

Decision on making expats voters next week

Says EC Sohul Hussain

UNB, Dhaka

The Election Commission (EC) would take a decision within the next week whether the Bangladeshi expatriates would be made voters, Election Commissioner M Sohul Hussain said yesterday.

He, however, said related laws would have to be amended if the government agrees to make the expatriates voters.

"We couldn't discuss it with the government due to Sindr after we came back home from the UK. We'll discuss it with the Chief Adviser this week. We'll apprise him about how we want to accomplish the task. If the government agrees then the concerned laws will have to be changed," Sohul told reporters at his office yesterday afternoon.

If a positive decision has to be taken in this regard, he said, a method would have to be sorted out how to make the expatriates voters.

Asked about the expatriates living in Saudi Arabia who submitted a memorandum to the CA during his recent Hajj tour demanding that they be made voters, Sohul said the EC has not yet seen the document.

"They also can be made voters... We want every expatriate to make voter, but that couldn't be done this time since our time and logistics are limited... At the beginning, we had been doing it as a token job," he said.

About lifting the ban on politics, Sohul said they would ask the government for it whenever they

would be ready and the government would decide how much to relax the ban.

Asked how the electioneering would be carried out during the city corporation elections if the ban on politics are not relaxed fully and early, he said it would not be a problem since the elections would be held in limited areas.

"The campaign would have to be done within the time whatever they will have... How can we ask the government to lift the ban early when we're not ready?" he said.

About enrolling the voters living in Bangladesh enclaves inside India, the Election Commissioner said they would run their voter-listing drive in the enclaves like Dahagram and Angarpota, where

voter listing had always been done in the past.

"But, for other enclaves, discussions would have to take place between the governments of Bangladesh and India," he said.

Sohul informed that the EC is going to start delimiting the voter areas from January 2008 using the Geographical Information System.

"Every location, from village to union to street, is identified in this system. So, it would be easier to do the job," he said.

On holding electoral dialogue with BNP, Sohul said they would seek the High Court's direction as soon as it resumes with which faction of the party discussion could be held on the draft of electoral reforms.

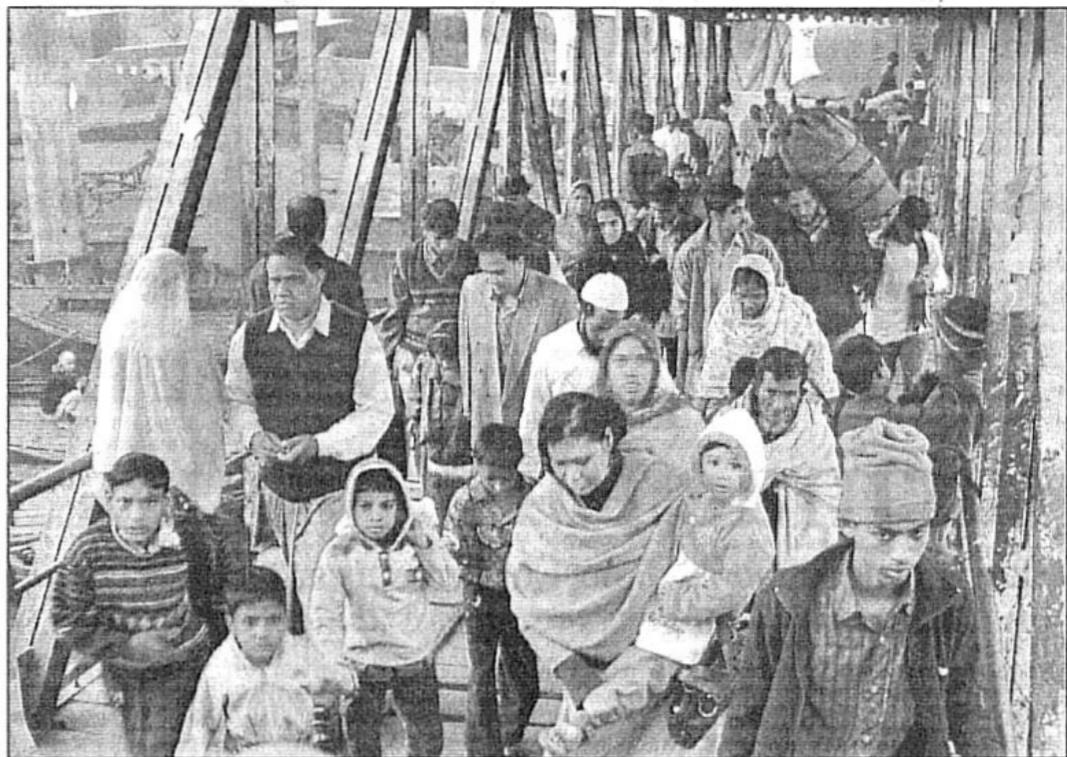


PHOTO: STAR

After celebrating Eid-ul-Azha with their near and dear ones, city dwellers have started returning from their home districts as Eid holidays are over. This picture was taken at Sadarghat Launch Terminal yesterday.



Mayor Mohiuddin Chowdhury was produced before a court in Chittagong yesterday in Bijoy TV scam case.

Obituary



Darul Ihsan University Trustee Board Chairman Dr Naimur Rahman passed away due to a cardiac arrest at city's Square Hospital in the early hours of yesterday at the age of 75, says a press release.

Naimur Rahman, also a physician, industrialist and former chairman of Bangladesh Jute Mills Association, left behind his wife, three sons, a daughter and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

He was buried at Azimpur graveyard after namaz-e-janaza at his residence yesterday.

Vice Chancellor of Darul Ihsan University Prof Monirul Haque expressed deep shock at his death.

His qulhwani will be held at his residence at 5, Circuit House Road, Ramna on Friday afternoon.

Gopal Chandra Roy

Gopal Chandra Roy, father of Krishna Pada Roy, superintendent of police in Sherpur, passed away on December 14 at the age of 77, says a press release.

He had been suffering for diabetes for a long time.

His Shradhha (post-funeral rites) will be held at his home at Tamalpur village in Nabiganj, Habiganj, on January 13.

Ali Ahmed Bhuiyan



Ali Ahmed Bhuiyan, a retired government official, passed away at Comilla CMH on December 14 at the age of 80, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, three sons and two daughters.

He was buried at his family graveyard at Aganagar in Barura, Comilla.

Haji Md Fulu Mia



Haji Md Fulu Mia, father of Alhaj Md Atiqul Islam, editor of the Daily Ajker Bani and the Weekly Shachitra, passed away at Shikdar Medical Hospital in the city yesterday, says a press release.

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

India missile tests to trigger arms race

Says Pakistan

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan yesterday said that recent missile tests by neighbouring India would lead to a new arms race in the region.

India on Friday announced a final successful test of its surface-to-air Akash missile before starting mass production under an ambitious plan to build a national missile defence shield.

"We are not in favour of introducing the new weapons systems in South Asia," Pakistani foreign ministry spokesman Mohammad Sadiq told a news conference.

"Because introduction of any new weapons system by any party would lead to an unnecessary armament race which South Asia cannot afford."

Pakistan carried out nuclear weapons tests in May 1998, following similar tests by India, with which it has fought three wars.

The neighbours were on the brink of a nuclear conflict in 2002 over tensions about disputed Kashmir, but began a slow-moving peace dialogue in 2004.

Pakistan test-fired a nuclear-capable cruise missile on

December 11. It previously tested the missile in March and July.

Theft of artefacts condemned

Leaders of Chhatra Sangram Parishad in a joint statement yesterday condemned the theft of the valuable artefacts, says a press release.

They also demanded punishment to the people responsible.

Coordinator of central parishad Mahmud Hasan Ripon, acting General Secretary Abul Kalam Azad, Bangladesh Chhatra League President Shariful Kabir Swapan, General Secretary Ali Hasan Torun, President of Bangladesh Chhatra Moitree Rafikul Islam Shujan, General Secretary Mukter Hossain, President of Jatiya Chhatra Dharan Bijoy Shankar Talukder, General Secretary Jakirul Rahman in the joint statement also demanded withdrawal of the acting French Ambassador from the country.

They alleged that the theft of the artefacts was pre-planned and that's why they turned a deaf ear to the opinion of the experts.

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UGC to honour 20 scholars today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh will honour 20 scholars of different public and private universities in the country for their innovative researches in a ceremony today.

The scholars will receive the UGC Award 2002-2005 at a prize giving ceremony at UGC office at 3:30pm. Each winner will receive a certificate, a crest and Tk 20,000.

The UGC award covers six areas of research- (1) arts, humanities, law and education, (2) social science, (3) physical and biological sciences, (4) agriculture science, (5) engineering and technology and (6) medical science.

No award will be given in medical science field, as qualitative research publication was not found, said UGC Member Prof Dr AHM Zehadul Karim who is also on charge of research field.

A total of fifty-one research papers were submitted for last four years from 2002 to 2005. Based on the assessment of the 'Evaluation Committee', twenty-one paper were chosen unanimously for awards," said Zehadul Karim while addressing at a press conference yesterday.

"UGC has been conferring award since 1980. The commission had so far awarded 34 scholars in two different occasions in various fields from 1980 to 2001. The last award giving ceremony was held in April 2, 2003 where nine scholars were honoured for the period of 1992 to 2001. Before that 25 scholars were given awards for the years 1980 to 1991 on February 8, 1995," he also said while narrating history of the award.

Prof Dr Ayesha Begum, Salma Akther, Prof Dr Md Anwar Hossain, Prof Dr Md Bahadur Meah and Prof AS Md Abdul Haseeb were selected for the UGC Award-2002, Prof Monsur Musa, Dr Gour Gobinda Goswami, Prof Dr Md Shamsul Alam, Mohammad Abdul Hossain, Dr GM Tarek Islam and Prof Dr MM Shahidul Hassan for UGC Award-2003, Dr M Tafazzul Islam, Prof Dr Md Samsul Alam and Prof Dr Md Saidur Rahman for UGC Award-2004 and Prof Dr Nurul Absar, Prof Dr MM Shahidul Hassan, Prof Dr Mohamad Asadullah, Dr Swarochish Sarker, Jamila Ahmed Chowdhury and Prof Dr Tajerima SA Islam for UGC Award-2005.

Three Chancellors of different public and private universities and Chairman of UGC will be present on the prize-giving ceremony.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:19pm today and rises at 6:40am tomorrow.

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

WEATHER TODAY

Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

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

Light to moderate fog may occur over the river basins of the country during early morning and night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 28.3 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 10.6 degrees Celsius at Jessor.

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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	26.0	13.7	86	67
Chittagong	24.8	15.4	76	75
Rajshahi	24.0	11.3	100	90
Khulna	25.6	14.0	93	86
Barisal	26.6	12.6	95	77
Sylhet	26.5	15.2	77	78
Cox's Bazar	28.3	16.0	76	72

Asia remembers tsunami victims three years on

AFP, Calang

Three years after Indian Ocean nations were lashed by massive tsunamis, sombre ceremonies were held yesterday to recall those lost in one of the worst natural catastrophes in modern times.

In Indonesia, mass prayers were held outdoors and at mosques across Aceh, the staunchly Muslim province at the northern tip of Sumatra island where 168,000 lives were claimed by the earthquake-triggered walls of water.

The toll here was more than half the 220,000 killed in a dozen nations, including Sri Lanka, India and Thailand, with thousands of unidentified victims buried in mass graves hastily dug in the disaster's aftermath.

Wednesday's main ceremony was held outdoors at a village on the outskirts of Calang, one of the areas of Aceh obliterated in the disaster.

"I came here to pray together with other residents. I pray for my wife and my child who died in the tsunami, hoping they are now resting in peace," said Alimuddin, a 61-year-old retired local government official.

Local governor Irwandi Yusuf, a

former rebel fighter, told about 1,000 residents, school children and officials that he hoped "we can learn from the tragedy to improve our piety towards God."

"Let us leave behind all our tears and work together to rebuild Aceh, hoping that one day we can repay our debt to the international community," he said.

The international community pledged more than seven-billion dollars to help reconstruction in Aceh, which is well on track towards completion.

Yusuf, who was detained in a jail that was destroyed by the tsunami, was elected in December last year following a historic peace pact spurned on by the disaster -- one of its few silver linings -- that saw a 29-year separatist conflict end.

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Also in Indonesia, a dramatic drill simulating a tsunami strike was held in Java's coastal province of Banten involving around 9,000 residents, local television reported.

The simulation, designed to test a tsunami warning system gradually being rolled out, saw hundreds of students, along with residents clutching children, rush to higher ground assailed by wailing sirens.

"This country is vulnerable to

tsunami threats. Let us pray to God for this country to be kept safe from tsunamis," President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said after observing the exercise.

Sri Lanka, which suffered 31,000 deaths, marked the anniversary by opening a showpiece bridge in the southern coastal town of Matara, gifted by South Korea.

President Mahinda Rajapakse observed two minutes of silence at 9:25 am, the time when the first giant waves lashed the coastline in a disaster that also displaced a million people on the island.

Sri Lanka's post-tsunami reconstruction work has been dogged by corruption and renewed fighting that has blocked relief to survivors, with less than a fifth of the money pledged properly accounted for, according to watchdogs.

In India, where more than 16,000 people died, thousands of fishing families who survived the avalanche of water gathered on beaches to remember the dead.

Parents who lost children thronged local beaches and fishing hamlets in India's worst-hit Nagapattinam district, where around 6,500 people died in southern Tamil Nadu.

Besides a gang of snatchers swooped on Nagayen when he came out for buying a cigarette from a shop in front of his residence at 4:00am. The muggers took away his cellphone stabbing him.

RANGS BHABAN DEMOLITION RAJUK engr suspended

UNB, Dhaka

A superintending engineer of RAJUK was suspended yesterday for negligence in duty in demolishing the illegal part of Rangs Bhaban.

Md Anwar Hossain,