

DU SENATE POLLS MAY 25 Election momentum gears up

HASAN JAHD TUSHER

The momentum for May 25 election to the Senate of Dhaka University (DU) has geared up, with many teachers having started door-to-door canvassing to woo the voters.

The authorities are going to hold the senate election about one year after its tenure expired. The tenure of the senate, which has powerful influence on DU, expired in June last year.

Two panels - the 'White Panel' backed by ruling BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami and the 'Blue Panel' backed by the opposition Awami League - have finalised their candidates for the election and submitted nomination papers.

Today is the last date for withdrawal of nomination papers.

As the candidates as well as their supporters are now busy with door-to-door campaigning, the students complained that the academic activities were being hampered, with many teachers canvassing throughout the day.

However, the teachers said that they have been campaigning after teaching the students in their classes.

Both the White and Blue panels' candidates are trying desperately to persuade the voters to support them in the senate election.

Teachers belonging to the Blue Panel are approaching the progressive teachers with pledges to restore the spirit of the liberation war, check irregularities in appointment and resist harassment of teachers and others.

On the other hand, their rivals have pledged to provide better residence facilities for the teachers, improve computer facilities and expand scopes for scholarships for higher education.

The Blue panel has also struck a deal with the left-leaning teachers to face the White panel in the race and at least five candidates from 'Pink group' are contesting the election from the Blue panel.

The White panel has at least 10 Jamaat-backed teachers, sources said.

The DU authorities announced the election schedule on May 13. DU Treasurer Prof Syed Rashidul Hasan will conduct the election as election commissioner.

The election will be held at the Teacher and Student Centre (TSC) from 9:00am to 1:00pm without any break. A total of 1100 teachers are likely to cast their votes, sources said.

Arrest of Asma Jahangir condemned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Human rights organisations yesterday expressed deep concern over the police attack on and arrest of Pakistan's rights activists, including Asma Jahangir, in Lahore.

Eminent lawyer and UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief Asma Jahangir was arrested along with 30 rights activists in Lahore on Saturday as they were attempting to lead a rally demanding the right for women to run in marathons alongside men.

In separate statements, the South Asian People's Union against Fundamentalism and Communalism, Bangladesh Society for the Enforcement of Human Rights (BSEHR), Bangladesh Human Rights Commission and Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) protested the attack and demanded release of all rights activists.

President of South Asian People's Union Prof Kabir Chowdhury and General Secretary Shahriar Kabir expressed solidarity with the movement by Asma Jahangir against fundamentalism and demanded legal action against the attackers.

BSEHR Secretary General Sigma Huda and Executive Director Alena Khan strongly condemned the arrest of Asma Jahangir.

The ASK in its statement said, "We are shocked that a peaceful demonstration by women activists, which did not involve any provocation, such as banners or slogans, was attacked by the police in Lahore, and the government has taken no disciplinary measures against this basic violation of human rights."

Ahsania Mission launches cancer hospital lottery May 21

Dhaka Ahsania Mission launches a lottery programme on May 21 to raise funds for the construction of a 500-bed cancer hospital, with the slogan 'Our hospital with our money'.

The Ahsania Mission Cancer Hospital Lottery-2005 will offer a total of 1298 cash prizes amounting to Tk 50 lakh, including the first prize of Tk 30 lakh.

A committee has been formed to run the lottery programme, with former IGP Dr Enamul Haq as its chairman. Ibrahim Khaled, managing director of Pubali Bank Ltd., was made a member of the committee.

The Pubali Bank has volunteered to take the role of the lead bank for sale and distribution of lottery tickets and all the banks of the country have made elaborate arrangements to sell lottery tickets.

The world class hospital will be built at a cost of about Tk 150 crore, says a press release.



The Alliance against World Bank immunity stages a demonstration at Muktangan in the city yesterday protesting the move to give immunity to World Bank.

Protest against move to give immunity to WB continues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different organisations yesterday protested the government's move to provide immunity to the World Bank (WB) for its activities in Bangladesh.

Left Democratic Front held a rally, while the Alliance against World Bank Immunity, Sammilita Sramik Federation and People's Health Movement launched signature campaign against the move.

Addressing the rally at Muktangan, the left-leaning leaders said the alliance government is conspiring to give immunity to the WB by neglecting the national interests.

Following the prescription of the WB and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government has already closed down many mills and factories leaving thousands of workers unemployed, they said.

The speakers urged the people from all walks of life including leaders and workers of political parties, trade unions and professional bodies to be united against the move and create public awareness about the negative impact of the immunity.

"It is the constitutional right of the people to sue the WB and seek justice if and when affected by its activities," said Mujahidul Islam Selim, general secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB).

"No other country in the world has given such immunity to the WB," said Zakir Hossain, coordinator of the Left Democratic Front, adding that the bank's demand for blanket immunity in Bangladesh goes against its own rules and regulations.

Country's economic progress

will be jeopardised if the government grants immunity to the WB, said Bimol Biswas, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Bangladesh (WPB).

Later, the leaders and workers of CPB, WPB, Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal, Sramik-Krishak Samajbadi Dal, Bangladesh Samyabadi Dal (M-L), Democratic Majdur Party, Gono Mukti and Jatiya Sampad Raksha Sammilita Andolon brought out a procession from the Muktangan carrying red flags, banners, placards and festoons.

After the signature campaign, leaders and workers of 60 organisations under the banner of Alliance against World Bank Immunity also took out a procession from the Muktangan that paraded different city streets chanting various slogans against the move.



Shahriar Kabir, general secretary of South Asian People's Union against Fundamentalism & Communalism, speaks at a discussion titled "Democracy, human rights: Bangladesh perspective-2005" at the Liberation War Museum in the city yesterday. Sammilita Samajik Andolon organised the discussion.

'Govt fails to check launch accident'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different political and social organisations yesterday expressed grave concern over the loss of lives caused by Sunday's launch accident in the Buragourang river at Galachipa under Patuakhali district.

Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh President AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury said the government has failed to take any effective measure to prevent launch accident despite the loss of three thousand lives by three major launch accidents in last three and a half years.

He conveyed his sympathy to the members of the bereaved family and prayed for the salvation of the departed souls.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Haq Inu and General

Secretary Syed Jafar Sajjad also expressed grave concern over the repeated launch accidents in the country.

In a joint statement, they expressed resentment at the government's inaction to prevent such accidents despite huge loss of lives every year.

Expressing deep shock at the loss of lives, Ain O Salish Kendra demanded due compensation for the affected families.

Bangladesh Institute of Human Rights urged the government to take immediate steps to check the frequent launch accidents on emergency basis.

Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Mukti Andolon and Hijbut Tahrir Bangladesh also expressed grave concern over the accident.

Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at a few places over Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna and Barisal divisions till 6:00pm today.

Mild hit wave may continue over Khulna division and the regions of Rajshahi and Ishwardi, Met Office said predicting slight rise of day temperature over the country.

Highest temperature 38.6 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and lowest 19.8 degree Celsius at Srirangol.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:35pm today and rises at 5:15am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	35.7	25.5	74	61
Chittagong	33.5	27.6	77	73
Rajshahi	37.5	24.0	81	53
Khulna	35.6	25.4	88	71
Barisal	35.0	27.6	77	70
Sylhet	25.7	20.5	91	79
Cox's Bazar	34.8	28.6	70	68

New US visa scheduling service announced

BDNEWS, Dhaka

The US Embassy in Dhaka yesterday announced the implementation of a new arrangement with a private company to offer non-immigrant visa applicants to process their visa applications and schedule non-immigrant visa interview appointments.

Saimon Overseas Ltd. Bangladesh took over appointment scheduling process for non-immigrant visa from Saturday, according to a press release.

For interim period, 100 US dollar visa fee collection will be done at the American Express Bank branch offices at Motijheel, Gulshan and Dhanmondi in Dhaka, Agrabad in Chittagong and the AmEx Bank is no longer authorised to schedule visa interviews.

In order to schedule a non-immigrant visa appointment date, applicants must go to a Saimon Overseas office in Motijheel or Gulshan in Dhaka and in Chittagong.

Effective from June 12, Citibank NA Bangladesh will take over the fee collection process as follows: Fees may be paid at the Citibank branch offices at Motijheel, Gulshan, and Agrabad (in Chittagong), and on site at the Saimon Overseas office at Gulshan only.

Non-immigrant visa fees will no longer be accepted at American Express Bank. After paying the visa fee at Citibank, applicants will schedule visa appointments, obtain and fill application forms, submit passports and collect an interview date and time at Saimon Overseas branch offices.

For this service Saimon Overseas will take service fee of Tk 403 per passport in Dhaka and Tk 518 in Chittagong and Sylhet.

Those applicants who do not wish to take advantage of this service through Saimon Overseas may continue to schedule interviews for non-immigrant visas in person at the Consular Section only on Sunday between 2:00 to 3:00pm.

The Consular Section will not provide any expedited dates. The number of appointments available for applicants who appear at the Consular Section will be extremely limited. For faster service, applicants are strongly encouraged to go to the selected Saimon Overseas Ltd. branch offices as mentioned above to schedule non-immigrant visa interviews and submit their visa applications.

Journalist leaders hail pay scale, demand wage board

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Leaders of the journalists' community have termed the new pay scale "positive one" and urged the government to form a complete 6th wage board for journalists and announce dearness allowance immediately.

Talking to BDNEWS, president of one faction of Bangladesh Federal Journalists Association (BFJA) Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury said everyone would be of course be happy for the new pay scale but the question is how the government will bear the cost.

Referring to the formation of the 6th wage board, he said despite the government approved the formation of the 6th wage board in the cabinet much earlier, but nothing has been done due to unknown reasons. "This made the journalists community angry."

Ruhul Amin Gazi, secretary general of another faction of BFJA, congratulated the government and welcomed its decision for announcing the new pay scale.

He said the journalists used to get wage board before announcement of pay scale in the past, but this time the journalists lagged behind, which he termed as "sad".

He demanded immediate formation of the complete wage board and declaration of the dearness allowance.

Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul, BFJA secretary general of another faction, sees the new pay scale as a "positive one" as, what he said, the government evaluated the market situation and announced the scale.

He said it is government's "moral responsibility" to declare the 6th wage board "immediately" and proceed further announcing the dearness allowance.

Death anniversary



Today is the 8th death anniversary of Advocate Md Hasan Ali Chowdhury (Montu Mia), says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his village home at Maista Chowdhury Para in Kalihati upazila under Tangail district.

Hasina urges engineers to rid country of misrule

BDNEWS, Ctg

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina has urged all professionals, including engineers, to play a united and positive role to free the nation from misrule, corruption, politicisation, terrorism, violation of law and constitution, oppression of the finance government.

She made the call while speaking as chief guest at the concluding ceremony of the 49th convention of the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) at the Chittagong Engineers' Institution premises yesterday.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia inaugurated convention Saturday.

Recognising with gratitude the role and contribution of the engineers in post-independence reconstruction activities of the country and its overall development, Hasina said, "People are now extremely frustrated because of the misrule of the alliance government."

"People of all professions are now being sandwiched by the terrorism, corruption and politicisation of the ruling coalition," she alleged, adding, "An extremely unusual and suffocating situation is prevailing in the country."

She observed that the country lacks rule of law and there is no justice. The society has to be freed from this suffocation.

She commented, only the engineers of the country can play the pioneering role to face the 'Millennium Development Challenge' and to take the country towards the path of prosperity.

"We have spread the modern science and technology in every sphere of life but the alliance government is taking the country backward through its corruption, lack of transparency and misrule resulting in the sufferings of common people," she said.

Engineers speaking at the concluding session said, a consensus has to be made between the government, the opposition parties, civil society, professional bodies and people about the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) to eradicate poverty and for social development.

The speakers stressed the need for skilled human resources besides enhancing investment. They said that to ensure structural safety of the building plans, skilled engineers should monitor designs and construction work of the building and certification by them should also be made mandatory.

To this end, they demanded to enact chartered engineers act or professional engineers act. Otherwise the recurrence of Savar building collapse could not be prevented, they observed.

IEB president Prof Anwarul Azim chaired the convention while IEB general secretary ANH Akhter Hossain, and IEB Chittagong unit president AKM Faizullah also spoke.



Awami League President Sheikh Hasina discusses a point with newly elected Chittagong City Corporation Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury at a view exchange meeting of Nagorik Committee in the port city yesterday.

4 muggers held in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four alleged muggers were held in two separate incidents in the city on Sunday night.

Three muggers Lokman, 22, Imran, 23, and Dulal, 20, stopped a rickshaw passenger Ismail Hossain at RK Mission Road at 10:00pm and snatched Tk 20,000 from him.

As Ismail raised hue and cry, locals rushed to the spot and caught the muggers and beat them severely.

Sutrapur police rescued the three and admitted them to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH).

In the other incident, mob caught one Asaduzzaman Khan, 25, from Dilkusha area when he tried to mug a passerby Mizanur Rahman at 10:30pm.

Motijheel police rescued the mugger and took him to the DMCH.

'Safe migration of labourers a must to combat trafficking'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Encouraging safe migration of labourers is crucial to combating trafficking in persons, speakers at a seminar said yesterday.

"We are thinking of arrangements for safe movement of both male and female migrant labourers," said Women and Children Affairs Minister Khurshid Jahan Haque as chief guest at the seminar organised by Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unions (BATU) of the Saarc region.

"We will, in particular, keep detailed information about where a woman migrant will be employed, how her job and working environment will be like and whether there is any possibility of her being exploited," she said.

Natasha Ahmad, an independent consultant, presented the findings of a report on the trends of human trafficking in the Saarc countries.

Although Bangladesh is a source country of human trafficking, there is no exact figure of how many people are trafficked every year, she said, adding that the police estimate that around 15,000 Bangladeshis are trafficked a year.

Although it is extremely difficult to obtain data on trafficking in Nepal and Bhutan, she said, it is estimated that nearly 1.72 lakh Nepalese girls are working as sex workers or in businesses related to sex in different establishments in India.

Sources indicate that between 5,000 and 7,000 Nepalese girls are sold to India a year, Natasha added.

Pakistan is a source, transit, and destination country for trafficking in persons, she said in her report. Women and girls are trafficked to Pakistan from Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Iran, Myanmar, Nepal and Central Asia for forced commercial sexual exploitation and bonded labour.

India's sex industry, apart from being fed by Bangladesh and Nepal, is overwhelmed by mostly under-aged girls from across the country, she said.

Natasha identified poverty, ignorance and religious fundamentalism as some of the major reasons behind trafficking in persons.

The issue of trafficking has various dimensions, said Kazi M Aminul Islam, director of labour. "Multinational companies are being benefited from trafficking," he added.

Md Ashraf Hossain MP, also a trade union leader, said there are many laws to combat trafficking but they are hardly enforced. "There are many children who are exploited as bonded labourers even within the country," he said.

Labour leader Haider Akbar Khan Rono said free movement of migrant labourers in the international market should not be confused with trafficking.

Marc Van Lint of World Solidarity Movement, Justin MacDermot of International Organisation for Migration, Director General of Manpower and Employment Bureau SM Wahid Uz Zaman, Prof Ishrat Shamim of Dhaka University and Advocate Salma Ali also spoke at the seminar chaired by BATU-Saarc Chairman Mukhlesur Rahman.

HC rule on govt against sacking of 21 police cadets

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule upon the government to explain within three weeks why its October 16, 2004 notification discharging 21 cadet police sub-inspectors should not be declared illegal.

A division bench of the court, comprising justices M A Matin and AFM Abdur Rahman, issued the rule after a brief hearing on a writ filed by Sheikh Sohel Rana of Gopalganj district and 20 others challenging the legality of the notification issued by the superintendent of police (admin), Sarda Police Academy, Rajshahi.

During the hearing, Deputy Attorney General Adilur Rahman Khan opposed the writ. He said it was not sustainable under writ jurisdiction.

Home secretary, inspector general of police, principal and vice-principal of Sarda Police Academy and its superintendent of police (Admin) were made respondents of the rule.

Moving the petition, Barrister Amir-Ul Islam termed the notification illegal, arbitrary and mala fide and submitted that the petitioners were discharged without any show cause notice. He argued that the petitioners were selected for cadet sub-inspector training after they successfully passed the preliminary, written and viva examinations and medical test. But they were discharged only 14 days before completion of the year-long training.

DHAKA TODAY

Memorial meeting

Freedom Fighters' Coordination Council organises a meeting to commemorate the death of Lt General Jagjit Singh Aurora, commander of Bangladesh-India Joint Forces in 1971. Venue: Cirdap Auditorium, Topkhana Road. Time: 3:30pm.

Discussion

Bangladesh Tanin League will hold a discussion to mark the homecoming day of Awami League President Sheikh Hasina. Venue: Bangladesh Photo-journalists Association Auditorium, Purana Paltan. Time: 10:30am.

Human chain

Bangladesh Awami Sangskritik Forum will form a human chain to realise its various demands. Venue: Muktangan, Ramna. Time: 4:00pm.

Telecom day

In observance of World Telecommunications Day, a function has been arranged with IGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan as chief guest. Venue: Hotel Sheraton. Time: 10:00am.

Lecture

Asiatic Society of Bangladesh organises a lecture on 'Bengal landlords and agriculture: An interpretative

essay'. Venue: Seminar room of the society, 8 Old Secretariat Road. Time: 4:00pm.

Launching ceremony

Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association organises the launching ceremony of a published research and video drama on the issue of Wife Abuse in Bangladesh with Law Minister Moudud Ahmed as chief guest. Venue: VIP Lounge of the National Press Club. Time: 11:00am.

Film show

Academy Film Society will screen an American thriller titled 'The Rich Man's Wife'. Venue: Academy Auditorium, 21/C Jigatola. Time: 6:30pm.

Rotary Dhaka

Weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Dhaka will be held. Venue: Sonargaon Hotel. Time: 5:30pm.

Rotary Sonargaon

Weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Sonargaon Dhaka will be held. Venue: Dhaka Club. Time: 5:30pm.

Rally

World Social Forum organises a rally to protest the government decision to give immunity to World Bank. Venue: Shahbagh Crossing. Time: 3:00pm.