

POLLS UNDER INCUMBENT PM Fakhrul fears vote rigging

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition BNP has said the next general elections would be rigged in favour of the ruling Awami League if it is held under the incumbent prime minister.

"No matter whichever party people cast their votes for, all would go to 'boat', AL's polls symbol, if the election is held under the incumbent prime minister," alleged BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday.

He was addressing a discussion organised by Swechhasebak Dal, the volunteer front of BNP, in the capital's Diploma Engineers' Institute as the chief guest to mark the 6th year of the party's Senior Vice-Chairman Tarique Rahman's getting out of jail under bail.

"The PM [Sheikh Hasina] in London said they will form a mini-cabinet during the election time which the opposition can also join. But she [Hasina] has changed her position as she has understood nothing would save her from defeat in the coming elections," the BNP leader said.

About making preparations for their agitation programmes, he said, "We have a few weeks in hand for preparations. Within this time, we have to prepare ourselves perfectly and force the government to step down as we have no alternative to this. We will establish the government of the people."

Fakhrul hoped people would not participate in the polls that the government planned to stay in power for long.

Reiterating the demand for a neutral caretaker government during the election time, the BNP leader said they did not ask the government to hand over power to the party; they were fighting for the rights of the voters.



This pothole-riddled, muddied road in Kamalbagh Beribadh area in the capital's Lalbagh has been like this for around six years and the situation worsens after rains. The suffering locals allege that the authorities concerned did not take any step for repairs despite repeated requests.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

CTG ARMS HAUL CASES Defence intentionally prolonging proceedings

Prosecutor tells court
STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The prosecution lawyer in the Chittagong arms haul cases yesterday blamed defence lawyers of intentionally prolonging proceedings by repeatedly asking questions on the same issues in the name of cross-examination.

Advocate Kamal Uddin Ahammad also sought the judge's directives in this regard during the cross-examination of the cases' fifth and last investigation officer (IO), Mohammad Moniruzzaman Chowdhury.

Kamal, also the tribunal's public prosecutor, pointed out to the court that, till yesterday, the recording of the IO's deposition and his cross-examination had already taken up 18 working days since April 22.

Meanwhile, the proceedings on eight working days could not be held due to

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MKA admits Yaba smuggling alarming

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir yesterday termed alarming the situation of Yaba being smuggled into Bangladesh across the Naf river from Myanmar.

"We have intensified patrolling in the river to contain the Yaba trafficking. We will also request Myanmar's authorities to prevent such trafficking on the opposite bank of the river," he told reporters after a meeting on narcotics control at his ministry.

The minister described delay in adjudicating drug cases as a hindrance in the fight against the drug trade. Only 7.5 percent of around 55,000 drug cases filed annually in the country reach verdicts, he said, adding that in the adjudicated cases, 47 percent of the accused get acquitted.

Alamgir expressed dissatisfaction over the number of arrests, given the high number of drug peddlers and addicts.

Asked about ruling party men's alleged involvement in smuggling in Yaba from Myanmar, he said that while making arrests, law enforcers did not consider one's political identity.

Alamgir said the health ministry had an important role to play as almost 72 percent of the addicts took sedatives.

MONITORING TOURIST VISAS

Malaysia to set up one-stop centre in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Malaysia will establish a one-stop centre in Dhaka next month to monitor the tourist visas issued to Bangladeshis.

Malaysian Immigration Department Director General Datuk Alias Ahmad said the move was to curb rampant cases of Bangladeshis seeking employment in Malaysia with tourist visas, reported Malaysian English daily The Star yesterday.

He said the centre will be linked directly to all immigration entry points in Malaysia.

"This will enable us to verify whether the visas

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Protect centuries-old fort city Bhitargarh Urges researcher

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A researcher working on a centuries-old fort city called Bhitargarh in Panchagarh district yesterday urged the government to protect the archaeological site under the Antiquities Act, 1968, (amended in 1976).

Prof Shahnaj Husne Jahan, addressing a seminar, also stated that the 25 square kilometre area is the country's largest fortified city where further research needs to be conducted.

The seminar, "Archaeological Excavation and Research at Bhitargarh in Panchagarh District", was organised by the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh, where Prof Shahnaj teaches archaeology, in the capital's Department of Archaeology.

A June 2011 High Court stay order

on all sorts of construction at the site is being constantly violated. "Due to the lack of preservation, objects of immense archaeological value are on the verge of extinction," she added.

Working in the area since 2008, Jahan said her team found foundations of eight monuments, including a Buddhist temple, believed to have existed between 6th and 10th centuries.

She also commented that Bhitargarh's importance lies in its strategic location on the ancient riverine routes connecting Tibet, Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan, Assam, Koch Bihar and the Ganges valley.

AKM Zakaria, an archaeologist and former secretary to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, said Bhitargarh was probably one of the country's oldest archaeological sites.

Govt reduces migration cost significantly

Says Khandker Mosharraf

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshi workers used to pay the highest migration cost in the world to get a job abroad, but the cost of migration has been reduced significantly by the government, claimed Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain yesterday.

"Earlier, recruiting agencies used to charge a person who wanted jobs abroad Tk 3 lakh to Tk 4 lakh but now the migrant costs have come down to Tk 32,000 only," the minister said while addressing a two-day long workshop.

However, the minister's claim is only true for Malaysia and not other countries.

The government will continue its efforts to reduce the migration costs and ensure

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Appeal for help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



A man is once again seeking financial assistance from affluent people

of the society for his daughter's treatment.

Two-and-a-half-year-old Tasmia Islam, suffering from heart disease, received financial support from different individuals and organisations after The Daily Star published a report seeking assistance for her financially insolvent father Syed Fahadul Alam, a farmer of Noagram village under Lohagara in Narail.

With the support received, little Tasmia had undergone an operation in March but doctors

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