

DCC polls

FROM PAGE 1
constraint. Its tenure expired early last month.

In such a situation, the government again amended the relevant law on February 28 and extended the time limit for holding the polls within 90 days, which will expire on May 29.

The EC yesterday sat to review the preparatory work for holding the polls within the extended time.

"We have asked officials to make preparations for the polls. Now we have much time to complete the job," Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rakibuddin told journalists after yesterday's meeting.

The EC, however, did not fix the polls date.

Election Commissioner Zayed Ali said the present EC will implement the decisions taken by the previous EC regarding the DCC polls.

So, polls to the DCC (north) and DCC (south) will be held on the same day, he added.

"We will not change any decision of the previous EC. Even we will use electronic voting machines (EVMs) on a limited scale," Zayed said.

The EC has 1,000 EVMs while the number of polling stations in the bifurcated DCC is around 9,000, he mentioned.

Meanwhile, leaders of the ruling Awami League-led alliance and some individuals are already gearing up their polls campaign.

But leaders of the BNP-led opposition parties still remain silent on the issue as their parties vehemently opposed splitting the DCC.

Polls to the undivided DCC were held in April 2002 and tenure of the mayor and councillors expired in May 2007.

In such a situation, then mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka and the councillors continued to hold office till the DCC was split.

The government then appointed administrators to run the two city corporations.

10 spellers

FROM PAGE 20
Arifin Mahire and Hossain Mahmud Barkat of class IX, SM Rafi Uddin of class X, and Asifur Rahman and Fahim Ahmed of class VIII won the school-level competition.

A minimum of 3,000 spellers from all over the country will be taking part in the divisional round. Students are encouraged to play online spelling games at www.champs21.com to not only hone their skill, but also to get an opportunity to qualify for the second round.

Online top scorers from the country's seven divisions will join the divisional round.

The spelling contest will give students an opportunity to become reality TV stars (the top 72 students will qualify for the TV rounds which will be broadcast on Channel i) and to earn attractive cash prizes. The Spelling Bee champion, runner-up and the third-place finisher will get Tk 5 lakh, Tk 2 lakh and Tk 50,000. The champion will also get an all-expense-paid trip to Washington DC along with one of his/her parents and a teacher of his/her favourite.

This is a golden opportunity for students to make a name for themselves, become a star through their educational prowess and also to give something back to their parents and teachers.

Indian HC's

FROM PAGE 1
publications of Bangladesh. In keeping with the high journalistic standards The Daily Star has set for itself, it would be appreciated if appropriate action could be taken immediately to issue a rejoinder and remove the incorrect map from its website.

OUR REPLY
The graphical map we used along with the story is from an impact assessment study to show the location of under-construction dams in India. However, we have taken note of the objection and regret if any inadvertent inaccuracies that may have existed in the map.

CORRECTION
A report published on Wednesday under the headline, 'Saline death' for half the country, the budget of Indian river-linking project was mentioned as Rs 5,000 crore. In fact, the amount is Rs 5,00,000 crore. We regret the error.



The photo on the left shows the foundation stone laid in 2010 by Col (retd) Oli Ahmad himself for a construction work (photo on the right taken recently) on Cox's Bazar beach. The site falls in an ecologically critical area where any type of construction is prohibited.

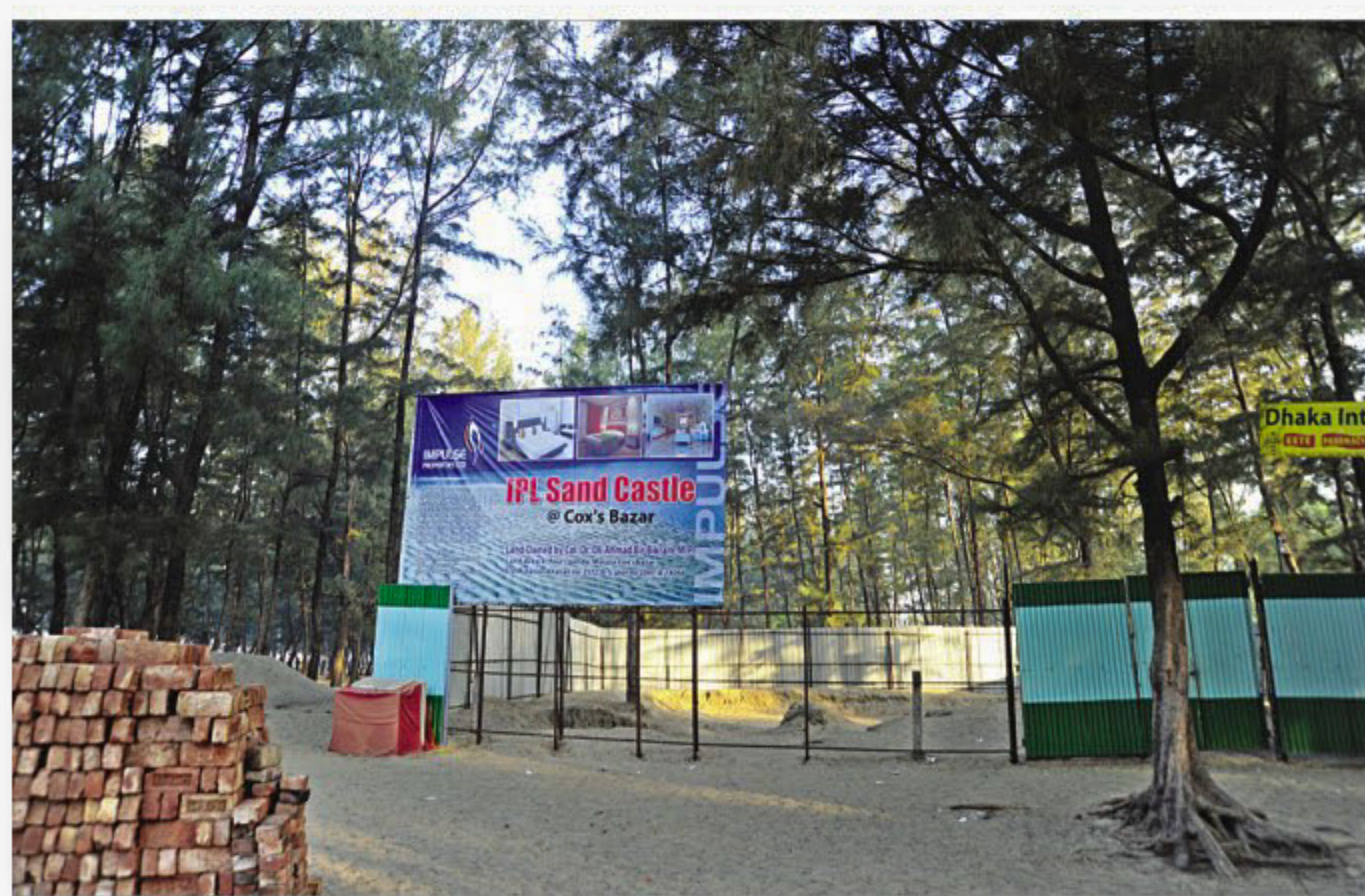


PHOTO: STAR

Oli Ahmad

FROM PAGE 20

said report on 22.02.2012 that there is only a tin fence surrounding the site protecting and demarcating the boundary of the land and there is no trace of any construction works that have been done or is ongoing at the site. Therefore it is clear that the newspaper publication is in direct conflict with reality as portrayed in the picture. The reporter's claim that a four storied building has been constructed is incorrect, false, fictitious, motivated and malicious.

c. That on 22.02.2012 in the aforementioned newspaper it was published that construction work has been started. The next day on 23.02.2012 it was published that a four-storey structure has already been built. It is unimaginable how a reputed newspaper has drastically changed its story within the space of 24 hours to state that a construction which had only begun had all of sudden been completed within a day. The true fact is that there is no structure what so ever in the site neither has any construction work taken place ever.

d. Moreover, it was also published that 3 (three) Jhau trees were cut at the site and the Department of Forest seized three trunks from the site. The reporter's aforesaid claim is imaginary, incorrect, false, fictitious, motivated and malicious. No trees were cut in that site. Moreover, the claim that the Department of Forest asked to stop construction is also baseless and imaginary since there is no construction work being carried out at the site at all.

e. Dr Oli Ahmad BB MP has always been vocal against corruption and active in establishing rule of law. The accusations raised by the reports not only tarnish his public image but in effect is detrimental to the message he carries. Furthermore, these reports riddled with false facts have misled the Honorable High Court Division to initiate litigation against him which has caused further embarrassment. Dr Oli Ahmad BB MP, as any citizen of the country has right to property.

OUR REPLY
a. In our first report titled "Oli's castle on Beach" was published on February 22 where we said Oli Ahmad had signed a deal with Impulse Properties, a real estate company, to construct the building. Later the plot was fenced off; a signboard was erected showing that a luxury resort was to be built. Foundation stone was laid (see picture) in which it was stated that work of a luxury resort had started.

Now the foundation stone has been removed. As per the guidelines of the Ecologically Critical Area (ECA), any kind of activities which could change the natural and original characteristics of the soil and water, felling trees and even extracting plants from the ecologically critical area without the permission of a lawful authority are prohibited under Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act 1995 (amendment 2010).

So installation of the foundation stone in the ECA zone which Oli Ahmad unveiled is a violation of the existing environmental laws. And other activities Oli Ahmad carried out there like demarcating boundary of the plot, digging soil inside for foundation piling of the building without permission is also prohibited.

b. The photographs The Daily Star publishes today, taken at the time of our investigation, not published earlier, show piles of bricks gathered at the site, digging marks in the soils for foundation piling, and corrugated tin fence around the site -- all of which are part of the construction work. C. In our first report in which we published a photograph that clearly reflected that a four-storey luxury resort was going to be built. In our second report published on February 23 which was the proceedings of the High Court Division we made a mistake. Instead of saying a four-storey building was being constructed, we said a four-storey building had already been constructed. This was an editing error, and we stand corrected.

However we stand by the content of our first report published on February 22. d. While the rejoinder denies cutting of any jhau trees, forest officer Rashed Ibne Siraj filed a case in the Cox's Bazar district court for cutting five jhau trees (not three) from the site of "IPL Sand Castle" accusing Subarna Construction of Ramu in Cox's Bazar, a developer firm, subcontracted by Impulse Properties and two guards. The case is pending in the court.

After cutting the trees, the chairman of the Impulse Properties applied for permission for cutting rest of the trees standing in the land, which was denied. e. It was never our intention to damage Oli Ahmad's reputation nor did we say anything about his other activities or his rights to own property. We only reported his activities in an ECA zone. We believe the honorable High Court was not misled, but acted with the highest concern to protect environment and uphold the law that would protect ecologically critical area.

Boy killed
FROM PAGE 20
his home from the hospital in the evening.

"Ahad has lost his words. He did not speak to anybody after returning from the hospital rather gave blank looks lying on the bed," said Mohammad Russell, an uncle of the twins. Neighbours said the slab was made as part of a development work at a drainage system in the lane. As the slab was no longer required after completion of the work, it was kept on the work.

Two girls die
FROM PAGE 20
are Sadia, 4, daughter of the house owner Shaful Alam and Habiba Begum, 5, daughter of neighbour Monohar Miah.

Family sources said that along with other babies the girls were playing at a place near the septic tank.

As curious Sadia and Habiba attempted to have a look into the tank they fell down, family members said.

They recovered the bodies from inside the tank after some time and found dead.

Police visited the house later and found nothing abnormal, officer-in-charge of Dakshin Surma PS Abu Shama Iqbal Hayat said.

Strike called
FROM PAGE 20
He informed high officials, including Engineer Abu Taleb, deputy manager (underground), of the matter and they assured him of taking action against the offence.

When the authorities did not take any action throughout the day, miners at night held a meeting and decided not to join work until Harun was dismissed, said the union members.

Workers said the company in October 2010 sacked five miners including then president and secretary of the miners' union as they had allegedly assaulted an officer inside the complex.

But this time the authority did not take any action against an officer for assaulting a miner, said Mojahidul Haque Shah, acting president of the miners' union.

He demanded that the five sacked miners be reinstated. No MGMCL officials could be reached over the phone for their comments.

DU students
FROM PAGE 1
Rumours were rife that Ahsan had differed with the rest of the junta over the decision to defer the national assembly session.

Yaqub Khan thus came to wear two hats, that of governor and zonal martial law administrator. For his part, Awami League chief Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman announced a general strike to protest the president's action. He also announced a national mourning day for March 3 in memory of those Bangladeshis who had died at the hands of the army and other security forces.

At Dhaka University, militancy began to take a markedly intense form, with students openly calling for Bangladesh to declare independence. Leading student figures exerted pressure on Bangabandhu to declare independence for East Pakistan and thereby break all links with the rest of the country.

It was in such a mood that on the day, the students of Dhaka University, led by ASM Abdur Rab, Shahjahan Siraj, Nur-e-Alam Siddiqui and Abdul Kuddus Makhani of the Chhatra Sangram Parishad, raised the flag of what they perceived to be a free Bangladesh.

The event not only galvanized the student community as well as Bangladeshis across the spectrum in their urge for self-expression but also brought to the fore the rapidity with which politics in East Pakistan was turning towards radicalism.

The flag, with a green background topped by a red circle symbolising a rising sun, in the centre of which nestled Bangladesh's map, was conceived and designed by Shibnarayan Das.

Both Arif and Ahad had worked in a press at city's Fakirapul. They took leave from their workplace yesterday for shifting their furniture.

After visiting the spot, AKM Abul Kashem, officer-in-charge of Jatrabari Police Station, said no one lodged allegation against anybody in connection with the incident.

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RPO given a dodge

FROM PAGE 1
Replying to a query, the minister informed the House that Feroz has yet to pay Tk 1.46 lakh in phone bill he defaulted on as a lawmaker in the seventh parliament in 1996-2001.

Likewise, Rahmat Ali has not paid Tk 3,411 in phone bill as a member of the eighth parliament in 2001-2006.

Both Feroz and Rahmat Ali should have been declared disqualified for the December 29 parliamentary polls in 2008, according to some changes made to the Representation of the People Order before that election.

Section 12 (n) of the RPO, laws regulating conduct of parliamentary polls and related issues, says a person shall be disqualified for election if he fails to pay phone, gas, electricity, water or any other bill for service provided by any government organisation within seven days since submission of nomination paper.

However, a number of contestants including Feroz and Rahmat Ali managed to get around the legal provision to compete in the December 29 polls.

After the election, Feroz was appointed a whip while Rahmat Ali was made chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the LGRD and cooperatives ministry.

Contacted, Feroz said he did not know that he had such a large amount of phone bill unpaid. After knowing this, he paid 10 percent of the amount and obtained a no-objection

certificate from the then speaker Jamiruddin Sircar. He has been paying the outstanding bill in monthly instalments.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Rahmat Ali claimed he did not owe a penny in phone bill. "It's a blatant lie. I will protest it."

However, a senior official at the parliament secretariat said the information provided by the telecommunications minister was correct.

In scripted answer to a query from AL's Shahiduzzaman Sarker, the telecommunications minister told parliament that 21 members of the seventh and eighth parliaments have yet to clear telephone bills of over Tk 38 lakh.

According to the minister's answer, 12 lawmakers including Feroz of the seventh parliament have not yet paid bills amounting to over Tk 18 lakh and nine lawmakers including Rahmat Ali of the eighth parliament have Tk 20 lakh outstanding as phone bills.

All of them, however, regularly took their telephone allowances.

Of the phone bill defaulters from the seventh parliament, AL's Joyntal Abedin Hazari has not yet paid Tk 1.97 lakh, Wazi Uddin Khan Tk 1.07 lakh, Dr Mizanul Haque Tk 3.03 lakh, Syed Masud Reza Tk 1.89 lakh, Panna Kaiser Tk 1.76 lakh, Khaleda Khanam Tk 4,748 and Farida Rouf Asha Tk 24,591; BNP's Nadeem Mostafa Tk 3.97 lakh, Khairul Anam Tk 69,952 and Ziaur Rahman Khan Tk 10,006; and Jatiya Party's Ahsan Ahmed Tk 1.78 lakh.

Fire at Ctg airport

FROM PAGE 20
Authority of Bangladesh. Firefighters doused the flame around 6:30pm.

Jaasim Uddin said it took time for the firefighters to clear the smoke trapped in the building as the building was airtight. Ten fire fighting units from three fire stations worked with the air force and navy personnel to douse the fire.

"The extent of damage to the building is not clear yet," he added.

Passengers and airport and airline staff were asked to clear the building immediately after the fire broke out, which created panic amongst the crowds.

A thick blanket of smoke and fumes engulfed the airport complex at the time. Electricity supply to the building was stopped from 4:05pm to 6:00pm, officials and witnesses said.

"Everybody was scared and looking for safety," said Ibrahim Khalil, an executive of GMG Airlines at the airport.

All inbound and outbound flights at the airport remained suspended from 4:05pm to 8:00pm, causing immense sufferings to travellers, including migrant workers returning to work places in the Middle East.

"If I miss my flight to Guanaju today [yesterday], I will have to wait for three more days for the next flight," said Alex Pohmung, a foreign national working at a shoe factory at Chittagong EPZ.

"We are not sure when our flights will leave, no one is giving us any information," said Md Ismail, a passenger, at 8:00pm. He was due to fly to Dubai.

The civil aviation authority has formed a four-member committee to investigate the incident.

India yesterday welcomed Pakistan's decision to switch to the negative list approach for trade with it, saying Islamabad is moving in the "right direction" and hoped that this will take practical shape by yearend.

"Pakistan is moving in the right direction in terms of bringing economic content into the political relationship. And now they have followed up and we are hoping that by December of this year, this will take practical shape. We welcome this idea of removing certain items from negative and this would certainly help in strengthening our bilateral relationship. I would like to thank government of Pakistan for it," External Affairs Minister SM Krishna said when asked about Pakistan's decision on easing trade regulations.

After considerable internal indecisiveness leading to confusing statements over the issue, Pakistan government on Wednesday approved the switch-over to a negative list regime for trade with India, paving the way for granting Most Favoured Nation status by yearend.

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Hill cutting

FROM PAGE 20
obtaining the certificate is mandatory before cutting any hill in the country.

A bench comprising Justice AHM Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik and Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim gave the verdict following a writ petition and directed the government to be careful so that no hills are cut without the DoE's clearance.

Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) filed the petition on November 24 last year seeking restriction on cutting hills at Shahjalal Upashahar and six upazilas of Sylhet.

The upazilas are Sylhet Sadar, Gowainghat, Beanibazar, Companyganj, Jaintapur and Golapganj.

On November 27 last year, the HC had asked the government to take steps to prevent cutting of hills in those areas and also issued a rule upon it to explain why the hill cutting should not be declared illegal.

Advocate Iqbal Kabir Lytton appeared for Bela, while Assistant Attorney General Yeadia Zaman represented the government.

Shahara Khatun should have stepped down after crossing her 48-hour deadline to arrest the killers. On the other side, Dhaka Union of Journalists General Secretary Sabar Mahmud also demanded the minister's resignation.

BFUJ Secretary General Abdul Jalil Bhuyian, DUJ presidents Omar Faruk and Abdus Shaheed, National Press Club President Kamaluddin Sabuj, DRU President Shakhawat Hossain Badsha, General Secretary Sajjad Alam Khan Tapu, noted journalist Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul and columnist Syed Abul Maksud, among others, spoke at the hunger strike programme.

S African ruling party expels youth leader Malema
AFP, Johannesburg

The ruling ANC on Wednesday expelled its youth leader Julius Malema, turning against a man who helped bring South African President Jacob Zuma to power but later stood in his path to re-election.

Malema was convicted in November of provoking divisions within the African National Congress and slapped with a five-year suspension.

Earlier in February, an appeals panel upheld his conviction, but allowed him a new hearing to argue against his suspension -- a move that came with the risk that the panel would decide to impose a harsher penalty.

Journalist leaders apprehended that this directive might hamper the independence of the media.

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New president

FROM PAGE 20
was determined to deliver his inaugural speech.

"The president is getting many messages asking him to make his address," Imad told AFP.

Imad said police and security forces had been ordered to exercise maximum restraint and said that those detained would be released later in the evening.

Waheed, who had declared yesterday a holiday for the opening of parliament, inspected a military guard of honour outside parliament earlier in the day before the protesting MPs prevented his address.

Police sealed off roads leading to parliament in the congested capital island of Male, which is a stronghold of the MDP