

‘Free, fair polls at any cost’

CEC directs administration, law enforcers in Chattogram

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal yesterday directed the local administration of Chattogram and law enforcement agencies to hold the upcoming January 7 polls in a free, fair, and peaceful manner at any cost to ensure acceptance.

He issued strict warnings against violence on polls day, saying that voting will be suspended if anyone tried to show muscle power inside polling centres.

Awal made the remarks during two separate closed-door meetings with the candidates from 16 constituencies of Chattogram and the officials of administration and law enforcement agencies.

The CEC first held a meeting with the candidates and noted their views at LGED auditorium in Sholoshahar. Later, he held a meeting with the administration and law



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enforcement officials at Primary Teachers' Training Institute.

"This time there can be no incident of muscle power during voting. If any, then the returning officers are directed to suspend the vote at the centres immediately. If the presiding officers notice this, they will also do it. If the presiding officer fails, then the RO will do it. If RO doesn't stop voting, then EC will take action directly," he said.

He also asked the administration and law enforcers to act neutrally to make the polls acceptable to everyone.

"Environment on the polling day will be discussed for a long time. To prevent vote rigging, the presiding and polling officers, who will conduct the voting, will have to ensure that no unauthorised person is allowed inside the centres during voting."

The CEC urged the candidates for keeping polling agents at the centres so that they can see the empty ballot boxes before voting and be present during vote counting.

A CMP deputy commissioner, wishing anonymity, said, "The CEC asked the police officials not to allow any unauthorised person inside voting booths or the polling centres, and also to record complaints immediately if there is any gross allegation or violence before and after voting."



After receiving clearance from the Election Commission to hold the "textbook festival" on January 1, the government has already set things in motion. Trucks from Dhaka, carrying textbooks, reached Barishal's Bakerganj upazila yesterday and efforts are underway to distribute these books to different schools in the area. The photo was taken near Bakerganj Jibon Singha Union High School.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

RAJSHAHI-2 More trouble for Badsha

After Awami League, local 14-party alliance members forsake the Workers' Party candidate

ANWAR ALI

Fazle Hossain Badsha, the Awami League led 14-party alliance candidate for Rajshahi-2 constituency, has not only failed to garner support of AL grassroots, but also other members of the alliance have forsaken him.

In a meeting with Rajshahi mayor and the local convenor of 14-party alliance AHM Khairuzzaman Liton on Monday night, the grassroots activists of at least 13 political parties said they won't be supporting Badsha on January



7, according to several sources present at the meeting.

On Friday, the city unit of AL announced that "scissor", not "boat", is the election symbol of the unit.

Shafiqur Rahman Badsha, the city AL vice president, is contesting with the scissor symbol while Fazle Hossain has been given the much coveted boat symbol.

Notably, Shafiqur is a supporter of Liton, also a presidium member of AL.

Fazle Hossain told this correspondent yesterday that he had reached an "understanding" with Liton.

"I went to his home in the

morning [Sunday]. We discussed a few things personally, and then we discussed it in the presence of his wife. We reached an understanding," said Badsha.

Contacted, Liton said, "I cannot stand against 'boat'. But I cannot also force my party men to support anyone in particular as there are directives to make the election participatory."

After the meeting between Badsha and Liton, the latter called the meeting of the local chapter of 14-party alliance at his political chamber in Ranibazar area on Monday night.

In the meeting, Liton reportedly extended his support to Fazle

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People have no interest to vote in 'meaningless' polls

Says BNP leader Nazrul Islam

UNB, Dhaka

BNP senior leader Nazrul Islam Khan yesterday said the country's people have no interest in casting their votes in a "meaningless" election.

He also raised a question if there is public support in the "one-sided" election, why the councillors have been given instructions by the police to bring voters to the polling stations.

He said this while talking to reporters after distributing leaflets, containing BNP's call for boycotting the upcoming polls, among the pedestrians on the Motijheel to Dilkusha Road.

He called upon the voters not to go to the polling stations in any situation on January 7. "Don't cooperate with the regime which is playing a game with the lives and livelihoods of people."

Nazrul, a BNP standing committee member, said people have already rejected the lopsided election and they will boycott the voting as well.

The BNP leader said their party wants such an election where the people can freely exercise their right to vote and elect their representatives.

Voter turnout will be satisfactory

Quader tells EU team

BSS, Dhaka

Voter turnout in the upcoming election will be satisfactory, AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader told the visiting European Union election expert team yesterday. The meeting was held at AL's Dhaka district office in Tejgaon.

Both sides discussed various aspects of the election slated for January 7, according to meeting sources.

"At the meeting, overall polls atmosphere including the preparations for the election as well as BNP's continuous attempt to foil it were also discussed," Quader told journalists afterwards.

David Noel Ward led the two-member EU team in the meeting. BNP is resorting to violence to destroy the peaceful atmosphere of the election, Quader told the EU team.

About the party's independent candidates, he said, "There is nothing wrong in it as the party has given them an opportunity to contest."

He also made it clear that the district and upazila committees have no right to expel or suspend anyone's party membership.



For nearly 30 years, Abul Bashar can be seen roaming the streets of Khulna from dawn till 10:00am, selling paratha and halwa to locals. Needless to say, come winter, the demand for this simple yet hearty breakfast delicacies increases manifold. The photo was taken near Shibbari intersection yesterday. PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

BOMB BLAST AT DHAKA COURT Mastermind held in Chawkbazar: DB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police claimed to have arrested the mastermind behind the crude bomb blast on the premises of Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court on November 20.

A DB team from DMP's Lalbagh Division arrested Mukit alias Boma Mawlana from the capital's Chawkbazar area on Monday, Harun Or Rashid, additional commissioner of DB, said during a briefing at DMP Media Centre yesterday.

Mukit made around 400 bombs between October 27 and December 16 by collecting gunpowder, and supplied those to different areas in Dhaka, the DB chief said.

The detectives alleged that Jubo Dal president Sultan Salauddin Tuku provided the gunpowder to Mukit.

"We were looking for Mukit for a long period. He was the vice-president of Chhatra Dal's Alia madrasa wing and later became its president, before being elected as joint secretary of Chhatra Dal's Dhaka south unit," Harun said.

Mukit lost his right wrist in a blast while making bombs in 2013-14 and since then he has been known as Boma Mawlana, the DB chief said.

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JHALAKATHI-1 Independent candidate withdraws

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Independent candidate M Moniruzzaman yesterday announced his withdrawal from the polls race in Jhalakathi-1 constituency.


Moniruzzaman, a sub-committee member of Awami League's freedom fighters' affairs central unit, made the announcement through a press conference at Muktijoddha Sangsad office in Rajapur.

"Obeying the decision of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, I have decided to step down. I will still work for 'boat' symbol," Moniruzzaman said, adding that there was no pressure on him to make this decision.

AL nominated Mohammad Shahjahan Omar, a former BNP central unit leader, will contest with "boat" symbol from the seat.

With Moniruzzaman's withdrawal, Omar is likely to win comfortably from the seat in the January 7 polls.


A total of six candidates, excluding Moniruzzaman, are now going to contest the polls from Jhalakathi-1.



আমরা শোকাহত

বিশিষ্ট শিল্পপতি, বাংলাদেশের শিল্প অঙ্গনের অন্যতম সফল উদ্যোক্তা এবং সিটি গ্রুপের চেয়ারম্যান ও ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক **জনাব ফজলুর রহমান**-এঁর মৃত্যুতে পূবালী ব্যাংক পিএলসি'র পরিচালনা পর্ষদ এবং সকল স্তরের নির্বাহী, কর্মকর্তা ও কর্মচারীবৃন্দ গভীরভাবে শোকাহত।

ফজলুর রহমানের মৃত্যু বাংলাদেশের শিল্প ও বাণিজ্য জগতের জন্য এক অপূরণীয় ক্ষতি। আমরা মহান আল্লাহতায়ালার নিকট মরহুমের বিদেহী আত্মার মাগফেরাত কামনা করছি এবং তাঁর শোকসন্তপ্ত পরিবার পরিজনের প্রতি গভীর সমবেদনা জ্ঞাপন করছি।

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