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Polls in time, with or without BNP

Govt has nothing to do if BNP does not take part in election, says PM



● The graft case against Khaleda was filed by the interim govt led by 'her own confidants'

● PM dispels fear of misuse of proposed Digital Security Act

● Myanmar delaying Rohingya repatriation using excuses

AGENCIES, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday categorically said the next general election would be held in time as per the constitution, no matter whether the BNP takes part in it or not.

"Ours is a multiparty democracy and it's up to the respective parties whether they will contest the polls," she told a crowded press conference at her official residence the Gono Bhaban yesterday, two days after her return from Italy.

"The election will take place in due time as per the constitution and those who

believe in democracy and the peoples' right to vote, those who have trust in the country's people, will take part in the polls."

The PM then recalled the atrocities, torture and mayhem unleashed allegedly by the BNP-Jamaat men in 2013, 2014 and 2015 centring the January 5 polls, reports BSS.

Hasina made the comments as journalists drew her attention to a recent statement by BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir that the party would not participate in upcoming national polls without its Chairperson Khaleda Zia, who is now in jail over a corruption case.

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GRABBING PUBLIC LAND



Crops grown on a small char in the Shitalakkhya river in Narayanganj. Claiming the ownership of the government land, some locals have been growing crops there for a long time. The authorities, however, seem oblivious to it. The photo was taken from Sultana Kamal Bridge in the capital's Demra area recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Question leaks nothing new

Says PM, seeks cooperation in finding out culprits; SSC biology questions too leaked

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the leaking of the SSC question papers was nothing new.

"It has been going on for decades. Sometimes it gets publicity and sometimes it does not, this is the reality."

"This time the problem is, we are using technology. And this technology gives us opportunity and creates problems as well," she told a press conference at her official residence the Gono Bhaban.

Hours before the press conference, images of the Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) paper (kha-set) and the answers of yesterday's biology exam were uploaded on several Facebook pages around 8:58am, an hour ahead of the exam.

Meanwhile, Rab yesterday detained five

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Khaleda confessed abuse of power, says court

It was either a mistake or a deliberate inclusion in verdict, claims BNP chairperson's lawyer; she may file appeal today

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER, TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and WASIM BIN HABIB

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in her defence statement confessed that she had abused her power, said the court in the verdict of Zia Orphanage Trust graft case.

"So, there is no bar to punishing her under section 409 of Penal Code and 5(2) of Corruption Prevention Act-1947," the verdict says on page 624.

The way the six accused in collusion with each other misappropriated the money has a presumptive value, the court said, adding this is very much relevant to disposal of the case.

But Masud Ahmed Talukder, one of



Khaleda's lawyers said the BNP chief in her statement categorically denied misappropriating money and abusing power.

"It was either an unwanted mistake or the court deliberately added untrue

statements to the verdict," he told The Daily Star when contacted last night.

Khaleda, also a former prime minister, always termed the case "politically motivated" and accused the government of trying to use court for keeping her away from politics and elections.

She made the same allegation while giving a statement before the court under section 342 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) during the trial.

The Special Judge's Court-5 of Dhaka, which found Khaleda guilty in the graft case 11 days ago, released the full verdict yesterday.

Khaleda's lawyers said they collected a copy of the verdict and may file

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CONSTABLE RECRUITMENT

Don't entertain political request

Police Headquarters instructs SPs about unfit candidates

SHARIFUL ISLAM and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The Police Headquarters has instructed the SPs not to entertain the recommendations of political leaders in favour of unfit candidates as previously postponed recruitment of 10,000 constables starts on February 22.

In case of political requests for fit candidates, the SPs may seek assistance from the monitoring teams from the headquarters, said a top official yesterday.

A special meeting chaired by Inspector General of Police Mohammad Javed Patwary on Sunday with officials concerned decided that monitoring teams from the headquarters will visit all the districts to oversee the constable recruitment.

"The monitoring teams will watch the recruitment and assist SPs in the recruitment process," the official said, wishing anonymity.

The teams will be under direct supervision of the IGP, additional inspector general (admin and operation) and deputy inspector general (human resources).

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Demonstrators chanting slogans from a torch procession in the capital's Shahbagh area yesterday. The procession was brought out under the banner of Nipironer Biruddhe Nagorik (citizens against repression) to protest the alleged rape of a Marma girl and sexual assault of her younger sister and also the attack on Chakma Circle Queen Yan Yan in Rangamati recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

BPC for new oil pricing formula

Prices may go up if adjustments made in line with int'l market

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MOHAMMAD SUMAN

Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation has put forward a proposal to the energy ministry to introduce an automated pricing formula to adjust petroleum prices against international prices on a monthly basis.

If the formula is introduced, prices of diesel, kerosene, and furnace oil will go up in the country.

State Minister for Energy, Power and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid said the BPC early this month also made some suggestions on the price adjustment mechanism.

"The BPC has been incurring huge losses as the petroleum prices increased in the international market recently," he told The Daily Star on Sunday.

The price gap, especially for diesel, between the local and international markets has widened, he added.

The state minister said his ministry would discuss the BPC's proposal and make a decision after consulting Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina about the issue.

The price hike proposal comes at a time when the parliamentary election is just a few months away. Officials at the finance and energy ministries said there was a little chance that the government would hike the prices ahead of the polls.

International petroleum prices dropped drastically in 2014 and remained almost steady for the next three years.

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GP, Robi, Banglalink start 4G service

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Grameenphone, Robi, and Banglalink have started 4G service in selected areas immediately after receiving the licence for the fourth-generation mobile internet yesterday evening.

State-run carrier Teletalk will take some time before it offers its 4G service to customers.

The top three carriers yesterday said they went live with 4G service with about 400 base transceiver stations (BTS) in major cities of the country.

Telecom Minister Mustafa Jabbar handed over the licences to top officials of the carriers during a ceremony at the Dhaka Club yesterday evening.

Soon after getting the licence, market leader Grameenphone's Chief Executive Officer Michael Foley announced the launch of 4G service on Facebook Live.

It started covering

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