allocation for the B-category projects could be spent. All C-category projects were put on hold.

Now, the B-category projects can spend up to 85 percent of their allocation, while the C-category projects that are nearing the end can proceed, as per the notice from the finance division.

While the entire revenue budget can now be spent, there are certain guardrails: 75 percent of the allocation for electricity, 50 percent of the allocation for training and 80 percent of the allocation for petrol, oil and lubricant, gas and fuel can be used.

The institutions can spend their allocations on entertainment, travel, training, stationery, electrical equipment and furniture, which they were barred from before. Only for essential and emergency purposes could they spend under these overheads and that too 50 percent of the allotted amount.

Honorariums for attending meetings of the project implementation committee, project steering committee, departmental project evaluation committee and departmental special project evaluation committee -- can be resumed too.

Land development as well as the construction of residential and non-residential buildings, which were on pause for the austerity stance, can resume under the revenue budget.

However, the ban on foreign tours by government officials remains.

“This is a premature relaxation,” said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

“Our crisis remains. Our dollar and revenue crisis remain. Everything is the same as before.”

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute

SEE PAGE 7 COL 2



95TH ACADEMY AWARDS

‘Everything Everywhere’ wins all at once

If last year's ‘slap’ incident tainted the Oscars ceremony, this year's ceremony was a more than a welcome step in the right direction -- be it Jimmy Kimmel's sharp-witted comedy or the momentous win by “Everything Everywhere All At Once” as “Best Picture” with a predominantly Asian cast, Michelle Yeoh being the first Asian woman to win the “Best Actress” award for her stellar performance in the film, or Ke Huy Quan taking home the “Best Supporting Actor” after his first starring role in 20 long years. Proving that it's not all hype, SS Rajamouli's magnum opus “RRR” took away the award for “Best Original Song” for “Naatu Naatu”. Brendan Fraser became the ‘comeback king’ after becoming “Best Actor” for his compassionate portrayal of a melancholic, lonely and obese father, trying to reconnect with his estranged daughter in “The Whale”. No matter which way you look at it, this year's Academy Awards was a big win for filmmaking and performance arts.

READ MORE ON PAGE 6

Army man killed in Bandarban KNA attack

Says ISPR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An army man was killed and two others were injured after members of Kuki-Chin National Army (KNA) opened fire on the army personnel in Bandarban's Ruanchhari on Sunday, said the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) in a press release yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Nazim Uddin, a master warrant officer.

Some armed members of KNA opened fire around 1:00pm on an army team tasked with providing security to a free health campaign, supervised by Bangladesh Army, for mothers and children in remote hilly areas on the occasion of Independence Day and National Children's Day, said the ISPR release.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1



Workers loading watermelons onto a truck at Nazrul Nagar in Bhola's Charfesson upazila. The melons are sent to Dhaka. Farmers have a good yield of this popular summer fruit this year due to favourable weather. Depending on size, wholesalers sell watermelons for Tk 18,000 to Tk 30,000 for every 100 of them. The photo was taken on Friday.

PHOTO: MONIR UDDIN ANIK

Keep watch on Ramadan markets

Cabinet Division asks DCs, okays draft of traffic-in-transit deal with Bhutan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has asked deputy commissioners to monitor the market strictly during Ramadan and take legal measures if necessary, Cabinet Secretary Mahbub Hossain said yesterday.

The directive was given to DCs at the weekly cabinet meeting held with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair at the PMO, the cabinet secretary said while briefing reporters.

Asked whether there was any directive from the prime minister about keeping prices of daily essentials stable, he said, “It is being communicated always. Monitoring activities are on at different levels of the government to ensure that prices and supplies are stable during Ramadan.”

Replying to a question about preparations ahead of Ramadan, Mahbub said, “The DCs have been asked to monitor the market strictly and enforce the law if needed.”

Meanwhile, the cabinet yesterday approved a draft agreement on the movement of traffic-in-transit and

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4