

DCC polls in limbo

May 31 elections to be delayed by at least 5 months amid govt reluctance; EC vows to hold CCC polls in June

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission yesterday deferred polls to Dhaka City Corporation by at least five months, as the government refused to have the elections on May 31.

Completing all preparations, the EC on April 8 informed the LGRD ministry about its decision to hold the DCC polls on May 31, around three years after expiry of the current DCC's tenure, EC officials said.

The government high-ups yesterday informed the EC that they want to redraw the boundaries of the wards under the DCC before the polls and it asked the commission to delay the polls until winter.

"I talked to the top level of the government over telephone today. They do not want the polls now as they want redrawing of the boundaries of DCC wards," Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda told reporters yesterday afternoon.

"It is a very complicated task [redrawing the boundaries]. Even if it is started now, it will not be possible to hold the DCC elections before October," the poll chief said.

Asked whether the EC got any letter about delaying the elections, the CEC said he had heard that the LGRD ministry sent a letter to this effect but he did not receive it yesterday afternoon.

The LGRD ministry is legally empowered to redraw the boundaries of the DCC wards and all other local government bodies. In line with the law, the LGRD ministry also increased the number of wards of the DCC to 92 from 90. But it did not resolve the inequality of the population in the wards and the LGRD ministry now wants to do the job, EC officials said.

In fact, the policymakers and ruling Awami League leaders believe the ongoing crises of power, water and gas and high prices of essentials might go against ruling party-backed mayoral candidate in the DCC elections.

They favoured holding the polls in winter believing the power situation would improve and prices of essentials would go down then.

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The Ektara in the hand of a child seems to play a note on the arrival of Baishakh, the first month in Bangla calendar, linking up the younger mind to the age-old tradition. The photo was taken in Dhaka University area on Wednesday during Bangla New Year celebration.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

No elections if EC not satisfied

CEC reacts sharply as clashes mark Bhola campaigns; BNP threatens to boycott if army not deployed

STAR REPORT

The Election Commission has expressed its tough stance on the by-poll in Bhola-3 constituency, even warned of cancelling election results, as activists of Awami League and BNP clashed there yesterday centring poll campaigns.

Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday asked the electoral enquiry committee to investigate the incident, which left 15 persons including a former lawmaker injured.

"We will have no choice but to cancel the election result if the poll does not satisfy us," he told reporters. "I hope we will get the enquiry committee's report today."

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret) Shakhawat Hossain told The Daily Star, "We will have to think of stopping the election if law and order deteriorates further."

The EC yesterday also asked the police authorities to withdraw at least nine sub-inspectors from the constituency. Two platoons Rab members will be deployed in the area today

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CHT REGIONAL COUNCIL HC order stayed for 6 weeks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday stayed for six weeks a High Court (HC) verdict that declared the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Regional Council illegal and unconstitutional.

Chamber Judge of the Appellate Division Justice Md Muzammel Hossain passed the order upon a stay petition filed by the government against the HC verdict.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told the court the HC order would hamper the peace process in the region.

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5 die as storms sweep 6 dists

Thousands of houses destroyed

STAR REPORT

At least five people, including a woman, were killed and around two hundred injured in powerful tropical storms that lashed various northern districts for last three days.

Several thousand dwelling houses and crops on vast tracts of land were destroyed and innumerable trees uprooted in Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Dinajpur, Bogra and Sirajganj as the storms swept through.

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TOXIC SHIPS Make import even tougher

JS body wants cleaning certificate from vessel's country of registration

PINAKI ROY and RASHIDUL HASAN

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on environment and forest ministry asked the government not to allow any scrap vessels in the country without cleaning certificate from the government of the exporting country.

If anybody imports any ships without the cleaning certificate from the government of the specific country, the standing committee recommended filing case against the importer under Environment Conservation Act, 1995.

The committee said this at a press briefing following a meeting held yesterday as the commerce ministry recently changed its Import Policy Order 2009-2012 ignoring a High Court directives on the toxic ship issue.

The new Import Policy Order says the government would allow any unclean ships if the exporter himself issue a certificate saying, "the scrap ship is not carrying toxic goods other than inbuilt toxic materials".

The standing committee said, it takes thousands of dollar to clean a toxic ships carrying inbuilt hazardous materials like asbestos and PCB. These chemicals may cause cancer if anyone

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Nababarsha celebrated

Some youths go wild at TSC after sunset

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sending the setbacks of the preceding year to oblivion, the nation on Wednesday welcomed Pahela Baishakh, the first day of the Bangla year 1417, amid colourful festivity.

In the capital, however, a few incidents of harassment of women on Dhaka University campus in the late afternoon tainted the celebration.

People attired in traditional dresses, thronged Baishakhi Melas (fairs) -- showcasing various handicrafts and artefacts-- in the capital and elsewhere in the country.

Colourful rallies, music programmes, fairs and pitha (traditional Bangladeshi cakes) festivals added colour to the biggest carnival of the Bangalees.

The day was a public holiday. The Bangla year with its first month Baishakh was

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6 RMG units damaged

30 hurt, highway barricaded as workers run amok over pay hike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Production of all six garment factories of Nasa Group in the city's outskirts Nishchintapur of Ashulia were suspended yesterday following workers' unrest.

The agitating workers went on rampage at the factories, attacked officials and clashed with police that left about 30 people injured.

Meanwhile, Indian investor-owned factory Pearl Garments Company Ltd was also shut down for an indefinite period following an apprehension of attack by its workers.

The six factories are Nasa Basic Ltd, Nasa Global Ltd, Nasa Hi-tech, Nasa AG Super Garments, Nasa Wash Ltd and Nasa Packaging Ltd.

Locals said around 8,000 workers of Nasa Group went into a violent action at the six garment factories around 9:30 am when the factory authorities refused to meet their 10-point demand, including pay hikes and removal of its six officials. They damaged window panes, glasses and furniture of the factories.

As some officials and security guards tried to resist the agitation, the workers attacked its seven officials, including Nasa Group assistant director (production) Fazlul Huq, production manager Ziaul Huq, chief accountant Dipak Mandal and manager Sumit Barua.

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China quake toll rises to over 600

AFP, Beijing

A total of 617 people have been confirmed killed and over 9,000 injured when the quake measuring at least 6.9 struck in the Yushu prefecture on Wednesday, the deadliest in China in almost two years.

The death toll was expected to rise further, with more than 300 still buried in the ruins,

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QULKHANI



The Qulkhani of Roushanara Sobhan wife of renowned lawyer Ahmad Sobhan, will be held today [Friday] at 05:00 PM at her former residence in Dhanmondi. Relatives and Friends are requested to attend the Qulkhani.

Roushanara Sobhan was an eminent educationist who did her Masters in Bengali from Dhaka University and Diploma in Education from the American University of Beirut, in 1956.

Barrister Masood R. Sobhan Barrister Fatema S. Chowdhury
 Sajjad R. Sobhan M.A. [CANTAB] Shabnam Sobhan of Scholastica
 Dr. Tahmina Sobhan Dr. Lutfur Rahman
 And Tashfina & Tanisha



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