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POLLS MONITORING

EC to invite 42 countries

US still undecided; EU to send 4-member team

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission has decided to invite election management bodies from 42 countries to observe the upcoming parliamentary polls.

It will also invite the secretary general of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

EC officials said they will send invitations to election management bodies of China, Russia, India, Australia, Canada, France, Malaysia, the Philippines, South Korea, Singapore, Argentina, Brazil, South Africa, Japan, Qatar, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and other countries.

EC Additional Secretary Ashok Kumar Debnath yesterday told The Daily Star that they will send invitations and the whole process will be communicated through the foreign ministry.

He said the EC will bear expenses of

their stay in Bangladesh.

During the last election, 38 observers from the Commonwealth, OIC, and Philippines-based Association of Asian Election Authorities (AAEA), among others came to Bangladesh on EC's invitation.

Besides, 62 foreigners and 69 Bangladeshis of different foreign missions worked as international observers in the 2018 election.

According to EC sources, 169 international observers monitored the 2018 election, compared to 593 in 2008 and 225 in 2001.

Meanwhile, the EC on October 22 invited applications from interested international observers by November 21 to monitor the polls.

EC gives great importance to the election observation process for the sake of transparency, it said yesterday in a notice.

EC sources said that the European Union, Commonwealth and US-based

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Police personnel on guard in front of a garment factory in the capital's Mirpur yesterday. This protective measure has been taken in the backdrop of the workers' protest to press home their demand for Tk 23,000 as minimum wage.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

12 more dengue patients die

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 12 more dengue patients died, seven of them from Dhaka, in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

With the new numbers, the total number of deaths rose to 1,496, of which 872 are from Dhaka, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

With 1,470 new dengue cases, the total number of dengue cases this year rose to 2,95,042, of which 1,04,227 were from Dhaka.

A total of 5,905 dengue patients are still undergoing treatment at hospitals across the country.

Among the total cases, 2,87,641 patients have already been released.

According to the DGHS data, 62,382 patients were hospitalised last year while the total number of deaths was 281.

PRAYER TIMING NOVEMBER 15					
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
AZAN 5-00	12-45	3-45	5-22	7-00	
JAMAT 5-35	1-15	4-00	5-25	7-30	
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					



Lower courts get 97 new judges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ninety-seven new assistant judges have been appointed to the lower courts across the country.

The law ministry issued a gazette notification yesterday giving them posting on advice from the Supreme Court.

The new judges have qualified in the Bangladesh Judicial Service examinations, according to the gazette notification.

The law ministry directed the new judges to join their offices on November 19.

The government has initiated the process of recruiting new judges in a bid to reduce the existing backlog of cases as 36 lakh lawsuits remain pending with the lower courts across the country, according to law ministry sources.

RENEWABLE ENERGY SECTOR

Women's participation still too low: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women participation in the renewable energy sector is still significantly low compared to other professions, said speakers at a webinar yesterday.

Manusher Jonno Foundation and The Daily Star jointly organised the virtual discussion on "Women's Participation in Renewable Energy: Challenges and Opportunities."

In the keynote paper, Banasree Mitra Neogi, director (programme) of MJF, said there is a lack of role models or leadership for women in this sector.

Limited access to STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education, unequal pay, and limited entrepreneurship opportunities are also reasons for underrepresentation of women.

She termed the current policies "gender blind" and said, "If girls are now going to space, it's not impossible to work in this sector."

Salman Rahman, director of Inspira Consulting and Advisory Ltd, said they have reviewed 16 countries' renewable energy policies, including the US, the UK, Sweden, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, and Kenya, and found all

those having specific provisions regarding women's participation.

"Women can participate in three phases of the renewable energy sector -- as sector practitioners like entrepreneurs or employees; as producers and consumers; and as policymakers," he added.

Prof Sharmin Neelormi of Jahangirnagar University said

Limited access to STEM education, unequal pay, and limited entrepreneurship opportunities are also reasons for underrepresentation of women.

all job sectors and markets are discriminatory.

"Even organisations that are working for women's rights in the country, including Grameen Shakti and Brac, have some programmes related to renewable energy where women's participation is not satisfactory," she added.

Speaking as chief guest, Waseqa Ayesha Khan, chair of the parliamentary committee on

Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, said around 32 percent of women work in the renewable energy sector globally, compared to 22 percent in the overall energy sector.

"We have to think about how to integrate more women in this sector, as compared to the rest of the world, we are 10 to 20 percent behind," she added.

Waseqa said as long as women keep getting technical education, there will be a chance for them to work in the renewable sector.

She said there are funds for women entrepreneurs at Bangladesh Bank, but in the last few years, the funds have not been allocated properly.

Executive Director of Manusher Jonno Foundation Shaheen Anam concluded the discussion, saying women progressed in many arenas but are still in the same place in some areas, like representation in the decision-making process.

She said there are private organisations that can help the government disburse the funds (of Bangladesh Bank).

"We have thousands of ideas to work for women's empowerment. This can happen under a shared or cross-funding system," she added.

'We'll hold dialogue, but with whom?'

Asks foreign minister

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said Awami League would like to hold dialogue to uphold democracy but raised questions regarding who they would hold it with.

"We will do whatever is needed to preserve democracy. If dialogue is needed, we will do that, but with whom will we hold the dialogue?" he told journalists at the foreign ministry yesterday.

When asked for comments on the letter sent by the US government to the three political parties -- Awami League, BNP, and Jatiya Party -- calling upon them to hold dialogue without any preconditions amid a deadlock created over the polls-time government, he said AL doesn't want anything that harms the democratic process.

"Bangladesh is a free country, and anyone can express their opinion. If

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BNP keeping its own office locked Says DMP chief; party rejects claim



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner yesterday said it was BNP who had kept its own party office in Nayapaltan locked since October 28.

The party, however, put the blame on police for putting its headquarters under lock and key.

"They [BNP] themselves locked the BNP office. They do not come there now. Only they can say why they don't come," said DMP Commissioner Habibur Rahman.

He said this while replying to a query after visiting patients, who suffered burn injuries in recent arson attacks, at the national burn institute.

"We have no objection if they open the office and carry out activities there," he said.

Police have been deployed near the party office for providing security to people, he said.

Talking to The Daily Star, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi refuted the DMP chief's claim. "Police locked the office and drove away office staffers." Police have besieged the party office with an ill motive, he added.

"Police locked the office and they have to open it."

Canadian businessman on Facebook, fraudster in reality

JAMIL KHAN

A man, masquerading as a senior associate consultant of the High Commission of Canada to Bangladesh, has been arrested in Dhaka for engaging in a social media scam.

The accused, identified as Foyzal Ahmed, adopted the alias Sheikh Mohammad Yousuf Ali on Facebook. Using this false identity, he sent friend requests to unsuspecting users, claiming to be an elected mayor of Niagara City in Canada.

Once the friend requests were accepted, he would approach individuals, offering job opportunities in Canada while posing as a businessman.

To add legitimacy to his claims, the fraudster claimed his son facilitated the relocation of people from Bangladesh to Canada through government arrangements. For this reason, it did not require any additional expense.

He built relationships with people and gradually extracted money from them under the guise of processing fees for passports and document arrangements.

Harun Or Rashid, the additional

commissioner (detective branch) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, revealed these details following the arrest of the fraudster from the capital's Mirpur on Monday.

"We have received written complaints from two to three victims and then arrested Foyzal. We suspect many people have become victims of his trap."

This correspondent met with Mozibul Haque Talukder at the DB compound yesterday, who was one of Foyzal's victims.

"I received a friend request from a Facebook ID named Yousuf Ali. Then he identified himself as a senior assistant consultant of the High Commission of Canada. He also said he has a big business in Canada and is looking for a personal manager," said Mozibul.

"When I showed interest, he asked me to send around Tk 47,400 for passport processing. Once I sent the money to him, the Facebook ID just blocked me from his account and stopped all communication," he said.

Mozibul then filed a case with Ramna Police Station.



Foyzal Ahmed



With a fewer turnout of passengers, the alleys of Gabtoli bus counter wore a deserted look yesterday despite the city not being under a blockade.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN