

Ashraf for partisan local govt elections

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Local government elections should be held politically where candidates would compete under the respective political parties' banners, LGRD Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam said yesterday.

"They should also have an election manifesto," he said, adding that this would allow grassroots-level leaders to enter national politics through their participation in community development work.

As per the existing local government laws, Union Parishad, Pourashava, Upazila and City Corporation elections should be held under non-political banners.

The Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda, however, has recently said the existing laws need to be changed to allow holding of

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Law enforcers lob tear shells to disperse the agitating garment workers at Jamgora, Ashulia yesterday. Owners of at least 350 factories in Savar, Ashulia and Fatullah areas suspended production yesterday as the workers demonstrated against the new wage structure for the second consecutive day.

PHOTO: STAR

Violence stops RMG hubs

Production suspended for a day in 350 factories; 150 business establishments vandalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 350 garment factories in Savar, Ashulia and Fatulla suspended production yesterday after RMG workers clashed with police injuring over 100 people.

The angry labourers damaged nearly 150 business establishments and vandalised more than 50 vehicles.

The factories called off production after the workers demonstrated against the new wage structure for the second consecutive day demanding a minimum wage of Tk 5,000. Three other factories in Ashulia were shut down indefinitely.

Witnesses said the labourers put barricades on the main roads in Savar, Ashulia and Fatullah bringing vehicular movement to a halt for several hours.

Police fired more than 100 rubber bullets and lobbed over 30 teargas canisters.



ters. They also used water cannons and charged baton on the agitating workers to disperse them.

Tension prevailed in the areas prompting the authorities to deploy Rab and police personnel there.

Several hundred workers attacked Irish Fashion at Kathgora in Ashulia shortly after 8:30am and put barricades

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Workers agree on new wage

Sit with govt and owners, pledge an end to violence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The workers' representatives yesterday agreed to the new pay structure for garment sector and pledged cooperation to ensure normal work environment in industrial areas.

They made the commitments at a meeting with ministers, lawmakers, chamber leaders and garment owners at the BGMEA office in the capital.

Labour representative Amirul Haque Amin said the workers had agreed to the new wage structure and to resume work today.

"We have no disagreements about the new wage structure. We denounce violence in garment factories," he said.

Amin urged factory owners to reconsider the pay of the workers under grade-VandVI.

Labour and Employment Minister Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, who attended the meeting, formed three committees with representatives from

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ANNUAL FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS

18 parties miss report deadline

AL seeks one-month time

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The ruling Awami League and 17 other political parties did not submit annual financial statements to the Election Commission, in breach of the law on registration of political parties.

The seven-month deadline for submitting the statements expired yesterday. Of 38 parties registered with the EC, only 20 including BNP, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami have turned in their financial reports of the calendar year 2009.

AL, meantime, has sought one month's time. In a letter to the EC yesterday, it said it could not submit the report in time as audit of its accounts was still on.

AL Deputy Publicity Secretary Mrinal Kanti Das submitted the letter signed by AL General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam.

Six other parties have also applied for extension by a month or two, while the remaining 11 did not even contact the com-

mission, said officials at the EC Secretariat.

Workers Party of Bangladesh, Liberal Democratic Party and Bangladesh Jatiya Party—all three have representation in the ninth parliament—are among the parties who have failed to submit reports.

Asked about the political parties' plea for time extension, Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday said there is no scope to do so, as the time limit is specified in the law.

"Not submitting reports in time is a minor irregularity. But political parties will have to be brought under a system gradually," the polls chief observed.

Queried what action would be taken against the defaulters, Election Commissioner Muhammed Sohul Hussein said the EC might issue notice asking them to explain why they failed to submit financial transaction reports.

"Even party registration might be

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Global wheat shortfall affects Bangladesh

Traders expect quick procurement decision

INAM AHMED

The world wheat market is withering under a drought, and Bangladesh is starting to feel the heat.

Unseasonably hot weather has shrunk production in key wheat-producing countries such as Russia and Kazakhstan. Canada, one of the world's top wheat exporters, reports the lowest amount of cultivated acreage for the grain since 1971.

The result: prices have surged to their highest level in more than a year, jumping 20.5 cents to \$6.16 a bushel. The 3.5 percent increase sets the price at its highest since June 2009.

Bangladeshi importers usually look for low protein grains. Wheat with 10 to 10.5 percent protein content sells at a lower price. But now they are even finding it hard to book high protein content grain as commodity dealers find it not worthwhile to negotiate prices.

Bangladesh imported some 3.7 million tonnes of wheat last year.

Here is a snapped email exchange between a Bangladeshi importer and a supplier in Ukraine who said lower grade wheat is not available and premium wheat might be looked for.

Importer: Practically there is no price premium in the local market for higher protein wheat. I can try. What level you can maintain at this moment, and what is the suitable shipment period for lowest price?

Exporter: No reply.

Traders say unless the government makes a quick decision (within 5 days maximum) regarding procurement, it might have to pay higher prices as the market is on an upward curve. Many deals had to be foreclosed as importers could not match their bid prices with market prices.

Usually the government purchase committee takes about 3 weeks to a month to

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Mr. K.M. Mahmood Ur Rahman awarded Gold Medal



Mr. K.M. Mahmood Ur Rahman received the prestigious "Gold Medal" from Mr. Md. Zillur Rahman, the Honorable President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for his dedicated contribution in Shipping & Shipbuilding Sector of Bangladesh.

Following an earlier nomination by the "Poet Sarojini Naidu Memorial Council" Mr. K.M. Mahmood Ur Rahman

was presented with this award at a ceremony held on 29th July, 2010 at Osmani Memorial Auditorium. Mr. K.M. Mahmood Ur Rahman is the President of the Shipbuilders Assoc. of Bangladesh (BSA), Launch (Ship) Owners Assoc. and also the Chairman of Bangladesh Shipping Agents Association (BSAA).

Mr. K.M. Mahmood Ur Rahman, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the Maritime sector in Bangladesh, for last 50 years, was also awarded the coveted IMO award in 2008. The shipbuilding sector grew large in size and reputation under his dynamic leadership which led to export of ship from Bangladesh.

Members- Bangladesh Ship Builders' Association

Highways become death traps

Crashes kill around 500 in 6 months

SHARIFUL ISLAM and MUKHLESUR RAHMAN

The highways across the country have virtually become death traps as there are apparently no authorities to control reckless driving.

The country witnessed deaths of around 500 people and injuries to many others in road accidents on the stretch of about 12,000-kilometre highways in the first half of 2010.

Deaths of a secretary and an additional secretary on Saturday added to the long list of casualties. They were killed in a crash in Manikganj on their official trip to Gopalganj.

The drivers in general hardly follow traffic rules, especially speed limit, on highways causing fatal accidents, according to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA). Most of the times the culprit drivers go unpunished thanks to lack of law enforcement.

In most cases vehicle owners or drivers strike a deal with the

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BCS QUESTION PAPERS

PSC blames BG Press for errors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Public Service Commission (PSC) yesterday put the blame on Bangladesh Government (BG) Press for the errors and inconsistencies in a set of question paper of the preliminary test for the 30th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS).

PSC Chairman Saadat Husain said BG press has made the mistakes.

The commission held a meeting at its office in the city yesterday with the PSC chairman in the chair to discuss the matter.

But the meeting could not come to a decision as the authorities found the matter quite complex, sources said.

However, the commission will soon talk to experts to resolve the issue in a way that will protect the interest of the examinees, he said.

Such "minor mistakes" had been made in the previous years too but the commission handled the situations well, he added.

Errors appeared in English section of set-2 of the BCS question paper and that caused confusion among the examinees.

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