

# Announce election schedule

Demand AL, CPB

UNB, Dhaka

The Awami League (AL) and Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) yesterday jointly demanded announcement of parliamentary election schedule and asked for holding the polls as per declared roadmap.

Talking to newsmen after their meeting, AL leader Tofail Ahmed and CPB leader Mujahidul Islam Selim said confusions run in people's mind about holding the election in time and announcement of election schedule will remove the confusions.

The bilateral meeting was held at Gulshan residence of acting AL President Zillur Rahman.

The leaders of the two parties also demanded withdrawal of the state of emergency ahead of the parliamentary polls as well as trial of the "fundamentalists and war criminals".

Tofail said the government should not do anything that may delay the electoral process.

Talking to the reporters, CPB General Secretary Selim said they discussed the current political situation of the country and reached consensus on some issues.

AL leaders Amir Hossain Amu, Abdul Razaq, Suranjit Sengupta, Motia Chowdhury, Kazi Zafarullah and Syed Ashraful Islam and CPB leaders Manjurul Ahsan Khan, MM Akash and Shahidullah Chowdhury, among others, were present at the meeting.

# Shamsuddin new envoy to Kenya

UNB, Dhaka

Former secretary AKM Shamsuddin has been appointed Bangladesh High Commissioner to Kenya for a two-year term on contractual basis, said an official announcement yesterday.

# People to decide on state of emergency

Says Australian envoy

UNB, Dhaka

Australian High Commissioner Douglas Foskett yesterday observed that the people of Bangladesh are to determine whether the next elections would be held under state of emergency.

"It's possible to do anything in Bangladesh if people want," he told journalists when asked if he thinks elections could be held under the current state of emergency.

Foskett was speaking to journalists after a meeting with the Election Commission in the morning. Chief Election Commissioner Dr ATM Shamsul Huda and Election Commissioners M Sohel Hussain and Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hussain were present at the meeting.

"You can't have elections until the registration (voter listing) and other processes are done," the Australian envoy said about the political parties' demand for early polls.

Asked if a free and fair election is possible within the year, Foskett said he does not see any reason why there should not be free, fair and transparent elections by this year since the election process is going very well and the EC is very competent.

He hoped that the elections would be held this year and they are looking forward to a successful process towards the polls.

# Bangladesh's support for Palestine unflinching

Iftekhar tells Palestinian foreign minister

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury said Bangladesh's support for the Palestinian cause is unflinching.

"...at this very moment when the people of Gaza are facing ruthless aggression, Bangladesh stands untied behind them in solidarity," he said at a meeting with the Palestinian Foreign Minister Dr Riad Malki on Monday on the sidelines of the Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers, being held in Dakar of Senegal.

Malki apprised the foreign adviser of the current situation in Gaza and the attempts under way to resolve its immediate crises.

Earlier on Monday evening, Iftekhar arrived in the city to represent Bangladesh in the OIC Foreign Ministers' meeting preceding the summit and was received at the airport by the Senegalese Minister of the Office of the President, Prof Serigne Diop.

Later, the foreign adviser attended a reception hosted by the Senegalese Foreign Minister Cheikh Gadio.



Police seized 900 bottles of phensidyl in the Ashraf Road area at Patharghata in Chittagong city yesterday, they also arrested one person in this connection.

# Valuables worth Tk 30 lakh gutted in Ctg fire

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Valuables worth Tk 30 lakh were gutted in a fire at a spinning mill at Sitakunda upazila in the district yesterday.

Sources said the fire broke out at Sun Men Textile Spinning Mill owned by Major (ret'd) Abdul Mannan in Kadam Rasul area under the upazila at around 10:10am.

The blaze soon engulfed some valuable electric equipment and machineries of the semi-pucca mill.

Two fire fighting units from Kumira Fire Station around 11km off the spot rushed to the scene and managed to extinguish the fire after two hours.

Fire Service suspected the fire might have originated from an electrical short circuit while the loss was estimated at Tk 30 lakh.

# No local body elections before national polls

Says Hannan Shah

UNB, Gazipur

BNP chairperson's adviser Brig Gen (Ret'd) ASM Hannan Shah yesterday said if the Election Commission declared schedule of local body elections before parliamentary polls, BNP, in consultation with other political parties, would take a stand against it.

"National elections will have to be held first, then the other elections," he said to journalists when he went to the district court to appear in a case filed against him.

He said that he was very hopeful about the unity of their factious party. But the meeting held at Saifur Rahman's residence last October has to be scrapped.

"Because, it was just a tea party. If some ones are trying to term it a 'meeting, none will believe it," he added.

About the parties who have already declared their participation in the upazila elections, even if held before the national elections, and also supported holding election in time of emergency, Hannan Shah reminded that those who played such a role during the Pakistan rule were called 'collaborators'.

Describing the soaring prices of

essentials as the 'main problem', Hannan Shah said, "The unelected government can't understand the pain of the people and that is the main reason behind the price hike."

He also blamed lack of coordination and proper steps by the government for the problem and said, "No one can run a country bearing the responsibility of failure."



Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Masayuki Inoue and Executive Director of Centre for Disabilities in Development (CDD) AHM Noman Khan shake hands after signing an agreement for 'Construction of Training Complex for Craftsman of Artificial Limbs for Disability' project yesterday.

# \$85,204 Japanese aid for persons with disabilities

Japan will donate \$85,204 to Centre for Disabilities in Development (CDD) for its 'Construction of Training Complex for Craftsman of Artificial Limbs for Disability' project, says a press release.

To this end, Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Masayuki Inoue and Executive Director of CDD AHM Noman Khan signed an agreement yesterday.

Using the grant, CDD, which has been actively working to improve social and economic status of the handicapped, will build a training complex for the craftsmen of artificial limbs for disability in Savar.

Currently there is no training centre for such craftsmen, while 5,000 to 7,000 craftsmen are needed against 7.8 million persons with disabilities.

Through this project, the Japanese government hopes that artificial limbs will be more available in Bangladesh and that the handicapped will have more opportunities to participate in social and economic activities.

The Government of Japan has been extending Grant Assistance for Grass-roots Human Security

Projects through NGOs since 1989 in Bangladesh. A total of 137 projects have already received grants worth \$9.7 million.

# British Muslim media guide launched

UNB, Dhaka

British Council yesterday launched "British Muslim Media Guide (Bengali Version)" which describes Britain's Muslim communities, their history, present and future.

The council, the association of Muslim social scientists and partners jointly published the book aiming to strengthen international understanding of the diverse nature of British society.

Former adviser of the caretaker government and editor of the Daily Independent Mahbul Alam attended the book launching ceremony as the chief guest at the Council's Fuller Road office. Acting Director of the British Council Peter Ashton was also present.

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TRANSCOM ELECTRONICS

Trust Bank Mercantile Bank Limited IT Consultants Ltd. Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited

## Sharing of ATM/POS Network

Trust Bank Ltd., Mercantile Bank Ltd., IT Consultants Ltd., and Dutch-Bangla Bank Ltd. (DBBL) signed an agreement for sharing ATM/POS Network. Mr. Iqbal U., Ahmed, Managing Director of Trust Bank Ltd. (Settlement Bank of Q-Cash), Mr. Dewan Mujibur Rahman, Managing Director of Mercantile Bank Ltd. (sponsoring bank of Q-Cash), Mr. Kazi Saifuddin Munir, Managing Director & CEO of IT Consultants Ltd. (Q-Cash Solution provider), and Mr. Md. Yeasin Ali, Managing Director of Dutch-Bangla Bank Ltd. signed on behalf of their respective organizations. The representatives from member banks of Q-Cash, Mr. S.A. Chowdhury, Managing Director of Sonali Bank Ltd., Mr. Md. Nurul Amin, Managing Director of NCC Bank Ltd., Mr. Helal Ahmed Chowdhury, Managing Director of Pubali Bank Ltd., Mr. Muhammed Ali, Managing Director of Shahjalal Islami Bank Ltd., Mr. Kazi Md. Shafiqur Rahman, Managing Director of Mutual Trust Bank Ltd., Mr. Ali Reza Iftekhar, Managing Director of Eastern Bank Ltd. and Senior executives from different member banks of Q-Cash were also present on the occasion.

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