

CG to hand over power to elected govt in new year

CA tells EU election observers

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday reiterated that his government would hand over power to the next elected government in the coming new year.

He told this to the visiting Chief of the European Union Election Observer Mission to Bangladesh Alexander Graf Lambsdorff when the latter made a courtesy call on him at Chief Adviser's office.

Fakhruddin said his caretaker government (CG) was determined to hold a free, fair and acceptable election next week in a peaceful and credible manner.

"And the election is going to be held on December 29," he asserted, apparently dispelling reported doubts about scheduled holding of the JS polls.

In this connection, the CA referred to various efforts taken in the nearly past two years by his government and the Election Commission. Among them are the institutional reforms, political dialogue with all stakeholders, new voter list with photographs, amending electoral rules and regulations and the election code of conduct.

He particularly informed the EU delegation of his government's step on complete withdrawal of State of Emergency from December 17 last.

All these, he said were done to promote democratic and transparent environment in the country so that the people can elect a government of their choice.

Fakhruddin thanked the EU for their support to the government and said his government welcomed election observers from both home and abroad.

The EU Chief Election Observer, who is also member of the European parliament, said they will monitor the coming election maintaining neutrality.

Alexander, who already visited some parts of the country, congratulated the CG and the Election Commission for taking all the preparations for holding the coming parliamentary elections and the upazila elections. All these were "hard and challenging" tasks for the CG, he said.

CA's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim, who was present during the meeting, later briefed newsmen about the deliberations.



Peshajibi Shamannay Parishad Convener Barrister Shafique Ahmed speaks at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 3)

CONFCE ON ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING BEGINS

Give new ideas to solve power crisis

Justice Mustafa Kamal urges researchers

DU CORRESPONDENT

A three-day 5th International Conference on Electrical and Computer Engineering (ICECE) 2008 began in the city yesterday.

Jointly organised by the department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering (EEE) of BUET and Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE), the conference aims at contributing to the advancement of electrical engineering by facilitating exchange of latest ideas and researches.

Former chief justice (CJ) Mustafa Kamal inaugurated the conference as the chief guest at a city hotel where BUET Vice Chancellor Prof AMM Sahullah was present as the special guest.

Addressing the programme, he called on the young researchers to give new ideas that will solve the power crisis and to innovate something that will minimise the gap of present facilities between the developed and developing countries.

Justice Mustafa Kamal hoped that young researchers will find new ideas to work through presentation of papers and discussions which will help build a bridge between the countries.

He said electrical energy plays a very significant role in modern society. In developed countries, almost every facet of the daily life depends on electrical energy.

Mahbub returns to Jatiya Party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former minister and BNP lawmaker advocate Mahbubur Rahman returned to Jatiya Party (JP) again by presenting a bouquet to its chief HM Ershad in the city yesterday.

Ershad said JP, which was once a major political party, is gaining popularity again, as the countrymen now believe only JP can put an end to the present political crisis and can control the price hike of essentials.

Mahbub said he had earlier joined BNP from JP but came back to the JP as BNP has diverted from the spirit of nationalism.

Ershad nominated him to contest the general election from Noakhali-1 constituency.

Dhaka again made member of UN Peace Commission

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh has been selected as a member of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, an intergovernmental advisory body of the UN that supports peace efforts in countries emerging from conflict, for the second time.

The two-year term will be effective from January 1, 2009, an official handouts said.

Bangladesh had been selected as the founding member of the commission in 2005 for a two-year term as it continued to send the highest number of troops and policemen to the UN peacekeeping mission.

Selim re-elected Gulshan Club president

METRO DESK

Engineer Faizul Islam Selim was re-elected president of Gulshan Club for 2008-2009 at the club's annual general meeting on the club premises on December 19, says a press release.

Executive committee members are Sabera Ahmed (Koli), Naveed Alam, Riaz ur Rahman, Nahar Abed, Naseem Ali Khan, Alam Mahbubul, Md Abdur Rauf, AKM Iftekhar Hossain, Mohammad Shahed Masud and Engr Shafiqul H Syed.



Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

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

Moderate to thick fog may occur over the northern, western and central parts and the river basins and light to moderate fog elsewhere over the country during mid night till morning.

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

Highest temperature 29.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Teknaf and lowest 13.7 degrees Celsius at Rangpur.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:16pm today and rises at 6:37am tomorrow.

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
Dhaka	20.0	15.5
Chittagong	25.7	17.8
Rajshahi	20.4	15.2
Khulna	23.5	14.5
Barisal	22.0	16.0
Sylhet	27.7	16.5
Cox's Bazar	28.5	18.2

Mawa ferry service suspended for dense fog

UNB, Munshiganj

Ferry services on Mawa-Kawrakandi route in the Padma River remained suspended since early Friday due to dense fog.

BIWTC sources said three ferries with a large number of vehicles and over 2,000 passengers got stranded in the mid-river while four ferries at Mawa side and three ferries at Kawrakandi side.

The ferries could not operate until 9:15am yesterday.

A huge traffic jam was created on both sides of the route, causing untold sufferings to the passengers.

AGM of BIWTC, working in Mawa, said the ferries could not be operated due to poor visibility caused by dense fog.

Besides, 10 river vessels also remained stuck in the mid-rivers of Dhaleshwari, Meghna and Padma.

Army chief visits injured ETV journalists

UNB, Dhaka

Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed yesterday visited Combined Military Hospital to see the injured journalist and cameraman of private television channel ETV.

The two were shifted to the CMH from Bogra Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital on Friday evening.

The army chief spent there for some time and inquired about the treatment of ETV's Special correspondent Rashed Ahmed and cameraman Asaduzzaman Asad.

He also asked the physicians concerned to take necessary steps about their proper treatment.

Three crew members of ETV, including Rashed and Asaduzzaman, were injured seriously as a bus hit their microbus accompanying former prime minister Khaleda Zia's motorcade at Bhuiyangati in Sirajganj on Wednesday.

Cadet College Club executives

METRO DESK

Shafiqur Rahman Munna and M Musleh Uz Zaman were elected president and secretary general of Cadet College Club Limited for 2009 at its 6th annual general meeting (AGM) on December 15, says a press release.

Other office-bearers are: Vice President: Md Anwar Shahid, Joint Secretary General: TM Shahidul Islam, Treasurer: Md Ataulah.

Members are Lutful Hossain (FCC), Lt Col Shaikh Abidur Rahman (ICC), Enayet Kabir (MCC), Wg Cdr Muhammad Alamgir (RCC), Md Rezaul Haque Razu (SCC), Shaikh Ehsanul Habib (CCR), Md Hasibur Rahman Shaheen (BCC), Abul Hasem Sarker (PCC), Johra Akhter Bente Habib (MGCC), Dr Ehsanur Rahman (CCC) and Sayed Rafiqul Haq (WCCC).



Book launching

A book titled 'Tathayapanji: Nirbachani Reporting' will be launched. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 3:30pm.

View exchange meet

Campaign for Popular Education organises a view exchange meeting on open education for disadvantaged children. Venue: LGED Building. Time: 11:30am.



(Left) BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia introduces four-party alliance candidates Hasan Uddin Sarkar (Gazipur-2), Tanbir Ahmed Siddiqui (Gazipur-1) and Prof MA Mannan (Gazipur-3) at an election rally on the Gazipur Konabari High School premises yesterday. (Right) Awami League President Sheikh Hasina holds a floral boat with grand alliance candidate Rashed Khan Menon at an election rally at Motijheel AGB colony in the city yesterday.

Forge national unity to resist corruption, criminalisation

Says Dr Kamal

DU CORRESPONDENT

Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday called on secular and democratic political parties, social forces and professionals to forge a national unity to resist politics of corruption and criminalisation and to achieve economic prosperity.

He also called on the voters to use their votes in the upcoming parliamentary elections as a weapon against terrorism and black money holders.

"It is high time to reject those who want to manipulate the elections, to buy votes and to deprive the people of their right to vote... We must not allow such an opportunity to slip through our fingers," Dr Kamal said in his address aired by state-run Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Bazar.

The eminent jurist called on all to get rid of the politics of conspiracy, violence and destruction and to begin a new journey towards establishing the politics of development based on the spirit of the Liberation War.

He also called for ensuring education of international standard, optimum use of natural resources, rule of law, competent and accountable administration, decentralisation of administration, stronger local government and autonomy of BT and Betar.

Dr Kamal also called for steps to ensure rural development and food security.

To empower women, he called for direct election of women to the reserved seats in parliament.

He also demanded steps to ensure equal rights of minority community, indigenous people and Dalits.

"Many developing countries in the region have achieved remarkable progress, but we are lagging behind due to unhealthy politics. We have to get rid of this situation," Dr Kamal said and called for united movement to promote healthy politics.

He also sought votes for Gono Forum candidates. "Our electoral symbol is 'Rising sun'. We want to bring a new light to the country."

First laparoscopic bariatric surgery in country

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Medical experts successfully performed laparoscopic bariatric surgery on a woman - the first such operation in the country - at Birdem Hospital yesterday.

This metabolic surgery helps reduce obesity and control diabetes and hypertension. During the surgery, the size of the stomach is made smaller so that the person with obesity cannot eat much, thereby losing weight gradually, the experts said.

A housewife with body weight of 112 kg underwent the operation. She has also been suffering from diabetes for the last two years.

Dr SM Abu Zafar performed the surgery, assisted by Dr Shashank Shah from Pune, India, Prof AKM Nurnabi Chowdhury, Dr Mazharul Hoque Khan, Dr Azharul Islam, Dr Ezharul Islam, Dr Tapash Kumar Maitra, Dr Samir Kumar Mondol and Dr Noor Aalam.

"The procedure of this surgery is very simple and it is possible to perform such surgery in any hospital of the country if there is a specialist in bariatric surgery," Dr Abu Zafar said.

Such operation costs around Rs 3 to 5 lakh in India, the experts said.

The operation was shown on closed-circuit television to reporters following a workshop on Laparoscopic Bariatric Surgery at Birdem auditorium, organised by the department of surgery and department of endocrinology of Birdem and the Society of Laparoscopic Surgery.

Prof AK Azad Khan was present as the chief guest. Prof Maj Gen (ret'd) Ziauddin Ahmed, Prof Maj Gen (ret'd) AR Khan, Prof ANM Ziaur Rahman, Prof Hajera Mahtab, Prof Nazmun Nahar and Prof Mirza Mazharul Islam were also present.



Members of Shaheed Kamal Smriti Sangsad conduct a campaign on a truck in different areas of the city yesterday with a call to reject war criminals in the upcoming parliamentary election.

Chevron to launch seismic survey in Block 7 in Jan

UNB, Dhaka

Chevron would conduct the seismic survey and then drill an exploratory well in the block area by 2011.

He said further development work in the field like exploration of hydrocarbon would depend on the findings of the seismic survey.

Chevron has already relinquished 25 percent of the exploration acreage of the Block 7 to Petrobangla in accordance with the PSC, he said.

He said the seismic survey would cover both onshore and offshore areas even up to 20km of the Bay of Bengal.

The seismic survey would delineate features of interest that were identified by a regional seismic programme acquired in 2006.

The project will consist of 450km of two-dimensional seismic data acquisition fulfilling one of the work programme commitments by Chevron to the Bangladesh government.

Chevron Bangladesh has 90 per cent stake as the operator, while the state-owned Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Ltd (Bapex) owns the remaining 10 per cent in block seven.

Chevron will undertake all exploration risks under the PSC, while the Bapex would be responsible for its share of costs only after commercial discovery of gas and initiation of the output.

Regarding the seismic survey the Chevron Bangladesh President Steve Wilson had said, "Seismic programme in Block 7 aims to identify new reserves in order to increase the energy supply to Petrobangla."

He said Chevron is committed to continuing effort to expand its exploration programme to ensure future energy security of the country.

"We look forward to working closely with Petrobangla and Bapex with a view to developing the energy sector safely and in an environmentally responsible manner."

Chevron is currently producing about 40 percent of the country's total gas consumption of 1800 million cubic feet per day from its three fields - Jalalabad, Moulavi Bazar and Bibiyana.

CAMPAIGN FOR 'NO VOTE' 4 UPDF men abducted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Four members of United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF) were abducted yesterday by a gang of unidentified criminals in Rangamati town.

The abductees were identified as Arjun Moni Chakma, Debashis Chakma, Kina Dhan Chakma and Jagadish Chakma.

Sources said the kidnapped UPDF activists went to the town in the morning for an electoral campaign with posters and leaflets. At one stage, some unknown armed men abducted them at gunpoint.

Shantideb Chakma, leader of UPDF Rangamati unit, blamed Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) for the incident.

He said in a pre-planned way, the PCJSS armed cadres kidnapped their members to hamper electoral campaign, adding that PCJSS is trying to gag the democratic right.

UPDF has been conducting an campaign in the district in favour of casting 'no vote'.

LIBERATION WAR Book on Ctg port staffs published

CU CORRESPONDENT

The publication ceremony of a book titled 'Muktijuddha O Chattagram Bandar' (Liberation War and Chittagong Port), which highlights contribution of the employees and officials of Chittagong Port during Liberation War, was held at Bandar Bhaban in Chittagong yesterday.

Chairman of the port Commodore RU Ahmed unveiled the cover of the book as the chief guest.

Freedom fighter Abul Hashem, who is now a rickshaw puller, was the special guest at the ceremony chaired by the member (engineer) of the port Captain Zobaer Ahmed.

Later, Abul Hashem unveiled a memorial inscribed with names of 100 martyred employees and officials of the port on the Bandar Bhaban premises.

Transshipment activities at Benapole closed today

A CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Transshipment activities of Benapole land port will remain closed today as its 71 officials and staffs would participate in the election training.

Worries widened among businessmen soon after the closure notice. They said Benapole port would be inactive if the port is closed along with two days' regular government holiday.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sheikh Akram Hossain, one of the organisers of the Liberation War, and maternal uncle of Awami League President Sheikh Hasina, passed away at Comfort Hospital in the city on Friday night at the age of 66.

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

His body was taken to Sudha Sadan at Dhanmondi where Sheikh Hasina and her sister Sheikh Rehana along with other family members offered munajat seeking peace for his departed soul.

He was buried at his family graveyard in Tungipara.

Sheikh Hasina, Sheikh Rehana and AL Joint Secretary Sayeed Ashrafur Islam consoled the death.