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Polls only after vital electoral reforms

New CEC says after taking oath

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The new Election Commission does not want another one-sided election, Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin said yesterday, adding that the election will be free, fair, and acceptable to all.

He also said the next national polls will be held after necessary reforms to the election process are done.

The one-sided elections of the past harmed the country, he said.

"We will create a level playing field for a competitive election," he told reporters after his first day at the office.

He referred to the 2024 election in which many Awami League leaders ran as independents, allegedly to make the election appear participatory.

He also made reference to the 2014 election in which 153 individuals also got "elected" to the 300-seat parliament because they were the only ones who participated in their constituencies, he said.

The BNP and other major opposition parties boycotted both the elections.

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Nasir Uddin

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Thousands of battery-run rickshaw pullers gathered near the Jatiya Press Club in the capital to press home their demand yesterday afternoon. Many others occupied the streets in Agargaon, Mohammadpur and Jatrabari, causing disruptions to traffic.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Amended ICT law to allow trial of security personnel

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The newly amended International Crimes (Tribunals) Act will allow for the prosecution of members of the army, navy, air force, police, Rapid Action Battalion, Border Guard Bangladesh and all intelligence agencies.

A gazette was issued to this effect yesterday.

"Intelligence agency" means any "authority, force or entity, established by or under any law which is responsible for the collection, analysis and exploitation of information in support of law enforcement, national security and public safety", specified the amendment.

The amended law says, "The provisions of this article shall apply only to persons in a position effectively to exercise control over or to direct the political or military action of a State."

The newly amended law also provides explicit instructions to protect accused and detained persons from torture and forcible detention, and orders all accused to be brought to the tribunal within 24 hours of arrest. The accused and detained will have legal rights to protection under the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, 2013.

"Evidence obtained by means of a violation of internationally recognised human rights shall not be admissible."

The law also mandates that the prosecution must disclose to the defence any evidence in its possession that portrays that an accused person may be innocent.

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World reaches \$300b climate finance deal

Developing nations slam deal 'woefully insufficient' to tackle climate crisis

REUTERS, Baku

Countries at the COP29 summit in Baku adopted a \$300 billion a year global finance target yesterday to help poorer nations cope with impacts of climate change, a deal its intended recipients criticised as woefully insufficient.

The agreement, clinched in overtime at the two-week conference in Azerbaijan's capital, was meant to provide momentum for international efforts to curb global warming in a year destined to be the hottest on record.

- US, EU hail 'new era for climate finance'
- Deal keeps China climate finance 'voluntary'
- UN chief says deal did not 'go far enough'

Some delegates gave the deal a standing ovation in the COP29 plenary hall. Others lambasted wealthy nations for not doing more and criticised the Azerbaijan host for hurriedly gaveling through the contentious sum.

"It's a paltry sum. I regret to say that this document is nothing more than an optical illusion," Indian delegation representative Chandni Raina told the closing session of the summit, minutes after the deal was gavelled in.

"This, in our opinion, will not address the enormity of the challenge we all face. Therefore, we oppose the adoption of this document."

United Nations climate chief Simon Stiell acknowledged the

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30 injured as students run riot at govt college

They vandalise classrooms, office of Suhrawardy College over alleged attack on peers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, JnU

Violence engulfed parts of Old Dhaka yesterday as students from over a dozen colleges attacked Government Shaheed Suhrawardy College in what they said was a retaliatory move.

They vandalised at least six vehicles at Suhrawardy College and tried to attack Kabi Nazrul Government College but failed to enter the campus.

At least 30 people were injured amid a chase and counter-chase between two groups hurling brick chunks at each other.

The protesters also attacked Dhaka National Medical College Hospital, where Mollah College student Avijit died on November 18 due to alleged negligence. The demonstrators vandalised the gate and glasses of the hospital.

The students were protesting against an alleged attack on their peers from Dr Mahbubur Rahman Mollah College by students of Suhrawardy and Kabi Nazrul colleges during a demonstration on November 21 over Avijit's death.

This correspondent witnessed that several thousand students, including from Mollah College, Dhaka College, City College and Notre Dame College, gathered in front of the hospital again at yesterday noon, protesting the death of Avijit.

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'16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM' At least one woman raped nearly every 9hrs

Sexual violence against women and children BETWEEN 2020-2024



SOURCE: AIN O SALISH KENDRA



With the recent addition of potatoes to TCB packages, more people from low-income groups have begun joining the lines in front of OMS trucks. The packages now include 3kg potatoes for Tk 40, 2litres edible oil for Tk 200, 2kg lentils for Tk 120, and 5kg rice for Tk 150.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

INT'L DAY FOR ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

From November 25th to December 10th, the world unites to combat gender-based violence during the 16 Days of Activism. This annual campaign, initiated in 1991, aims to raise awareness and inspire action to end violence against women and girls.

Throughout these 16 days, The Daily Star, through its print and digital platforms, will highlight the ongoing issue of gender-based violence in Bangladesh, explore the root causes of this pervasive problem, and shed light on the tireless efforts of individuals and organisations working towards a more equitable future.

NILIMA JAHAN

Marium (not her real name) was only 10 years old when she was subjected to the horrors of sexual violence in 2018.

A middle-aged man raped her in the slum she lives in.

The child narrated the incident to her grandmother and a group of women, including a community activist.

Her grandmother, however, decided to hush up the matter to protect Marium's "reputation."

Despite the community activist's attempt to seek legal justice for the child, her 'honour' mattered more to the grandmother and their community.

When police arrived, the community members dismissed the incident as an "overblown rumour" -- ultimately granting the rapist impunity and offering him the chance to further exploit the child and other girls of the slum.

This is an edited excerpt of a case study from the research report titled "Why Rape Survivors Stay Out of Court: Lessons from Paralegal Interventions" published by BLAST in 2018.

The scenario in Bangladesh has changed little since then. Under-reporting of rape cases remains a problem, according to experts.

For instance, data from the prominent human rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) showed a total of 4,787 rape cases from January 2020 to September 2024.

In 2020, 1,627 rape cases were reported, while only 329 were reported between January and September 2024.

Legal experts say the rape data underrepresents the true scope of the problem as many rapes go unreported.

An analysis by this correspondent of the ASK data over four years showed that there was one rape every 9 hours -- meaning at least two women have been raped in Bangladesh each day during this period just based on reports published in the media.

A 2024 report by the National Girl Child Advocacy Forum noted that, amid political unrest and crises in Bangladesh, the needs of women, girls and vulnerable groups were overshadowed in media coverage.

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