

Free polls

FROM PAGE 20
during the polls," he said.
The commission has drafted proposals for electoral reforms and those will be sent to the government next week, sources in the EC Secretariat said.
The proposals say since the dissolution of parliament and until the formation of a new one, the government will not take any decision without consulting the EC on issues relating to parliamentary elections, particularly the conduct of business of the cabinet division and ministries of home, public administration and LGRD.
In June last year, the provision of a caretaker government was scrapped through a constitutional amendment. And the existing provisions say the incumbent government will remain in office during the next national polls.
But the opposition now threatens to boycott elections, if not overseen by a non-party caretaker administration. Many fear the polls would not be neutral under the partisan government.
Against this backdrop, the outgoing CEC yesterday said everybody will have to abide by the electoral laws and cooperate with the EC. "It will be difficult to hold impartial polls if these conditions are not fulfilled."
Shamsul Huda assumed the CEC's office on February 5, 2007 during the then caretaker administration. His five-year tenure will expire tomorrow.
He also spoke about some other issues, including introduction of electronic voting machines in the next parliamentary polls and the BNP's criticism of the EC.
The BNP's criticism made him "great". After his retirement, he said, he would speak about the party's "splitting up" during the past caretaker government's tenure.
Asked if he would accept any proposal for his re-appointment, the CEC said nobody had communicated with him on the matter. He would not comment about it now because, he said, "I don't like any speculation."
Earlier on the day, Muhammed Sohel Hussein, another election commissioner who will also retire tomorrow, spoke about different aspects of the commission's activities over the past five years.
The EC-led by Shamsul Huda held 402 meetings and took 1,017 decisions of which 994 have resulted in action and 23 others are in the process of implementation.

Another investor

FROM PAGE 1
killed himself in Dhaka over the same reason.
The two houses of the country -- Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) and Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) -- have been in the red for several months, the climax being reached on Wednesday when the general index of DSE fell below 4,000 points, the lowest in 27 months. The continued plunge in share prices left many small investors ruined financially.
Yesterday's victim, Dildar Ahmed, had been talking about committing suicide over the last few days due to huge losses, relatives told The Daily Star.
The 55-year-old hanged himself from the ceiling of his bedroom around 8:30am at his Askar Dighir Par residence, said Zakir Hossain, sub-inspector of Kotwali Police Station.

Egypt mourns

FROM PAGE 1
State television ran footage of riot police standing rigidly in rows as pandemonium erupted around them.
Interior Minister Mohammed Ibrahim has said most of the deaths were caused by the crush but medics said some people were stabbed.
The health ministry said 74 people were killed, including a policeman. More than 1,000 people were also reported wounded. Police said 47 people had been arrested.
The ruling military announced three days of national mourning and Ibrahim fired city security chief Essam Samak because of the violence.
Politicians, fans and players took to social media to express their fury over the clashes, which cap a year of political upheaval and unrest after the uprising that unseated Mubarak.
"There are dead people lying on the ground! There are dead people in the changing room," Al-Ahly striker Emad Meteab told the team's satellite channel.
"I won't play football anymore until these people get justice," a furious Meteab said.
Young men blocked roads near the state television building and the capital's landmark Tahrir Square, and a crowd gathered at Cairo's main rail station hoping to see relatives returning from the game in Port Said.
As covered bodies from Egypt's worst soccer disaster were unloaded from trains, thousands chanted "Down with military rule."
"Where is my son?" screamed Fatma Kamal, whose frantic phone calls seeking news of her 18-year-old had gone unanswered. "To hell with the football!"

500 structures

FROM PAGE 20
the railway bulldozer during the drive.
The railway authorities have carried out similar eviction drives many times, even in the said stretch, but the illegal occupants soon returned each time.
Blake due
FROM PAGE 20
Earlier, in March 2011, Blake came to Dhaka to hold a meeting with top US diplomats from the South and Central Asian region.
During his three-day visit, which will likely be on February 14-16, Blake is expected to meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Commerce Minister GM Quader and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.
He will also meet Prof Muhammad Yunus and other civil society representatives.
Although it is a routine visit, government officials and diplomatic circles in Dhaka consider it crucial in the current political context.
Blake's visit may even help roll back the recent decline in US-Bangladesh bilateral relations.
The ties between the two countries have weakened considerably since Dhaka ignored the US government's concerns over the removal of Nobel Laureate Prof Yunus from his post as managing director of Grameen Bank.
The Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs deals with US foreign policy and US relations with Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Blake is also expected to visit some of those countries, besides Bangladesh.

Ashraf

FROM PAGE 1
Fazlul Azim's allegation that nepotism and corruption had plagued the administrations, even the LGRD ministry, Ashraf said the media spoke of so many things that were not correct.
Ashraf, also general secretary of the Awami League, said the media described road deaths as killings, which were merely some accidents. "Accident is accident."
After maghrib prayers, Tarana Halim, elected from a seat reserved for women, took the floor on a point of order and sharply reacted to the LGRD minister's comments.
Referring to Paloma, a class-II student killed while crossing a road on Wednesday, Tarana said a road accident should not be taken lightly. Rather, there should be measures to avert such incidents which claim many lives every year.
A campaigner of the road safety movement, the lawmaker in her brief but captivating speech quoted a provision of the law and said it would be considered a punishable offence when a road accident occurred due to the negligence of a driver.

Step taken 2 years

FROM PAGE 1
asked the police and the district administration across the country to implement the decisions within three months. Divisional commissioners will coordinate the implementation process.
The issue of stopping the use of fake driving licences also came up in the council meeting. But the council refrained from deciding on the matter in the face of strong opposition from transport leaders.
Plying of human haulers, and setting up of illegal structures and markets along the highways have been causing road accidents. The decision to remove illegal structures and slow vehicles from highways came at a council meeting nearly two years ago.
Cabinet committee on law and order also took similar decisions in the past to ensure road safety, but they have not been implemented.
Some government officials at the meeting blamed political intervention, opposition from transport leaders and police's negligence for this.
Communications Minister Obaidul Quader expressed disappointment at the long list of agenda for the meeting. When he asked whether any of the previous decisions had been implemented, none gave an reply.
Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan and State Minister for Home Shamsul Hoque Tuku were also present there.
"We hold discussions and make 30 to 35 decisions in a council meeting, but most of them remain unimplemented. Therefore, today [yesterday] we have made only five to six decisions," Bangladesh Road Transport Authority Chairman Ayubur Rahman Khan told reporters after the meeting.
The council decided to implement the decisions on a priority basis.
Nearly a year ago, the council decided to outsource the task of checking vehicle fitness amid allegations that certificates were issued to unfit vehicles in exchange for money. But the decision has not been implemented yet.
The council yesterday decided to outsource the task within six months.
The issue of phasing out about 5 lakh fake driving licences were also discussed at the meeting. When Tuku proposed that drivers carrying fake licences should be prevented from driving vehicles, transport owners vehemently protested it.
"Just think what will happen if five lakh vehicles are taken off the road," said Khandaker Enayetullah, general secretary of Dhaka Road Transport Owners' Association.
Shajahan Khan, also executive president of Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation, backed Enayet.
Later, the council moved away from the issue, and decided to set up more training centres for drivers.

Padma Bridge project

FROM PAGE 1
Bank gives more specific documents and evidence, we'll reopen the inquiry," the ACC chief added.
On September 21 last year, WB's Integrity Vice-president Leonard F McCarthy handed over a letter and an investigation report to Finance Minister AMA Muhith and to the commission over the alleged graft in the 2.97-billion project. The WB promised to give 1.2 billion in loan for the work.
The construction was initially planned to start this year and be completed by the end of 2014 to connect southern Bangladesh with the capital. But the work could not start as the WB temporarily suspended the fund over the allegation.
The WB report alleged the then communications minister Syed Abul Hossain and his family-owned company SAHCO sought to coerce multiple companies into using SAHCO as a paid "silent agent" for getting permission to bid for the contract of the main bridge.
Abul had all along denied any wrongdoing, saying on one occasion that he was a "proven honest man". In the face of widespread criticism from various quarters, Abul was removed from the communications ministry in December last year.
Following the allegation, the ACC assigned its Deputy Director Jainul Abedin Shibli in October the same year to investigate the matter, a month after Prime Minister

School-goers at grave risk

FROM PAGE 1
estimate that accidental deaths hover around the figure of four to five thousand annually and the number of those injured is six to seven thousand.
Accident Research Institute of Buet portrays a more dismal picture. It notes that road accidents in Bangladesh claim on an average 12,000 lives annually and lead to about 35,000 injuries.
According to Dhaka Metropolitan Police statistics, 198 people were killed in 259 crashes in the city in the first half of 2010. Around 72 percent of fatal accidents are caused by vehicles hitting pedestrians.
Dr Shamsul Hoque, former director of Accident Research Institute of Buet, notes that school-going children and garment workers are particularly vulnerable to accidents caused by reckless motorists as they make up the largest group among pedestrians during rush hours.
In the morning hours, he noted, commuters get desperate to reach their work on time while buses compete for passengers, making the roads anything but pedestrian-friendly.
Bus drivers tend to overtake other vehicles so that they can reach the next stop earlier to take more passengers aboard and make some extra bucks, he continued. "As long as the drivers keep their eyes focused on the passengers instead of on the road, the poor pedestrians will continue losing their lives. To ensure safety, the drivers must give undivided attention to the roads."
Quoting police records, Dr Shamsul Hoque said that 10 accidents on average occur every day across the country and one fourth of the total road crashes happen in Dhaka.
Until a comprehensively planned public transportation system is in place, this messy situation on the roads will prevail, he added. "No country in the world has so many public bus services. In our country, fragmented ownerships are on the rise. Small operators get their drivers to go on and on as many trips as possible in order to maximise profits."
He said the only solution was to fix one or two companies under which all the buses would operate and the drivers would get salaries, not wages.
"Besides, if the buses are run under one or two companies, their management will become easier," he said stressing the need for more investment to make this

Dhirendranath

FROM PAGE 1
ignoring the language of the majority population of the country could only lead to a complex situation.
Intriguingly, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan, who owed his seat in the assembly to the quota for East Bengal, rejected Dutta's suggestion out of hand. Among those who sided with the prime minister was Khwaja Nazimuddin, the Urdu-speaking chief minister of East Bengal. Nazimuddin even went to the extent of informing the House, falsely as it were, that most people of East Bengal thought Urdu ought to be the state language of Pakistan.
The rejection of Dhirendranath Dutta's proposal raised howls of protest, predictably, in East Bengal. Students of Dhaka University called a strike at the university and at all educational institutions for February 26. For their part, the media came down heavily on the Nazimuddin ministry over the language issue. The Azad newspaper was unflattering in its view that Nazimuddin had made a blunder. One of the more important ramifications of the language issue was the formation of a State Language Action Committee comprising representatives from a large number of political parties at a meeting at Dhaka University. The meeting resolved to observe a general strike across the province on March 11 as a protest against the constituent assembly's rejection of the proposal for Bangla as one of its languages of business.
As the general strike got under way on March 11, police went into action picking up a number of student and youth leaders. Among those taken into custody were Oli Ahad, Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan, Shamsul Haq, Shawkat Ali, K.G. Mahubb and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The next day, Sher-e-Bangla A.K. Fazlul Huq roundly condemned the police action.
Correction: In the write-up, Bangla or Urdu? on February 1, Abul Mansur Ahmed was credited with editing the weekly Millat. In fact, he edited the weekly Ittehad. The error is regretted.

Overtaking

FROM PAGE 1
Witness Idris Ali, also cousin to the victim, told reporters that he and Mollick got on to the bus for Gulistan from Nabisco area around 1:15pm. While Idris managed to push himself in, Mollick remained hanging on the footboard with almost his whole body outside the vehicle.
"Just a little after the bus had started, another bus speeding from behind overtook our bus from the wrong side," Idris said, adding that while doing so the bus sandwiched the victim.
"We heard a scream," he said, "Then our bus stopped and we found my cousin lying on the road."
The driver of Mollick's bus fled the scene instantly while police had to chase the speeding bus up to Moghbazar railway crossing until they caught its driver, Md Shakil Hossain.
The victim was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where the doctors declared him dead. Hospital sources said Mollick's head was fatally damaged.
Omer Faruque, officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Industrial Area Police Station, said they had seized both the buses. No case has been lodged with the police station in this connection till filing of the report at 7:00pm.

President

FROM PAGE 1
sincerely thank the patriotic army," he said.
Zillur Rahman was addressing the Annual Commander Conference-2011 of the Army Medical Corps, investiture of the 6th Colonel Commandant, and National Flag Award Ceremony-2012 at Ghatil Cantonment in Tangail.
The president said "You will have to keep in mind that full-fledged democracy has been established after lots of sacrifices... the country is now being governed through a proper democratic process."
"Any evil attempt to frustrate the democratic process is not expected by any of us, and such evil move will not be tolerated," he told the audience.
Zillur Rahman, who holds the supreme command of the defence services, said an effective command channel plays an active role in resolving any task of the army.
It is possible to accomplish any task with efficiency and discipline if there is respect and loyalty to all levels of commanders, he said.
All Combined Military Hospitals (CMHs) of the country have been able to gain people's confidence by providing advanced medical services, the president said adding: "The government is keen to modernise the CMHs and field medical units."
Earlier in the day, Zillur Rahman addressed a parade on the occasion of awarding national flag to Army Medical Corps Centre and School at the cantonment.
He lauded the members of the armed forces for their immense contribution to world peace, saying their professionalism has earned them respect from other compatriot peacekeepers in various parts of the world.
Chief of Army Staff General M Abdul Mubeen, senior armed forces officers, ministers, local lawmakers, among others, attended the function.

Magistrate

FROM PAGE 20
Abul Hossain Mridha and Limon Saiyal -- died on Sunday when police fired live rounds on some BNP activists during a clash with them on the ground of Chandpur Hasan Ali Govt High School in the town.
The BNP men had been gathering there to bring out a procession.
On the same day, the law enforcers claimed that they fired shots acting in self-defence according to the order of the magistrate.
Fatema Begum, the widow of Abul, sued the magistrate and 195 police men on Wednesday for the murder of her husband.
In another development, a two-member police probe committee yesterday started an enquiry into the incident.
The committee led by Biswas Afzal Hossain, deputy inspector general (DIG-Chittagong) of police, visited the school ground in the morning and talked with witnesses, local journalists, teachers, students of the school and their guardians.
"We will take legal action against police members or any other people, if found guilty," mentioned the DIG.
KHALEDATO VISIT CHANDPUR FEB 13
BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will visit Chandpur on February 13 to express her sympathy to the bereaved family members of the two victims.
This was announced on Wednesday at a press conference hosted by BNP in the town.
Earlier on the day, a BNP delegation led by its two Joint Secretaries General Mohammad Shahjahan and Barkat Ullah Bulu reached here from the capital.
Shahjahan termed the deaths of the two BNP activists "a turning point" in the movement to topple the government.
The home minister and the foreign minister cannot evade their responsibilities over the deaths, he maintained.

BCL infight

FROM PAGE 20
Suman, vice-president of BCL, its former international affairs secretary Sohel Rana Mithu, organising secretary Shakwat-ul Islam, and Dhaka University's hall unit leaders Jewel Rana, Tanvir, Imran, Parish, Merun, Laju Rahman and Shuvo.
They were admitted to different hospitals including Dhaka Medical College Hospital and Central Hospital, police said.
Sources said BCL leaders of DU's Zahurul Haque Hall Mithu, Suman and a few others "permitted" a trader to set up a food stall outside the Bangla Academy premises in the afternoon.
Meanwhile, BCL activists of DU's Ekushey Hall announced to set up a stall at the same place.
The Mithu-Suman group informed the organisation's President HM Badiuzzaman Sohagh and its DU unit General Secretary Omar Sharif about the matter. Sohagh and Sharif permitted the Mithu-Suman group to build the stall, and accordingly they set it up, annoying the Ekushey Hall group, the sources added.
BCL activists of Ekushey Hall then swooped on the Mithu-Suman group at the Suhrawardi Udyan gate.
On information, BCL men of Zahurul Haque Hall counter attacked the Ekushey Hall activists, leaving several of them injured.
Contacted, the BCL president told The Daily Star he was not fully aware of the clashes.
However, its DU unit President Mehadi Hasan said they would take "appropriate action" against their members who were involved in the incident.

President

FROM PAGE 1
officials of the China-based China Railway 15 Bureau Group Corporation, whose Bangladesh office raised the allegation against SAHCO, have denied receiving any letter from SAHCO offering to work as a "silent agent", said Ghulam Rahman.
The ACC carried out the inquiry by dividing the allegation into two -- allegation of corruption over the construction of the main bridge and allegation of corruption in the appointment of the supervising consultant.
The commission yesterday disclosed the findings of its inquiry into the first issue.
The Padma Bridge at Mawa-Jajira point was to be co-financed by the Asian Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank and Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica). The government signed agreements with the WB for \$1.2 billion loan, ADB for \$615 million, Jica for \$415 million and IDB for \$140 million.
Last week, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the government would not accept WB's assistance in the project should it fail to prove the allegation of corruption it had raised.
Meanwhile, the Malaysian government on Monday formally offered funding for the project. The Bangladesh government is yet to decide on the matter.

Magistrate

FROM PAGE 20
Abul Hossain Mridha and Limon Saiyal -- died on Sunday when police fired live rounds on some BNP activists during a clash with them on the ground of Chandpur Hasan Ali Govt High School in the town.
The BNP men had been gathering there to bring out a procession.
On the same day, the law enforcers claimed that they fired shots acting in self-defence according to the order of the magistrate.
Fatema Begum, the widow of Abul, sued the magistrate and 195 police men on Wednesday for the murder of her husband.
In another development, a two-member police probe committee yesterday started an enquiry into the incident.
The committee led by Biswas Afzal Hossain, deputy inspector general (DIG-Chittagong) of police, visited the school ground in the morning and talked with witnesses, local journalists, teachers, students of the school and their guardians.
"We will take legal action against police members or any other people, if found guilty," mentioned the DIG.
KHALEDATO VISIT CHANDPUR FEB 13
BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will visit Chandpur on February 13 to express her sympathy to the bereaved family members of the two victims.
This was announced on Wednesday at a press conference hosted by BNP in the town.
Earlier on the day, a BNP delegation led by its two Joint Secretaries General Mohammad Shahjahan and Barkat Ullah Bulu reached here from the capital.
Shahjahan termed the deaths of the two BNP activists "a turning point" in the movement to topple the government.
The home minister and the foreign minister cannot evade their responsibilities over the deaths, he maintained.