

No poll in next 18 months

CEC says voter list, national ID cards to be prepared during this time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday said the Election Commission (EC) will not think about holding any elections either to parliament or local government bodies in next one and a half years.

"During this time, we will simultaneously prepare a voter list with photographs and national identity cards. Once the massive task is done, we will think about holding elections. But now we cannot give any timeline when the elections are likely to be held," the CEC told a press briefing.

When the electoral roll is prepared, there would be a lot of other tasks to be done. The government will have to create a congenial atmosphere for elections, he said.

"So, we cannot say that parlia-

mentary elections will be held just after 18 months. We will be ready for elections after 18 months if everything goes smoothly."

Facing a volley of questions about a tentative timeframe for holding the stalled ninth parliamentary elections, which was earlier scheduled for January 22, the CEC said it is not possible now to specify any timeline for holding the ninth parliamentary polls.

He also disclosed a set of proposals for electoral reforms at the briefing.

"There are now so many uncertainties before us about preparation of voter list correctly. After next six to nine months, we can give a clear picture about the planned task. And

Poll reform proposals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday formally unveiled a set of proposals for electoral reforms that include making public the statements to be submitted by the parliamentary election candidates.

If anyone is found to have concealed facts, the commission will recommend cancellation of their membership in parliament.

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now I do not dare to speak about any timeline for elections," said Shamsul Huda, who was appointed CEC on February 4 following resignation of his controversial predecessor MA Aziz.

In reply to a question, he said, "There is no scope to expedite our plan. This is the minimum time (18 months) subject to fulfilment of several conditions."

In defence of the EC plan, the CEC said they are working in the interest of the nation and the country. "We joined our posts not to hold parliamentary election as was usually held. And it needs resolution of matters concerning the arrested corrupt. There will be no point in holding election if they come back in the polls process."

He believes that political parties will not oppose the EC plan that is

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Convicted killer of Ahsanullah Master held

A CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested Hafiz alias 'Kana' Hafiz, who was sentenced to death in Awami League (AL) leader Ahsanullah Master killing case, in the city's Khilgaon area yesterday.

Rab sources said 'Kana' Hafiz was wanted in nine cases filed against him with Tongi Police Station. A total of 14 people, including Hafiz, were awarded death penalty by the Special Tribunal, Dhaka, in Ahsanullah Master murder case.

The AL leader was shot dead by the assailants near his residence at Tongi on May 7, 2004.

BIRD FLU 600 chickens culled in Noakhali

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Khagrachhari district administration fearing bird flu infection imposed a ban on the transportation of chickens, eggs and poultry feeds from bird flu-infected areas yesterday while Noakhali district administration culled 600 chickens as those were bought from bird flu-infected areas of Gazipur.

The central avian influenza control room sources said the decisions were taken by the district administration. A number of other districts including Rajshahi and Feni have also taken the similar decisions, the control room sources said.

They said no new cases of bird flu infection were detected in the last five days.

Our Noakhali correspondent reports: Upazila Nirbahi Officer Sheikh Hakim Hasan culled 600 broiler chickens in Noakhali which were bought from bird flu infected Gazipur district.

Office-in-charge of Sudharam Police Station ASM Nurul Alam said Abul Khayer and Abul Kashem of North Fakirpur bought 800

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CHANGE IN EMERGENCY POWER RULES No hearing on bail prayers in 10 days

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER

Hearings on the bail petitions of cases filed under various acts were not held in Dhaka courts in the last 10 days following a second amendment to the emergency power rules curbing bail right.

The March 21 amendment suspended bails under the Arms Act, Foreign Regulation Act and Explosive Substances Act.

The amendment added Penal Code to the three acts and renamed Foreign Regulation Act as Foreign Exchange Regulation Act.

Following this amendment, bails in cases under all the 511 sections of Penal Code, which include cases for petty crimes for which maximum punishment is one month's jail, are suspended.

Most of the arrestees under bailable charges of the Penal Code are deprived of getting bails following this amendment, sources mentioned.

"Eighty percent of the cases filed with different police stations in the city and district (Dhaka) every day are under the Penal Code," said a senior official in a court.

On March 21, the government amended the rules under Emergency Powers Ordinance 2007, suspending the rights to appeal for bail and seek redress from any higher court until a case is resolved in a trial court.

After receipt of the gazette containing the amendment, all the courts in the capital including the District and Sessions Judge's Court, Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court and District Magistrate's Court stopped hearing the bail petitions.

Sources in the courts said hearings on at least 500 bail petitions are being held back every day, resulting in a massive backlog of cases.

In such a situation, Law Adviser Mainul Hossain recently said the third amendment relating to granting or rejection of bail prayer of any

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Shops allowed to be open 7 days a week

UNB, Dhaka

Shop owners across the country now can keep their shops open all the seven days of the week to recoup losses being incurred following the government decision on closure in the evening to save electricity.

The decision was taken in a meeting between LGRD and Cooperatives Adviser Anwarul Iqbal and the leaders of the Shop Owners Association in the ministry's conference room yesterday.

It was decided in the meeting that shop employees would be given necessary allowances and facilities under the Labour Law 2006 for their overtime work.

The meeting also decided to readjust the matter of arranging hawkers market (holiday market) at some places in the capital in the wake of keeping the shops open all the seven days of the week.

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PHOTO: STAR

The nearly completed courtroom at the old MP Hostel in the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan complex. The courtroom is being prepared for proceedings of graft cases filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission.

Mamun confesses involvement in Tk 1.3cr extortion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Giasuddin Al Mamun, close friend and business partner of BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman, yesterday confessed his involvement in the extortion of Tk 1.32 crore.

BNP leader and former lawmaker Khairul Kabir Khokon and five others are also accused in the case.

Heavily guarded by police, Mamun was taken to the chamber of Metropolitan Magistrate ABM Abdul Fattah at around 3:30pm. The magistrate recorded his statement for around one and a half hours. However, details of his statement could not be learnt.

Khan Mohammad Aftab Uddin, managing director of Reza Construction Ltd, filed the extortion case with Gulshan police on March 27.

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Elections only after necessary reforms

CA tells Boucher govt fully accountable under gaze of free media

ASHFAQ WARES KHAN, New Delhi

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday told US Assistant Secretary Richard Boucher that for a credible election it is necessary to have the electoral reforms, including the anti-corruption drive to eliminate influence of money and muscle in election.

The US assistant secretary of state for south and central Asian affairs, who called on Fakhruddin in New Delhi yesterday, asked the chief adviser when the elections might be held. He also reiterated Washington's full support to the ongoing reforms in Bangladesh.

Fakhruddin said the reform process is fully transparent and the government is fully accountable under the gaze of a "free media".

He apprised Boucher of his government's commitment to hold free, fair and acceptable elections only after implementing necessary electoral reforms, chief adviser's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim told The Daily Star over telephone yesterday.

Fakhruddin also met with Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala yesterday and asked Nepal to take advantage of the Mongla Port and the improved infrastructure in Bangladesh.

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TARIQUE RAHMAN Proceedings of extortion case adjourned till April 17

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday adjourned the proceedings of the Tk 1 crore extortion case against BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman till April 17, following a time petition by the defence lawyers.

Metropolitan Magistrate Abdur Rouf Khan passed the order after defence lawyers filed a petition seeking stay of the processing of the case.

In yesterday's petition, defence lawyer ABM Sharifuddin Khan Mukul told the court that they had earlier submitted a petition with the High Court (HC) on April 4, seeking quashment of the case.

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PHOTO: SHAFIQ ALAM

Tarique Rahman sitting inside the prison van in front of the court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate in Dhaka yesterday.

ACC sues Harris Chy, Mamun

Arrest warrants issued

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued arrest warrants against Harris Chowdhury, political secretary to former prime minister Khaleda Zia, and controversial businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun following two cases filed against them.

Metropolitan Sessions Judge Momin Ullah issued the order when two officials of the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) filed separate cases yesterday seeking arrest warrants against them for not submitting their wealth statements to the commission within the stipulated time.

ACC Deputy Director Abu Sayeed filed the case against Harris while the commission's Assistant Director SMM Akhter Hamid Bhuiyan lodged the case against Mamun.

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ACID BRUTALITY ON 49-DAY BABY Finding words to a pulverised mouth

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Little Durjoy can now say 'amma' (mother).

Uttering this simple word by this twenty-eight-month-old boy could be considered a miracle since acid was poured down his throat when he was only 49 days of age!

Though his speech is still blurry, he can pronounce a few other words too.

Success story of this young boy was presented yesterday by Acid Survivors Foundation (ASF) at its seminar room in the capital where Durjoy along with his parents appeared before journalists after his return from Prince of Wales Hospital in Hong Kong.



PHOTO: STAR

Durjoy, an acid crime survivor, on his mother's lap at a press conference at the Acid Survivors Foundation office in the capital yesterday.

Nasim's wife granted 4-week anticipatory bail

UNB, Dhaka

The High Court (HC) yesterday granted anticipatory bail for four weeks to Laila Arjumand Banu, wife of former home minister Mohammad Nasim, in a corruption case.

After hearing a petition, a division bench comprising Justice Nozrul Islam Chowdhury and Justice Zubayer Rahman Chowdhury passed the order.

The court also issued a rule upon the government to explain why the petitioner should not be granted regular bail.

Advocate Anisul Huq with Towfiq Karim appeared for Laila, while Deputy Attorney General Golam Mohammad Chowdhury Alal for the state.

SECOND CORRUPT LIST OF 50 ACC to launch probe against 34 suspects

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite having various administrative limitations, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) is going to start enquiry against 34 more high profile corruption suspects published in the media in the second week of March, said ACC Commissioner Habibur Rahman.

The 34 are from the second government list of 50 high profile corruption suspects published in the media in the second week of March, said ACC Commissioner Habibur Rahman.

Meanwhile, the commission's activities are being hampered because of shortage of manpower. The ACC commissioner said they could not yet file cases against 11 persons from its first list of 50 corruption suspects due to the shortage of investigation officers.

However, Habib told journalists yesterday that despite the crisis the commission will assign 34 investigation officers (IO) to start enquiry against the 34 corruption suspects whose names he declined to reveal.

He also did not say clearly why 16 others on the list have been dropped and what criterion was followed in choosing the 34 for enquiry.

ACC sources said the commission finalised the 34 persons including Tarique Rahman.

ACC Secretary Delwar Hossain on February 18 officially published the names of 50 corruption suspects and directed them to submit their wealth statements within 72 hours. Of them 35 submitted their wealth statements within the ACC-stipulated time while a few others submitted theirs obtaining High Court order.

The ACC so far filed graft cases against 13 of the 35 corruption suspects as it found mismatches between their wealth statements and actual properties.

The ACC commissioner said, "We could have filed more cases by this time if we had required number of investigation officers."

According to the new ACC rules,

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