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Fresh schedules today to break polls deadlock

CEC predicts JS polls on any day from Dec 27 to 29 after talks with AL; upazila goes to early January; EC to recommend lifting of emergency

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission (EC) will announce fresh schedules for the parliamentary and upazila elections today in efforts to break the deadlock over timing of the long-stalled polls.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday said, "It's almost certain now that the national election won't be held on December 18."

In that case, he added, the election might be held either on December 27, 28 or 29.

He was talking to reporters after meeting the Awami League-led grand

alliance at the EC Secretariat in the evening.

The new election dates come when the closing date for filing applications seeking candidacy in both the national and upazila polls expires today.

Sources at the EC Secretariat said the commission would not give in to the growing pressure from the political parties to defer the December 28 upazila polls for at least a month. It would at best put back the polls by 10 to 12 days.

Besides, the polls chief said, the EC will make some recommendations for the caretaker government with regard to repeated calls from BNP- and AL-led electoral combines for withdrawal of the state of emergency.

Sources close to the EC last night told

The Daily Star that the EC might ask the government for lifting of the state of emergency to ensure the election is held in a free atmosphere.

Referring to the talks with AL and allies, Huda said, "We've mainly discussed new dates for the polls and lifting of the state of emergency."

He said, "They [Awami League-led coalition] will take a decision tonight (last night) and inform us about it."

Emerging from the meeting at around 7:15pm, AL acting general secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam, who led the seven-member alliance team, said, "We will give our reaction once the commission takes the decision."

Later, the delegation briefed the grand

AL, allies blast Zillur over talks failure remark

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL)-led grand alliance yesterday blasted Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman for making 'false statement' on why the caretaker government had failed to negotiate a deferment of the general election.

The adviser Wednesday said the government and the

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Hasina talks to leaders denied AL ticket

Assures them of review

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday held talks with some party leaders who were denied nomination and assured them of reviewing their appeals.

Meanwhile, several people

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SC STAY ON RULING OF TAC BEING ILLEGAL Legally Tac can act, morally should not

Observe intellectuals, legal experts

EMRAN HOSSAIN

The moral right of the government to move along the Truth and Accountability Commission (TAC) has great weakened by obtaining stay on a High Court (HC) verdict that declared Tac illegal and unconstitutional, say intellectuals and civil society members.

Legal experts have meanwhile observed that though there is no legal bar for Tac to function now, its activities would not be smooth due to the stayed HC order.

"Although there is no legal bar for the Truth Commission to act, I doubt whether anybody would go to the commission after knowing that it has become a lame horse after the High Court judgment," observed eminent jurist Dr M Zahir.

Though uncertain about the fate of the commission and what is going to happen to the people confessing graft, TAC Chairman Justice Habibur Rahman Khan has however said, "Current functioning of the Truth Commission

is right both legally and morally."

On the other hand, Prof Muzaffer Ahmad, convener of Shujan, a civil society initiative to promote good governance, said, "I've told many times from the very beginning that there can't be two laws for the same offence."

He added Tac even violates the country's constitution.

"The Truth Commission must wind up under the current circumstances. Its functioning is not viable morally at present," said Prof Serajul Islam Choudhury in his reaction to resumption of Tac functioning.

Earlier on November 13, Tac stopped functioning following the HC order but resumed its activities after the Supreme Court stayed the HC order for a month on November 16.

The HC order even didn't come as something new as it was obvious to intellectuals, civil society members and legal experts that Tac was formed ignoring moral and legal restrictions, say eminent citizens and people involved with

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Pedestrians recklessly cross the tracks in front of a running train at Dewanghat in Chittagong. The authorities are often blamed for accidents on railway lines although a large number of the accidents occur because of carelessness on pedestrians' part.

Call to increase regional interconnectivity

Former diplomats urge at roundtable, lament lack of coordination

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former diplomats have suggested that the next elected government formulate a foreign policy prioritising regional connectivity for economic growth, impacts of climate change, international labour market, energy crisis and access of Bangladeshi products to global market.

They regretted that Bangladesh is failing to gain many benefits because of divergent foreign policies of successive governments and a lack of coordination between the foreign ministry and other ministries concerned.

HIGHLIGHTS

Branding Bangladesh

Interconnectivity with India, Myanmar, Nepal, China

Overseas employment for Bangladeshis

Strengthening foreign offices, missions

While formulating the policy, the government should have a broader national consensus and consider the changed world's aspects, especially the economic crisis, they said yesterday at a roundtable.

The ambassadors who

represented Bangladesh in different countries over the past few decades also stressed the need for "re-branding" the country in the international arena by projecting its achievements in microcredit and other social sectors and its multi-ethnicity.

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BNP cannot prepare as demands not met

Says Delwar on polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday said his party's preparation for the upcoming parliamentary election is hindered as the government is yet to meet their demands.

The BNP secretary general welcomed the exchange of pleasantries between BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina at the Armed Forces Day reception on Friday at Senakunja in Dhaka Cantonment.

"We hope that all concerned especially the two

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EDIBLE OIL

Prices shoot up locally; drop 50pc abroad

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

While edible oil prices came down by around 50 percent in the international market in the recent times, prices of both brand and non-brand edible oil witnessed a sharp rise in the local market.

Wholesalers and retailers said the importers in collaboration with a section of businessmen have created an artificial price hike by decreasing the amount of imports, but importers said it is the retailers and wholesalers who increased the oil prices.

AKM Fakhrul Alam, regional manager of Malaysian Palm Oil Council, said the prices of per tonne crude soya bean and palm oil reached to \$1450 and \$1350 in the international markets in July this year, but the prices came down to \$770-780 and \$530 now.

Prices of oil in domestic markets however

went high.

A kilogram (kg) of non-brand soya bean oil was selling for Tk 115-118 in the retail markets yesterday, which had been Tk 98-102 two weeks ago, while the price of palm oil hiked to Tk 80-90, which was Tk 60-70 two weeks back.

A kg of non-brand super palm (best quality) oil was selling at Tk 90-100 yesterday, while it was Tk 65-75 two weeks back.

The prices of some brands of soya bean oil rose by Tk 1.5-Tk 10 per litre in last five days.

The price of a five-litre can of Rupchanda at distributor level was Tk 541.50 yesterday, while it had been Tk 534. The distributor level price of a five-litre can of Teer soya bean oil reached to Tk 569 from Tk 519 five days back.

Our correspondent in Chittagong also reported different brand soybean oil companies also increased the prices of their products

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TIB for EC power to cancel poll candidature

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) thinks that Section 91(e) of the Representation of the People Order (RPO) 2008 empowering the Election Commission (EC) to take measures against the candidates for violating the code of conduct should not be cancelled.

A TIB statement signed by its senior advocacy officer Mohammad Imam Uddin yesterday said that if Section 91(e) of the amended RPO is cancelled, there will not be any official procedure to make the candidates comply with the code of conduct. It will also obstruct the way of empowerment of the Election Commission.

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Talking polls and beyond

Anti-graft drive may lose steam

ACC chief fears about hurdles under elected govt

EMRAN HOSSAIN

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury fears that under an elected government it might not be possible for them to continue the anti-graft drive the way they did in the last two years.

He believes an organisation's independence is 'relative' in a sovereign country, and its effectiveness depends largely on the political will of the government.

Still, his commission would seek to carry on its efforts

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Find details of the interview on page 11



Govt mulls further cut in fuel prices

UNB, Dhaka

The government will further reduce the petroleum prices if downturn in prices continues on the international market.

Chief Adviser's Special Assistant for power and energy ministry M Tamim said this after inauguration of country's first international exhibition of CNG filling equipment at Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city yesterday.

He said the government is considering the matter as part of its policy to review the oil prices every three months.

As per the policy, if it is found that the prices on the international market go up or down, the government will follow the trends in readjusting

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সফলতা ও অগ্রগতির ৫০ বর্ষ পদার্পণে

পূবালী ব্যাংকে যোগ হলো আরো একটি মাইল ফলক....

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