

LDP demands election schedule without delay

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) yesterday urged the Election Commission (EC) to announce parliamentary election schedule without delay to dispel growing scepticism about holding of the polls but the EC avoided a direct reply to the proposal.

"People are in a confusing situation due to various statements over the polls. They now think parliamentary election will not take place on time. In such a situation, if you [EC] announce the schedule for election, the confusion will be over," LDP President Oli Ahmed said at electoral reform talks with the EC.

Pressed by the LDP leaders, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda however clarified the EC's stance on polls but he did not make any comment on the proposal for announcing the election schedule.

"We have declared a roadmap stipulating the timeframe for holding the polls by December 2008 after completing the task of voter listing in October," the CEC said skipping a direct reply to the LDP request.

delegation to the talks, observed that an atmosphere of distrust has gripped the entire nation. And the country is in a state of economic depression.

"In such a situation, the EC should help restore the nation's confidence in its good intentions by announcing the schedule for parliamentary polls. And the only way to overcome the economic crisis is to hold the elections as early as possible and hand over power to elected representatives of people," argued Oli, a former minister.

The CEC however said the EC would not deviate from its roadmap for holding the stalled ninth parliamentary election.

"Election will take place according to the timeframe already announced. We hope, the task of preparing voter list with photographs will be completed by June, and in that case polls could take place earlier than the declared time frame," the CEC asserted.

Voter listing is now getting momentum and on an average four lakh eligible voters are being registered each day, Huda said.

On the election to local government bodies, he said the EC would

hold polls to five city corporations and some municipalities to gain confidence in the new system intended to avoid any errors in parliamentary polls.

Huda categorically said the EC will not hold elections to over 4,000 union parishads though their tenure will expire early next year since it does not want to take any decisions that might hamper the national election.

The EC would move for amendment to election rules for local government bodies, providing for a ban on mayors of city corporations in holding posts in political parties.

About upazila election officers, he said the EC plans to provide them with army training to improve their efficiency. On army's involvement in preparing voter list, he said they are working under the guidance of the EC.

At the electoral talks held at the EC Secretariat, the LDP placed a set of proposals that include cancellation of the existing system for allocation of election symbols, polls campaign on a limited scale to reduce expenditure, ban on anti-liberation forces' registration as political parties.



College girl killed in road accident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A female student of Dhaka City College was killed in a road accident at Dhanmondi in the city yesterday.

A Mirpur-bound minibus knocked down Sadia Afrin Suchi, 18, at around 11:20am when she was crossing the Mirpur Road.

Suchi, 18, a first year student, came out of her college after taking her examination. As she tried to cross the road to get on a bus, the minibus hit her.

She was rushed to nearby LabAid Hospital where the doctors declared her dead.

As the news spread, students and commuters barricaded the Mirpur Road, police said.

Police managed to control the situation after half an hour.

Locals caught the driver and seized the minibus and handed them over to police.

"Suchi's family wanted her to become a chartered accountant," her uncle Sohel Masud said as he burst into tears.

Suchi was the eldest daughter of Anisur Rahman, inspector of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution, Tongi.

New literary magazine for juveniles

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An initiative has been taken to publish a yearly literary magazine for the juveniles.

The magazine will be published on Pahela Baishakh every year. Writer and educationist Serajul Islam Chowdhury will be the chief editor of the 'Kishore Sahityabarshiki', says a press release.

One of the objectives of the magazine is to inspire young writers to contribute to the magazine alongside eminent writers.

The magazine invites all types of write-ups from the young writers. The write-ups can be sent to 62/1 Dhanmondi R/A, Road # 12/A, Dhaka-1209.

CYCLONE 2 more bodies recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Two decomposed bodies were recovered at Bogi and Chaltabunia villages of Southkhali union in Bagerhat's Shrankhola upazila yesterday, bringing the death toll from last month's cyclone to 680 in the upazila alone.

The dead bodies were of a child and a woman, said Upazila Nirbahi Officer Shahnewaz Talukder, adding that the child's corpse was found in a ditch at Bogi while the woman's in a Chaltabunia ditch.

District control room sources said they have recorded 810 deaths in Bagerhat till December 8.

Obituary



Abdul Wajed Lavlu, son of Abdul Majid, former director of FBCCI, passed away at his residence in the city on Sunday night at the age of 42, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, two sons and a host of admirers to mourn his death.

He was buried at his family graveyard in Bangshal.

Death anniversary

Today is the second death anniversary of SM Khalilur Rahman, father of staff reporter of the News Network of Bangladesh SM Delwar Hossain, says a press release.

Qurankhwani, doa and milad mahfil will be held at his residence (Sikdar Vila, House-1, Road-9, Block-B, East Rasulpur, Kamrangir Char) in the city after Juma prayers on Friday.

Milad mahfil



A milad mahfil will be held to pray for the departed soul of Abul Munir Sadeque at his residence (Apartment 4A, House 23, Road 7B, Sector 3, Uttara) in the city on Friday, says a press release.

Donations for Sidr victims

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different government and non-government organisations and professional bodies continued to stand by the Sidr victims yesterday.

Japan government donated \$1.5 million to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), while Bangladesh expatriates in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has so far donated Tk 55 lakh for rehabilitation of the cyclone-affected people.

Employees of Sonofon, subsidiary of Telenor, the majority shareholder of Grameenphone, donated Tk 1 million to Grameenphone fund while Telenor Pakistan donated another Tk 1 million.

Chairman and members of Bangladesh Cultural Centre in Hong Kong on behalf of the Bangladeshi community there handed over a draft of \$10,000 to Bangladesh Consul General in Hong Kong for the Sidr-affected people.

Australia also provided further Tk 11 lakh to Brac under its Direct Aid Programme 2007-08 for the Sidr victims.

12th CUDS anniversary celebrations begin today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong University Debating Society (CUDS) will celebrate its 12th founding anniversary with two-day colourful programmes beginning today.

Poet Nirmalendu Guin will inaugurate the celebrations at the auditorium of Chittagong Muslim Institute Hall at 10:00am.

Social scientist Dr Anupam Sen, poet and Resident Editor of the Prothom Alo Abul Momen, CUDS moderator Dr Mahbulul Haque, writer Imdadul Haque Milon and debater Dr Abdur Noor Tushar will join the programmes on the first day.

In addition, CUDS will raise funds for Sidr-affected people by selling tickets of the programmes at Tk 300 per person, he added.

The Daily Star, Channel 1 and Radio Today are the media partners of the two-day celebrations.



Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury, 2nd from left, and Prof Mosharraf Hossain, 3rd from left, launch a book titled 'Mosaic of Memories' by ATM Shamsul Haque, extreme right, at Dhaka Book Fair at Agargaon yesterday. On their right is Justice Kazi Ebadul Haque.

Man put behind bars

FROM PAGE 1 case disposed of.

The family members of Mohammad Alam alleged that police deliberately grilled and sent Mohammad Alam to jail knowing he was not the real accused. They added that police did so to extort money from him as he just returned from abroad.

Arrested on charge of trafficking women at Chuadanga on May 13, 2002, Mohammad Alam's brother Sayed Alam identified himself as Mohammad Alam, a resident of Ukhia in Cox's Bazar.

A case was filed with Jibannagar Police Station in Chuadanga following Sayed Alam's statement. Staying several days in custody, Sayed Alam obtained bail from Woman and Children Tribunal-2 in Chuadanga on May 19, 2003 and allegedly went to Pakistan.

Sayed Alam never returned afterwards but the court sentenced Mohammad Alam to life imprisonment on May 15, 2006.

Mohammad Alam has been working in Saudi Arabia since 1991 and returned to Bangladesh on January 24, 2007 when police arrested him and sent him to jail. He is still in jail while a petition, filed by his family members in April, for quashing the case awaits hearing at the HC.

"My uncle Mohammad Alam has been living in Saudi Arabia for a long time. Neither he nor we knew that something like this had happened," said Russell, nephew of

Mohammad Alam.

"My other uncle Sayed Alam along with his family has been living in Pakistan for 15 to 16 years. He visited Bangladesh often and we heard that each time he returned to Pakistan he took one or two girls with him," he added.

"We the family members and the locals have been suspecting for a long time that Sayed Alam is involved in trafficking women," Russell said. "We do not know when hearing on the petition will begin," he added.

Immigration approval and seals on the passport of Mohammad Alam show that he was abroad when the incident took place in Bangladesh.

Meanwhile, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Faruk ul Haque in an investigation report submitted to the Superintendent of Police of Cox's Bazar said his probe found that now jailed Mohammad Alam is not the real accused in the case.

Barrister Tanim Hossain Shaw, lawyer appointed by Mohammad Alam's family, said "We will submit the investigation report in a supplementary affidavit after the Eid-ul-Azha vacation. The case now awaits hearing in the High Court and when it hears the petition the innocent and ill-fated Mohammad Alam is expected to be freed."

Hajj agencies asked to collect tickets by today

BSS, Dhaka

The Ministry of Religious Affairs has advised the hajj agencies to collect air tickets for the pilgrims by today by contacting Biman Bangladesh Airlines and Saudia.

The hajj agencies will be held responsible if any pilgrim fails to perform hajj for failure to collect the tickets within the stipulated time, an official handout said yesterday.

It said Biman and Saudia flights are carrying hajj pilgrims as per schedule.

NDC & AFWC Graduation Dinner held

The Graduation Dinner of National Defence Course (NDC)-2007 and Armed Forces War Course (AFWC)-2007 of the National Defence College was held at Mirpur Cantonment on Monday, says an ISPR release.

Industries Adviser Geetara Safiya Chowdhury attended, the dinner as the chief guest at the Officers' Mess of the Defence Services Command and Staff College.

Navy Chief Vice Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam, Air Chief Air Marshal SM Ziaur Rahman, Defence Secretary Kamrul Hasan, Principal Staff Officer of Armed Forces Division Lt Gen Masud Uddin Chowdhury and secretaries, vice chancellors and professors of different universities, distinguished personalities, defence advisers and attaches of different countries and high officials from the Armed Forces attended the Graduation Dinner.

Commandant of the college Lt Gen ATM Zahurul Alam in his welcome address congratulated the graduating members of both the courses and expressed thanks to his colleagues at NDC for their relentless hard work for making the courses complete and success.

The President's Parade, marking the commissioning of the gentlemen cadets of the 56th BMA Long Course and 27th BMA Special Course will be held at the Bangladesh Military Academy (BMA) at Bhatiari in Chittagong tomorrow, says an ISPR release.

On the occasion, a special train will run between Chittagong and Bhatiari Railway Station for the invited guests tomorrow.

The special train will leave Chittagong Railway Station for Bhatiari at 7:30am and leave Bhatiari Railway Station for Chittagong at 2:00pm.

Special train for President's Parade

On the occasion, a special train will run between Chittagong and Bhatiari Railway Station for the invited guests tomorrow.

The special train will leave Chittagong Railway Station for Bhatiari at 7:30am and leave Bhatiari Railway Station for Chittagong at 2:00pm.

New president of Uttara Club

UNB, Dhaka

Engr Zafar Akram has been elected president of Uttara Club Ltd for the year 2007-2008.

At the club's annual general meeting held on December 9, a 10-member new executive committee (EC) was also elected, said a press release.

The elected EC members are Eaysmen Ara Lekha, Raquib Uddin Ahmed (Roomer), Nasir Hossain, Salim Shahed, Md Masudul Alam (Bappy), SA Mokhtar (Mithu), Md Azizul Haque, Ahsan Karim Jinnah, Ahsanul Haque (Duke) and Md Masud Khan.

Engr Zafar Akram has been elected president of Uttara Club Ltd for the year 2007-2008.

At the club's annual general meeting held on December 9, a 10-member new executive committee (EC) was also elected, said a press release.

The elected EC members are Eaysmen Ara Lekha, Raquib Uddin Ahmed (Roomer), Nasir Hossain, Salim Shahed, Md Masudul Alam (Bappy), SA Mokhtar (Mithu), Md Azizul Haque, Ahsan Karim Jinnah, Ahsanul Haque (Duke) and Md Masud Khan.

Rejoinder, our reply

FROM PAGE 1 Bangladesh. Desh Energy is part of the Mohammadi Group.

Bangla Trac and Caterpillar alone has injected 20 percent of the country's total power generation capacity, the rejoinder states.

With regards to "shopping" around for equipment, the tender process allows every bidder to have equipment available through direct ownership or through commitments made with any equipment supplier. The Green Power Consortium has equipment reserved for the 30 MW Bhola and 50 MW Ashuganj power plants through Caterpillar. Our consortium also has immense experience in the sector.

The rejoinder further says, "The article suggests that we as local companies should be 'filtered out' in the final stage of the bid process." It adds, how can it be suggested that a bidder which has already fulfilled the pre-requisite criteria to enable itself to participate in this tender should be filtered out?

The consortium is also giving huge amount in bid bonds while its tariff offer compared to the nearest competitor Alstom would save Tk 7 lakh a day in the 50 megawatt Ashuganj Power project. The wide difference of power tariff between the Green Energy Consortium and Alstom is due to difference in high overhead costs.

It adds, "building a power plant is not rocket science. We have many credible engineers in our country who are able to handle such tasks."

The rejoinder added that foreign partnership is not mandatory in the tender terms, therefore the consortium did not have any foreign partners. "We local companies have the adequate financial leverage and the technical capacity to undertake such projects."

OUR REPLY We stand corrected about the ownership of the Desh Power Consortium, and deeply regret the error.

However the consortium and its members are inexperienced in installation and designing a plant. Representing or assisting Caterpillar is not equivalent to having the experience or know-how of Caterpillar. The consortium members may have facilitated supply of power plant related equipment in the past but is not equivalent to becoming a power generation company.

Interestingly the Desh Power Consortium is not a legal entity as it is not registered under the Companies Act of Bangladesh. In fact the consortium's document submitted to the Power Cell is a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) only applicable for Ashuganj and Bhola tenders. The MoU expresses the "intent" to form a Joint Venture Agreement only if the consortium wins the bids. This

demonstrates the seriousness of this venture.

The consortium also did not specify its experience of "rental plants" of 20 mw or higher capacity during the last 3 years, as demanded by the tender terms. The bidder did not state the plant's location, capacity, owner, power purchaser or commissioning date.

Both Bangla Trac and Desh Energy introduced themselves as "local agent". But Bangla Trac, a local company, named itself as Bangla Trac/Caterpillar. This ambiguity was apparently used to show Caterpillar's experience as that of Bangla Trac. In the bid document, both Bangla Trac and Desh Energy said they had a 20MW plant in China - without specifying where in China. The owner of that plant was named Caterpillar. The purchaser of the power of that plant is Cernak.

Interestingly Cernak has been also named as the supplier of power plant machinery by another consortium in the rental power bid.

Till date, the Power Development Board (PDB) that spent thousands of crores taka to have new power plants have not set up a plant on its own, and left the matter to professional companies. This is also why, the bidding authorities have specifically spelled out a criterion to ensure its capability and experience. The consortium does not match that criterion as shown above.

Provoked, the unruly mob set fire to tyres and other flammable objects, barricaded the roads and damaged public properties. They also threw projectiles at the policemen on duty.

Additional police forces were deployed yesterday on the court premises to avoid any untoward incident.

Advocates Syed Rezaur Rahman, Sahara Khatun, Porimal Chandra Guha, Khondaker Abdul Mannan and Masud Ahmed Talukder defended the accused.

VERDICT ON TORCHING THE DGFIVEHICLE Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Ruhul Amin of a speedy trial court of Rajshahi is expected to deliver the verdict today in presence of the four accused, reports our Rajshahi correspondent.

The case was filed against two teachers, two employees and 10 students of RU in connection with torching a vehicle and assaulting a staff of the DGF on August 22.

The accused include Chowdhury Sarwar Jahan Sajal and Sabbir Sattar Tapu of geology and mining department, RU Deputy Chief Information Officer Sadekul Islam and former vice-chancellor Faisal Islam Faruki's driver Ataur Rahman. The accused students have been absconding.

Court orders trial of 4 DU teachers

FROM PAGE 1 Chandra Bhomik and student Moniruzzaman were brought to the court at 11:30am under tight security for the hearing on their discharge petitions.

Moving the petitions, the defence lawyers argued that their clients were implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy to harass them and that their names were not included in the first information report (FIR) and were included in the charge sheet later.

In no way could a university teacher dedicated to moulding the students into nation-builders commit the offences mentioned in the case. So, the teachers and others should be cleared of the charges, the lawyers added.

Prof Harun told the court that he was at his office when the incident took place. He tried his best to defuse the situation but to no avail.

The prosecution opposed the arguments made by the defence lawyers and prayed for framing charges against the accused.

After hearing both the sides, the court rejected the discharge petitions of the defence and framed charges against the four teachers and 15 students.

After the magistrate read out the charges against them, the DU teachers and student present in the

court pleaded not guilty and demanded justice.

Charges were framed against 14 students in their absence and they will be tried in absentia. The court issued warrants of arrest against the absconding students.

They are DU unit Jatiyabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) President Hasan Mamun and General Secretary Saiful Islam Firoz, JCD leader Kamrul Hasan Kochi, acting JCD President of Shamsunnahar Hall unit Tanjeen Chowdhury Lili, JCD President of Rokeya Hall unit Shahinor Nargis, Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) DU unit Vice President Aparna Rani Pal, Rifat Hossain Jitu, Nazrul Islam Russell, Shamsul Kabir Rahat, Mitul, Aziz Hasan, Rokonzaman, Kamruzzaman and Anwar Hossain.

Police pressed charges against the accused on September 9 for instigating violence on the university campus and at Shahbagh in the capital on August 22 and 23.

The charges said the accused endorsed processions, chanted slogans and the unruly students went on a rampage on and around the campus between 10:00am and 4:00pm that day. They also took position at different points and made statements seeking to incite students and outsiders to tear into the army post at the DU gymnasium.

JAMAAT LEADERS Court order on govt nod to sedition case

Dec 18

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday fixed December 18 as the date for giving its order regarding the issue of government approval for registering a sedition case against two top Jamaat-e-Islami leaders and a former Jamaat Bank chairman as a regular one.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Emran Hossain Chowdhury fixed the date of the case after a hearing on the issue.

Freedom fighter Fazlur Rahman, complainant of the sedition case, along with his lawyers appeared before the court. The lawyers made submissions on law points for registering the case without the approval from the government.

Fazlur Rahman filed the case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court on December 5 against Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, Assistant Secretary General Abdul Quader Mollah and ex-chairman of Jamaat Bank Shah Md Abdul Hannan, accusing them of anti-state activities.

DHAKA TODAY

Roundtable

Action on Disability and Development (ADD) organises a roundtable on 'Rights of people with disability: Need for legal reform and effective institutions'. Venue: Spectra Convention Centre. Time: 8:30am.

IEB seminar

Departmental committee on civil engineering of Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) will organise a seminar on 'Steel structure against cyclones'. Venue: Seminar room, IEB. Time: 5:30pm.

Seminar

Governance Coalition organises a seminar on 'Village court, arbitration and demand of time'. Venue: Lged Bhaban. Time: 10:00am.

Roundtable

Society for Peace and Progress will organise a roundtable on 'Contemporary Bangladesh: In search

of new ways'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

Seminar

Bangladesh Thalassaemia Foundation in association with Bangladesh Society of Hematology organise a seminar on 'Iron chelation in Thalassaemia-present and future perspectives'. Venue: Bardem hospital auditorium. Time: 11:00am.

Conference

Relief International-School Online (RI-SOL) in partnership with Democracy watch will organise a conference on 'ICT and girls empowerment'. Venue: Biam Foundation. Time: 10:00am.

Debate

The concluding day of the 7th inter university debate organised by Dhaka University Debating Society in association with Transparency International Bangladesh (TI) and Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) will be held. Venue: TSC Auditorium. Time: 4:30pm.



WEATHER TODAY

No change in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country during the period, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 29.4 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 09.8 degrees Celsius at Srimangal. The sun sets in the capital at 5:12pm today and rises at 6:32am tomorrow.

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

Table with 4 columns: City/Town, Temperature in Celsius (Max, Min), Humidity in percentage (Morning, Evening). Rows include Dhaka, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal, Sylhet, Cox's Bazar.

Five martyrs' anniversary of death today

Today is the 37th death anniversary of four brothers -- Mukarram Hossain Mukul, Mansur Hossain Manju, Mastaque Hossain Anju and Mosharraf Hossain Ranju -- and their brother-in-law Yusuf Ali, who were martyred during the Liberation War, says a press release.

All of them sacrificed their lives for the country.

Various programmes, including Qurankhwani, milad mahfil and distribution of food among the destitute, will be held at Hossain Nagar Baitul Mozammel Jame Mosque on Savar EPZ Link Road to mark of the day.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the programmes.

Death anniversary

Today is the second death anniversary of SM Khalilur Rahman, father of staff reporter of the News Network of Bangladesh SM Delwar Hossain, says a press release.

Qurankhwani, doa and milad mahfil will be held at his residence (Sikdar Vila, House-1, Road-9, Block-B, East Rasulpur, Kamrangir Char) in the city after Juma prayers on Friday.

Milad mahfil

A milad mahfil will be held to pray for the departed soul of Abul Munir Sadeque at his residence (Apartment 4A, House 23, Road 7B, Sector 3, Uttara) in the city on Friday, says a press release.

He passed away at Uttara Red Crescent Hospital on December 8 at the age of 74.