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“...For their own sake and to prevent the spread of the virus, they [Bangladeshis] must comply with China’s health guidelines.”
STATE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS MD SHAHRIAR ALAM URGES BANGLADESHIS IN CHINA

“Our policy is constant. We don’t have relations with Israel and holders of Israeli passports cannot visit the kingdom for now.”
SAUDI FOREIGN MINISTER PRINCE FAISAL BIN FARHAN AFTER THE JEWISH STATE SAID IT GAVE ITS CITIZENS THE GREEN LIGHT TO VISIT THE KINGDOM (PAGE 12)

“I just said, I believe in miracles. I got incredibly lucky tonight...”
ROGER FEDERER AFTER SURVIVING SEVEN MATCH POINTS TO WIN AUSTRALIAN OPEN MATCH (PAGE 15)

Big test for EC

All set for EVM-only first major polls amid reservations from parties, experts

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Amid reservations of opposition political parties and experts and confusion among many voters, the Election Commission is all set to hold its first major all-EVM polls.

The two Dhaka city corporations go to polls on February 1. The BNP and Communist Party of Bangladesh apprehend that electronic voting machines (EVMs) may be used for manipulating the polls and snatching people’s right to vote.

BNP leaders on several occasions even termed the EVM “a tool for robbing votes”.

The ruling Awami League is, however, backing the EC.

Many experts expressed concern that there could be room for irregularities in the polls using EVMs.

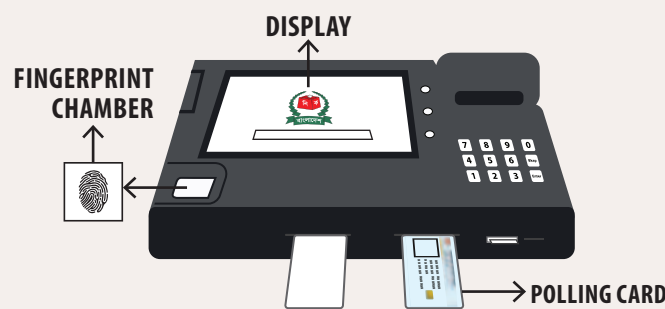
“The decision to use EVMs should have been taken on consensus of all parties. But that did not happen,” said former caretaker government adviser Hafizuddin Khan.

“We have fears of irregularities as it [EVM] does not have Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail [VVPAT, a printed receipt-like document that tells voters the vote has been cast] and election officials have overriding powers in case a voter’s fingerprint could not be matched with the database,” he said.

When asked why they have not kept the paper trail system in the EVMs, Brig Gen Mohammad Sidul Islam of NID Wing of the EC said, “We have seen that paper trail system creates some technical issues and it sometimes

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Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) are used to cast vote without paper ballots. The voting machine is a combination of mechanical and electromechanical equipment which is used to define ballots, cast and count votes, and to display results.



EC has a total of 35,000 EVMs

One EVM for each of 14,600 polling booths

2 technicians for each of 2,468 polling centres

EVM is being used in Feb 1 Dhaka city polls

Mock voting with EVM will be held on January 30

HOW TO CAST VOTE USING EVM

- ▶ A voter will be identified using smart card or fingerprint or voter number or national identification number.
- ▶ Voter’s information will be displayed on the monitor of control unit if any of the four options is entered in the EVM.
- ▶ The polling officer will verify the information. Then he or she will open ballot unit in presence of polling agents of all candidates.
- ▶ After confirmation by the polling officer, digital ballot unit which is kept in a secret room will be automatically activated.
- ▶ In the digital ballot unit, the symbol of the candidates will be displayed on the right side and their name will be displayed on the left side. To cast vote, voters will need to press the button on the right side of the desired symbol.

Then, the indicator beside the symbol will flash out. To confirm the vote, a voter will need to press the green button.

There will be three ballot units in the city polls -- for mayor, general ward councillor and reserved women councillor -- positions.

If you want to skip casting vote to anyone you will need to press cancel button twice.

If you have identified the wrong voting in any case, you will have the opportunity to correct the mistake unless and until you have pressed the green button.

EVM PROJECT COST: around Tk 4,000 cr

EVM PER UNIT COST Tk 2.06 lakh

Star LIVE

SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH VIDEO

TO USE QR CODE ON YOUR SMARTPHONE, INSTALL FREE QR READER SOFTWARE FROM GOOGLE PLAYSTORE OR APPLE STORE. TURN ON THE SOFTWARE AND HOLD THE PHONE CAMERA OVER THE QR CODE TO GET THE VIDEO LINK.

ROHINGYA GENOCIDE EU wants Myanmar to follow ICJ order

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The European Union wants Myanmar to fully comply with the World Court order asking Myanmar to stop genocidal acts against the Rohingyas in Myanmar’s Rakhine State.

“We expect the government of Myanmar to fully comply with the ICJ order in the interest of justice,” said the EU Ambassador and EU Member States’ Ambassadors and Heads of Mission resident in Myanmar in a statement on Monday.

On January 23, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordered Myanmar to take measures to ensure that its military or any other forces under it stop any physical and mental harms against the Rohingyas.

The ICJ also ordered Myanmar not to destroy the evidences of the

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CORONAVIRUS FALLOUT

Mega projects may suffer for Chinese staff’s absence

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Work on several mega development projects may be hampered if the situation over coronavirus does not improve soon.

Many Chinese nationals working under those projects are now home on leave to celebrate the Chinese New Year. Given the situation in China, they might not be able to return and join work on time, said officials linked to the projects.

They also said the authorities of one of the projects have extended the leave of several hundred Chinese nationals by a week and that there could be further extension. Besides, several other project authorities were mulling similar steps, they said.

The projects include Padma Bridge, Padma Bridge Rail Link, Payra 1320MW Thermal Power Plant, Chittagong to Cox’s Bazar (Ramu) Rail Link, construction of a tunnel under the Karnaphuli river, and upgrading the Dhaka Bypass Road.

The projects involved several Chinese companies and are being implemented under the Bridges Division, Bangladesh Railway,

Power Division and Roads and Highways Department (RHD), the officials said.

The Daily Star could not confirm how many Chinese nationals are currently working at the projects or how many of them are in China on leave.

But officials in Dhaka say the projects employ “thousands of Chinese nationals, including officials, engineers and workers”.

Last week, many of them left for home to join the Chinese New Year celebrations that began on January 25. It is their longest holiday of the year.

Recently, China reported the outbreak of coronavirus, which until last night claimed more than 100 lives in the country.

The Chinese authorities have confirmed the presence of the deadly virus in almost all the provinces. Yesterday, the health authorities in the country announced that 4,515 confirmed cases of pneumonia caused by the novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) had been reported in 30 provincial-level regions.

To prevent further spread of the virus,

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CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

106 DEATHS (ALL IN CHINA)

4,610 confirmed cases

5,794 suspected cases

461 in critical condition

51 people recovered and discharged from hospital

The virus spread to at least 14 countries

At least 77 confirmed cases outside China

BANK DEPOSITS

Not more than 6pc interest from Feb 1

The decision comes at a meeting of managing directors of banks

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

The long-promised single-digit interest rate is now seeming more and more likely as the banks yesterday agreed to provide not more than 6 percent for savings from February 1 as part of their preparation to usher in 9 percent lending rate from April.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Association of Bankers, Bangladesh (ABB), a forum of managing directors of banks. ABB Chairman Ali Reza Iftakhar presided over the meeting, where MDs of almost all banks were present.

“The ABB requested all banks to implement the 6 percent interest rate on deposits from the beginning of February so that the single-digit lending rate can be made effective on time,” said Mashrur Arefin, the managing director of City Bank.

At a meeting on December 30 last year with Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, private banks’ sponsors and managing directors agreed to deploy single-digit interest rates from April 1.

Three other MDs on condition of anonymity told The Daily Star that all banks would implement the interest rate for deposits collectively with a view to tackling the ill competition among banks to poach deposits by offering higher rates.

Some 20 banks have already lowered their interest rate for deposits

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DHAKA CITY POLLS 2020

A top-class metropolis

Ishraque pledges in manifesto; says he’ll show zero-tolerance to corruption, work to ensure safety for women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP mayoral nominee Ishraque Hossain yesterday pledged to turn Dhaka south into a modern and world-class metropolis.

“City dwellers are riddled with problems and I am on the same page with them,” he said while presenting his 157-point manifesto at the capital’s Jatiya Press Club.

He promised to free the city from pollution, traffic congestion and waterlogging.

People face difficulties in accessing social services due to corruption, discrimination and lack of accountability, he said.

“I will implement a zero-tolerance policy against corruption in the city corporation,” he told reporters.

Ishraque, who has a post graduate degree from the University of Hertfordshire, is running for mayor in Dhaka South City

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Fire kills 5 of a family in Moulvibazar

They include a 3-year-old girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Five members of a family, including a three-year-old girl, were burnt to death at their home in Moulvibazar town yesterday morning.

The family used to live on the top floor of a two-storey building that had a market on the ground floor.

Abdullah Harun, deputy assistant director of Moulvibazar Fire Service, said the fire might have originated from a leakage in the gas line of a footwear outlet on the ground floor of the building.

The fire broke out around 10:45am and rapidly engulfed the building. After two hours of tireless effort, the fire fighters managed to take the blaze under control around 12:30pm, he added.

Alamgir Hossain, officer-in-charge of Moulvibazar Police Station, said they recovered the bodies and

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A passenger being screened with temperature checks after he landed at the capital’s Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport last night. Inset, a digital screen set up at the airport to make passengers aware about coronavirus. The airport authorities have taken the measures to prevent the virus from entering the country.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

No answers

Six months on, little Tuba keeps looking for mother killed in mob beating; no charge sheet yet in case

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Little Tasmin Mahira Tuba often springs up in her sleep in the middle of the night and frantically starts looking for her mother, Taslima Begum Renu, who was beaten to death by a mob in July last year. “Ammu,” she yells, and breaks down. While sobbing, the four-year-old asks, “Where is Ammu?”

Her aunt, Joynab Begum, tries to calm her down with false promises.

“Your mother has gone to America and will come back soon with a lot of beautiful dresses for you,” she tells Tuba.

“When will she come back?” asks Tuba.

“Soon,” is all Joynab can reply.

At times, Tuba gets impatient as these promises remain unfulfilled. Sometimes she calls her mother “pocha” (bad) and sometimes “bidsher Ammu” (foreign mother).

Six months have gone by since Taslima was brutally killed in a mob beating, but her daughter still doesn’t know that her mother is no more.

“We don’t know how long we will be able to do this. It is heart-rending,” Joynab told The Daily Star recently.

Since their mother’s death, Tuba and her 11-year-old brother Taseen al Mahir have been living with their aunt in Mohakhali.

Mahir, a class-V student at Banani Bidya Niketan, understands his mother won’t return.

“Sometimes he remains unusually quiet and looks worried. We understand he feels his mother’s absence at those times,” said Syed Nasiruddin Titu, Mahir’s cousin.

Their parents got separated – some two years before Taslima’s death.



Taslima Begum Renu

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