

A milestone towards attaining secularism

Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad on students' demonstrations for polls deferment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Following Election Commission's announcement to change Dhaka city polls' date to February 1, Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad in a press release welcomed the decision, and said further demonstrations will be discontinued.

In the press release, the Parishad's general secretary Rana Dasgupta said, "The students' protest to defer the date of the polls will be a milestone for establishing the secular nation that Bangabandhu dreamed of."

Earlier in the day, the platform had

announced that minority communities across the country will begin a week-long demonstration from tomorrow, including an hour-long road blockade on January 25, demanding deferral of Dhaka north and south city corporation elections, which were scheduled for January 30, coinciding with Saraswati Puja.

"We will start our countrywide demonstration through human chains and protest rallies on January 20," Rana Dasgupta had announced at a press conference at the platform's office at Paltan Tower in the capital yesterday.

The National Committee to Coordinate

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Students call off hunger strike

STAR REPORT

Students of Dhaka University ended their hunger strike yesterday as the Election Commission deferred the date of Dhaka north and south city corporation elections to February 1.

They brought out a procession on the campus celebrating the occasion and thanked the EC for its decision, reports our DU correspondent.

The demonstrators had started the hunger strike on Thursday, demanding rescheduling of the polls which coincided with Saraswati Puja on January 30.

On the last day of their event held at the base of Raju memorial sculpture, three DU students fell sick. With them, a total of 13 students faced similar fate while observing the hunger strike.

Jagannath Hall Union Vice-President Utpal Biswas said one of the three students were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) while the rest were given first aid.

Of them, a student named Ovi Das Pritom was taken to DMCH around

11:30am yesterday.

The other two -- Tanvir Hasan Saikat, member of Dhaka University Central Students' Union (Ducus), and Dipto Saha, joint secretary of DU unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League -- were administered intravenous saline in the morning.

"Most of the students, who had been observing the strike since the beginning, fell sick. They should be taken to hospitals," Utpal told The Daily Star.

Earlier students had said until the EC deferred the polls date, they would not take treatment.

Arnab Hore, who fell sick during the strike, had said, "If needed, the strike will continue till the day of the polls."

Five DU teachers -- Jagannath Hall provost Prof Mihir Lal Saha, Gobinda Mandal of law department, Nepal Chandra Roy of mathematics department, Dr Mukul Kumar Baroi of sculpture department, and Prof AKM Jamal Uddin of sociology department -- had visited the protesters and expressed solidarity with them.

On Friday, a total of 10 students,

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TWO TALES OF A CITY

Protests over the deferment of city polls date raged on throughout the day, with some DU students needing saline after falling sick during their hunger strike, while some had to be hospitalised. This is the length that protesters went to press home their demand, which was finally met after the EC yesterday night changed the polls date to February 1. The students celebrated the decision by bringing out a procession on the campus late at night. On the other side, candidates campaigned in full swing. Atiqul Islam met voters in Mirpur's West Shewrapara; Ishraque Hossain greeted the crowd at Islampur; Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh spoke to a gathering at Jatrabari, and Tabith Awal visited Khilgaon.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS, COLLECTED

Vote, no matter what: BNP

MATHEWS CHIRAN, DNCC

Exercise your franchise! Come to the polling centres overcoming all obstacles and vote!

The above reverberated through BNP's campaign yesterday.

The party also said their leaders and activists will remain present on the voting day, defying all odds to encourage voters to practice their democratic rights on January 30.

"We as a responsible party will encourage voters to cast their votes on the election day. We will be present [at the polling centres] and no matter what, we will stand our ground strongly," said BNP mayoral candidate Tabith Awal for Dhaka North City Corporation yesterday.

Tabith, on the ninth day of the campaign, was electioneering in the Khilgaon area.

"Voters are afraid. They want their voting rights to be protected. They want to vote for their chosen candidate through a democratic process. We urge the Election Commission to ensure safety for all voters on the day," Tabith said.

He promised that if elected, he will ensure accountability of the mayor and councillors and make the city corporation a corruption-free institution.

He also expressed concern regarding the use of electronic voting machines (EVM) and "capture" of polling centres by the incumbent party.

With elections to the two city corporations less than two weeks away, Awami League mayor and councillor candidates are campaigning in full swing, while BNP aspirants are alleging that their supporters are being pressurised and intimidated by ruling party activists.

Tabith Awal complained that polls code was being violated incessantly but the Election Commission was not doing anything about it, even after complaints were lodged.

Meanwhile, AL mayor candidate Atiqul Islam campaigned in Kochukhet, Kazipara and Shewrapara areas yesterday.

While campaigning in Kochukhet Bazar, he said if elected again, he will launch an app named "Sobar Dhaka" through which anyone can inform about their problems and DNCC will take immediate steps to solve those.

Besides, he also promised to set up a passenger shed in the Kochukhet area within three months of being elected mayor.

He hoped that he will be elected mayor again as people are with him. "I am hopeful to win as I am getting huge response from people," he added.

Meanwhile Atiqul's wife Dr Shaila Shagufa Islam campaigned for her husband in Mohakhali's Karail slum area along with media personalities Shomi Kaiser and Tanvin Sweetey.

"We are getting huge response from people. All are supporting 'boat' [Awami league's electoral symbol]," said Dr Shaila Shagufa.

People skeptical of big pledges

RASHIDUL HASAN, DSCC

The two mayor candidates for Dhaka South City Corporation polls -- Awami League's Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh and BNP's Ishraque Hossain -- yesterday campaigned in different parts of the city and made big pledges to woo voters.

On the ninth day of electioneering, both Taposh and Ishraque promised a clean and developed DSCC, if elected.

Several voters, however, while talking to this correspondent, expressed apprehension whether the city corporation mayor has enough power to take decision regarding development of Dhaka.

"Every day, they [Awami League and BNP mayor candidates] are making big promises that if elected they will resolve all problems. I want to ask them if they have enough jurisdiction to implement their promises or they are just rhetoric," said Mozibur Rahman, a tea vendor from Jatra Bari.

While campaigning in the area, Taposh, flanked by hundreds of leaders and activists of AL and its associate organisations, pledged that people's civic amenities would be ensured within five years, if he is elected.

Seeking co-operation from all to make Dhaka a modern city, he said, "I will serve as a public servant and build a developed city."

The mayor aspirant said under a proper plan, Dhaka will be modernised systematically. "We will bring back the culture and heritage of the city."

Asked, Nizam Uddin of Uttar Jatrabari, said, "We are used to hearing such pledges from candidates before the polls. But the reality is quite different. Many roads in the city are in a sorry state. We continue to face water crisis. We cannot walk on footpaths as they are grabbed by hawkers."

Meanwhile, Ishraque started his campaign in Sadarghat area yesterday. He said he will take all measures to make Dhaka a clean city.

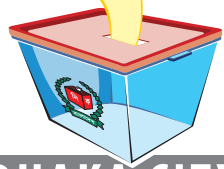
He also announced short, medium and long-term plans to solve the city's problems. "My main task will be to make this city liveable as the present condition of the city is not suitable for that," he added.

"I saw the sorry state of different parts of the city including Kadamtali, Shyampur and Jatrabari areas recently. It's more or less the same in other areas. The current undemocratic and unelected government is responsible for the city's condition," he alleged.

"As the present government is not elected, they feel no responsibility towards people," Ishraque further alleged.

His speech, however, made many locals skeptical.

Nabi Mohammad, a trader from Bangla Bazar area, said how Ishraque will be able to develop the city if Awami League government does not co-operate with him? "How will he fulfil his pledges without the government's support?" he asked.



DHAKA TODAY

DISCUSSION

Remembering Jahanara Iman
Organiser: Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal
Nirmul Committee
Venue: IEB, Ramna
Time: 3:30pm

Gulshan-2

Time: 12:30pm

FAIR

Dhaka International Trade Fair
Organiser: Ministry of Commerce and Export Bureau of Bangladesh
Venue: Agargaon
Time: 10am

SEMINAR

Mitigation Strategies for Warming of Dhaka Megacity
Organiser: BUIS, Curtin University and Department of Meteorology of Dhaka University
Venue: BUIS, Old Eskaton road
Time: 10am

ACADEMIC SESSION

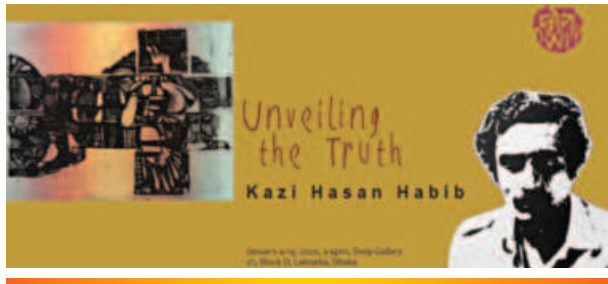
Writing Effective Emails for Professional Correspondence
Venue: EMK Center
Time: 2pm

REPORT LAUNCHING

The World Report on Vision
Organiser: International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness
Venue: The Westin Dhaka,

EXHIBITION

Unveiling The Truth
by Hasan Habib
Venue: Dwip Gallery, Lalmatia
Time: 3pm



Armed forces to become more skilled, dynamic

Says president at National Defence College reunion

UNB, Dhaka

President Abdul Hamid yesterday expressed hope that all members of the armed forces will continue their relentless efforts through discipline, skills, patriotism and dutifulness for the betterment of the force.

"Trust in leadership, mutual belief, respect, professional skills and discipline are prerequisites to the development of any force. It is my firm belief that members of armed forces will continue their relentless efforts through hard exercise, discipline, professionalism and patriotism," he said.

The president was addressing the reunion of National Defence College (NDC) of Bangladesh held at Mirpur Cantonment.

Terming the armed forces a symbol of pride, he said members of armed forces are playing a laudable role in nation building, facing the natural disasters and supporting the civil administration apart from maintaining the country's independence and sovereignty.

Referring to the implementation of Armed Forces Goal-2030 for modernisation of the forces by the government, he said the plan will make them more skilled and dynamic.

In the beginning of his speech, the president also recalled the architect of country's independence Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and paid homage to the martyrs and valiant sons of the soil who had made supreme sacrifices for the country.

He expressed his hope that all units of the forces will organise special programme marking the birth centenary of Bangabandhu and the golden jubilee celebration of the country's independence.

Ministers, secretaries, senior civil and military officials, former commandants of NDC, faculties and alumnus of different courses were present during the event. Commandant of NDC Lt Gen Sheikh Mamun Khaled delivered the welcome speech at the programme, where secretaries concerned to the president were also present.

2ND PHASE OF BISWA IJTEMA

Akheri Munajat today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

The second and last phase of three-day Biswa Ijtema, the second largest Muslim congregation after Hajj, ends today with Akheri Munajat (final prayers).

Maulana Muhammad Jamshed, an Indian preacher, is scheduled to conduct the munajat seeking divine blessings for all, said Tablighi Jamaat leaders.

Tablighi Jamaat has been organising the annual event on the bank of the Turag river in Tongi of Gazipur since 1967.

The first phase of the ijtema was held from January 10 to 12.

Maulana Zubair Hassan, imam of the capital's Kakrail mosque and leader of a faction of Tablighi Jamaat, administered the Akheri Munajat of the first phase.

Organisers said followers of Maulana Saad Kandhalvi have joined the second and last phase of Biswa Ijtema.

Syed Wasiful Islam, a leader of Tablighi Jamaat, told this correspondent that today's Akheri Munajat is expected to begin between 10am and 11am, which will be conducted by Maulana Jamshed.

"Thousands of people have already thronged the ijtema venue and more are gathering," he said, adding that this flow will continue till Akheri Munajat tomorrow [today].

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NEWS SIMPLIFIED

BHAIRAB: NATION'S FOOTWEAR HUB

৳300 B TOTAL INVESTMENT	👟
10,000 TOTAL SMALL & LARGE FACTORIES	🏭
250,000 EMPLOYED	👥
৳15-20 B AVERAGE TRANSACTION PER DAY	🔄
AND GROWING	📈

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