

Electoral voting machines on the cards

Says Sahul Hossain

BSS, Barisal

The Election Commission (EC) is considering introducing electoral voting machines in future to make the polls efficient, speedy and fair.

Election Commissioner Sahul Hossain said this yesterday while addressing the inaugural function of a workshop on development of the electoral process at Barisal Club in the city.

Presided over by Barisal Divisional Commissioner Md Nurunnabi Talukder, the function was also addressed by Deputy Election Commissioner Md Monirul Islam, Deputy Commissioner of Barisal district Mashur Rahman, UNDP Project Manager Abdul Alim and Additional Secretary of the EC Md Rafiqul Islam.

Sahul said the electoral voting machines are being used in the developed world and have been proved as an effective tool to make any polls neutral, fair and speedy.

He said the EC is conducting research work and taking suggestions and advice from all to make the future polls cent percent free and fair, he said.

The EC is ready to ratify any act to ensure the free and fair election, Sahul said urging all to extend cooperation to the EC for holding the free fair polls in the country.

"The EC cannot make any election free, fair and peaceful without the support and help of you," he said, noting that members of the media and the law enforcement agencies have played the vital role in making the national elections free, fair last year.

The UNDP organised the day-long workshop titled 'Support to electoral process in Bangladesh'.

All deputy commissioners of the Barisal division, and representatives from Barisal Lawyers' Association, different election monitoring teams, the media and NGOs took part in the workshop.

Housing ministry asked not to approve illegal projects

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Housing and Public Works Abdul Mannan Khan directed the heads of different departments under the ministry, including Rajuk, not to give permission to the projects being implemented violating rules.

He said the image of housing sector cannot be destroyed for a number of criminals.

Mannan said this at a meeting of Urban Development Committee of Rajuk at the conference room of the ministry yesterday.

"None will be able to do their work giving threats," he said, adding: "We have to give priority to the people of the

society where we live in." Mubasshar Hussein, president of Institute of Architects Bangladesh, thanked the minister for his brave role in bringing transparency as well as development in the sector.

Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (Rehab) President Tanvirul Haque Probal supported the thanksgiving proposal to the minister at the beginning of the meeting.

Housing Secretary Mahbubur Rahman, Rajuk Chairman Nurul Huda, Chief Architect of the Department of Architect ASM Ismail, Prof AQM Mahbub of Dhaka University and Prof Habibur Rahman of Buet attended the meeting.



Passengers remain stuck in a massive traffic congestion, as a group of students of Shaheed Suhrawardy College stage a demonstration in front of the National Press Club in the city yesterday, blocking the road at about 2:00pm. The students demanded punishment to the persons responsible for the attack on a student union leader.

Arrest warrant for Westmont chairman again

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday again issued an arrest warrant against Tajul Islam Farook, chairman of Westmont Power Company, in connection with a cheating case.

Metropolitan Magistrate Abdullah Al-Manum passed the order after the police submitted a report saying that they failed to arrest Farook, who had earlier hit the headlines by filing a Tk 3 crore extortion case against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

On June 4 last year, the same court had issued an arrest warrant against Farook.

Ali Akkas Nurani, a consultant of the company, filed the case against him on charges of misappropriating one million US dollars instead of paying the amount to Nurani in consultancy fee.

In his complaint, Nurani mentioned that he had been working as a consultant of Westmont Power Company since 1998. He had an important role in making a formal contract between the Bangladesh government and Westmont Power Company Bangladesh Limited for setting up large-mounted power plants at different places in the country.

Nurani added that the accused later misguided the company and misappropriated one million US dollars. The accused had also threatened to kill the complainant when he demanded his consultancy fee.

On April 9 in 2007, Tajul Islam had filed an extortion case with Tejgaon Police Station against Hasina, but later he appealed to the caretaker government to withdraw the case.

GRAFT CASE Court decision on charge sheet against AL MP today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court will give its decision today whether the charges of amassing illegal wealth worth Tk 55.4 lakh against Awami League lawmaker Atiur Rahman Atiq would be taken into cognisance for trial.

Judge ANM Bashir Ullah of the Senior Special Judge's Court yesterday set the date after receiving the charge sheet submitted by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) on December 15 last year.

ACC Assistant Director Dewan Shafiqul Hossain, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet against the lawmaker to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka and showed 23 people as prosecution witnesses.

This was the first time the ACC pressed charges against an AL lawmaker since this government took over. The IO also appealed to the court for issuance of arrest warrant against the lawmaker from Sherpur-1 and an order to attach his properties, as he has been shown absconding in the case.

On May 27 in 2008, ACC Assistant Director Shamsul Islam filed the case against Atiq with the Ramna Police Station.

Dutch help in river dredging, water management sought

UNB, Dhaka

The government yesterday requested the Netherlands to provide technical and financial assistance for water management and river dredging as most of the rivers have silted up and some of them already dead.

"We request the Netherlands to extend their cooperation in this regard," said Abdul Razzak MP, chairman of the standing committee on the Ministry of Water Resources, while addressing the inaugural session of a seminar on 'Dredging Seminar' at Sheraton Hotel as the chief guest.

IHC Merwede, a leading dredger-building company, organised the seminar where Ambassador of the Netherlands Alphons Hennekens was the special guest. Many dredging experts, consultants, and representatives of local banks, shipyards and local media were present at the meet.

Razzak, also former water

resources minister, said the present government headed by Sheikh Hasina has already chalked out a plan of capital dredging for the country's all big and small rivers to remove the sediments carried down by the rivers from upstream.

"The prime minister is very interested in this regard and she has already given directives for working out how it can proceed," he told the function.

Describing water management as a very important issue as Bangladesh is the largest delta in the world, he said dredging the rivers is an imperative for facilitating the flow of river water with a view to protecting people, agriculture and ecology from salinity.

For lack of water flow, silts are gradually deposited in the rivers, saline water intrusion is increasing, damaging agriculture and causing climate change, he said. So, it's essential to immediately remove silts from the

riverbeds for socioeconomic development. "There are some 230 rivers, 57 of them trans-boundary, flowing over the country."

The Dutch envoy, Alphons Hennekens, said Bangladesh is at the heart of the largest deltas of the world and the delta has been created by deposition of billions of tons of sediment carried by the three major rivers - the Padma, the Jamuna and the Meghna. "Each year the major rivers of Bangladesh carry over billion tons of sediment and this sediment load is increasing," he said.

He said the government of Bangladesh has given priority to the water sector and aims to improve the flow and navigation of the river system. "Dredging will be a key instrument to achieve this," he told the meeting, adding that there is no life without water and water management is therefore essential to safeguard the livelihoods and enable economic develop-

ment. Saying that water management issues connect two countries -- the Netherlands and Bangladesh -- the envoy mentioned that the Netherlands lies at the heart of an important delta and, moreover, around 35 percent of the country lies below sea level. So the existence of his country depends on 24-hour water management.

Emphasising bilateral cooperation, Alphons Hennekens said the Netherlands supports Bangladesh for strengthening its institutions and stimulating capacity building to facilitate the formation of a coherent water management policy.

"We provide technical and financial assistance for coastal zone water management which includes land reclamation," he said, adding that the important part of their future support would be to assist the water sector in Bangladesh to develop a climate change adaptation programme.

Annular solar eclipse tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

The annular solar eclipse will occur tomorrow and it will be visible in Bangladesh if the sky remains clear.

The eclipse will start at 10:05:24am and end at 16:07:36pm.

The central eclipse will start at 11:17:36am and it will end at 14:55:24pm.

The greatest eclipse will occur at 13:06:30pm. The magnitude of the greatest eclipse will be 0.920 and its duration will be 00:11:04.

The annular eclipse will be visible at St Martin's island only and the duration of the annular phase at this place will be 00:08:46.

A partial solar eclipse will be visible in the rest of Bangladesh and the duration of the greatest eclipse will be five to seven minutes in these places, an ISPR release said yesterday.



Fourth-class employees of Dhaka Medical College Hospital stage a demonstration yesterday protesting alleged irregularities in the staff recruitment process.

DMCH boss confined to his room for 2 hrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 200 fourth-class employees of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday confined its director to his room for two hours protesting alleged irregularities in the staff recruitment process.

They also beat up an office assistant and three MLSS of the director.

Sources said the agitating DMCH employees also attempted to vandalise the director's room during the demonstration that began at around 1:30pm.

A team of Shahbagh police brought the situation under control at around 3:30pm.

Abdul Khalek, president of the fourth class employees' union, told The Daily Star that they had been demanding the authorities appoint the family members of the hospital staffs,

who had died or gone into retirement, to 101 posts.

A few days ago, they said that even 51 posts would do.

However, yesterday morning they came to know that no one from the families of the hospital staffs, who had died or gone into retirement, had been appointed, which led to the demonstration.

DMCH Director Brig Gen Bazle Quader told the agitating staff that he is trying to create 80 more posts. If he succeeds, he will give the agitators the 51 posts they had been demanding and if he fails, he would cancel the total recruitment process of the 171 people.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) Rezaul Karim of Shahbagh Police Station said additional police had been deployed in DMCH compound to avert further untoward situation.

TEACHERS' APPOINTMENT Govt warns against cheating

UNB, Dhaka

As allegations of swindling are rife, the authorities asked the applicants for primary headmaster and assistant teacher posts not to be cheated by giving money to anyone to get job.

An official note of warning yesterday said there are allegations that a "corrupt vested quarter" is making money from the innocent job seekers on false promise of giving them jobs.

The teacher employment process is fully transparent and there is no scope for nepotism or corruption as well as influencing or interfering into it," it said.

The release said the results of the written test will be published after examining the answer sheets through optical mark

reader system. Later, a merit list will be made with the successful candidates after taking viva voce exam.

"And then headmasters and assistant teachers will be appointed against the vacant posts following relevant rules and regulations."

The authorities also urged the persons concerned to inform the director general of Primary Education Department or the secretary of the Primary and Mass Education Ministry either in writing or on phone - 8057877 and 7162484 or fax - 8016499 and 7168871 respectively if anyone demands money from them in the name of giving jobs.

"Stern actions will be taken against the persons responsible after investigating the allegations," the government release said.

AL men create reign of terror in Patuakhali: BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling AL men continue to attack and threaten the people, especially the BNP leaders and activists, creating a reign of terror in Patuakhali district, BNP leaders said yesterday.

"Awami League cadres have broken hands and legs of BNP men, stabbed them, cut veins of legs and even gouged out their eyes in different upazilas under Patuakhali district," BNP leader and former minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury said at a press conference at the National Press Club in the city.

But the law enforcement

agencies and the administration has remained inactive, he said, adding that the AL men with support from the police are harassing the BNP men by filing false cases one after one.

He also said that the government-backed cadres have been trying to erase the name of BNP from the district.

Criticising the government for nurturing terrorism, Altaf Hossain said the ruling party men are involved in extortion, tender manipulation and in occupying markets, bus and launch terminals in Patuakhali.

He also urged the government to take punitive

action against the AL men who are involved in torturing and attacking the local BNP leaders and to take steps to create a congenial atmosphere.

He also called for an end to harassment of BNP men by the ruling party men in order to uphold democratic practice.

BNP standing committee member Brig (ret'd) Hannan Shah, student affairs secretary Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Anny, vice-chariman Selima Rahman, and former state minister for law Shahjahan Omar were present at the press conference organised by Patuakhali BNP.