

Hasina's Homecoming Day today

UNB, Dhaka

The 38th Homecoming Day of Awami League President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will be observed today. On this day in 1981, Sheikh Hasina returned home from India after nearly six years in exile following the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members by a group of army officers on August 15, 1975.

However, both the daughters of Bangabandhu, Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, survived as they were in Germany at that time.

Hasina was elected president of Awami League in her absence in the party's national council held on February 14-16, 1981.

To mark the day, Awami League and its associate bodies have chalked out various programmes.

The party will hold a discussion at Krishibid

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With Ramadan beginning tomorrow, dates are in demand like every year. This sweet, calorie-dense fruit is an indispensable item on the iftar menu in the country. This photo was taken in front of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque in the capital yesterday. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Utility providers lack coordination

Says a frustrated DSCC mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) Mayor Sayeed Khokon yesterday expressed frustration over the lack of commitment to coordinated efforts among utility service-providing bodies.

Speaking at a press conference at Nagar Bhaban to give an overview of his three-year tenure, he said it is very important to bring all utility service-providing organisations under an umbrella to achieve better coordination and solve bureaucratic problems.

"According to a gazette notification from the Prime Minister's Office, chiefs of all utility-providing bodies must attend coordination meetings called by the mayor, implement the decisions taken at the meetings and inform the mayor about it," Sayeed Khokon.

"But except a handful, other heads of the bodies or even their deputies do not come to the meetings. They send representatives who do not take part in discussion or can make decisions," he said. "We have written to the PM's principal secretary informing him of the matter, and sought necessary steps."

On another note, the mayor announced that DSCC will begin an inspection drive in households under its jurisdiction to find out larva of Aedes mosquito, which is the carrier of Dengue and Chikungunya viruses.

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JERUSALEM ISSUE Bangladesh to join OIC spl summit in Turkey

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh will attend an extraordinary summit of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Jerusalem tomorrow.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, who currently holds OIC's rotating chairmanship, called the summit in Istanbul.

Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali and Prime Minister's Security Affairs Adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) Tarique Ahmed Siddique will join the event, a senior official at the foreign ministry told the news agency

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EWG finds irregularities

Says those were not enough to impact KCC polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although some incidents of irregularities were witnessed at the Khulna City Corporation (KCC) polls, those incidents did not have any impact on the election, said Election Working Group (EWG) yesterday.

The group's director, Dr Abdul Alim, said EWG observers witnessed specific incidents of electoral rule violations at 32 percent polling stations.

The election observation group, consisting of 28 leading civil society organisations in the country, made the observations at a press conference organised at Jatiya Press Club to disclose its preliminary observation on the KCC election.

"While there were attempts to alter the outcome of the voting in a number of polling stations, due to the low number of attempts observed, it does-

not appear that those were significant enough to undermine the results of the election," said the EWG director.

Awami League candidate Talukder Abdul Khaleque was announced winner in the mayoral post of KCC at the election held on Tuesday, defeating BNP's Nazrul Islam Monju.

Average voter turnout at polling stations observed by EWG was 64.8 percent, Dr Alim said.

EWG was formed in 2006 with the shared goal of enhancing transparency and accountability of elections and other democratic processes in the country.

After the polling stations were opened, presence of agents representing the AL mayoral candidate was noticed at almost all stations by EWG observers. The presence of BNP agents was 88.8 percent.

The violations include ballot stuffing, minor violence in and outside the

polling stations, presence of unauthorised individuals inside polling stations and obstructing voters from casting their ballots.

At 12:43pm, inside a polling station at Ward 24, around 15 to 20 people forcibly entered booth 7 and took possession of a huge stack of ballot papers. They stamped the ballots and stuffed ballot boxes with the ballot papers in the presence of law enforcers, said Dr Alim. "The law enforcers did not take any action against the perpetrators."

At 12:40pm, violence broke out between supporters of AL and BNP candidates around 12:40pm inside a polling station. The police later brought the situation under control, he added.

At Aliya Madrassa polling station under the same ward, indelible ink was applied on the fingers of voters

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US disappointed over reported incidents

UN reiterates call for fair election

UNB, Dhaka

The United States has expressed disappointment over reported irregularities and intimidation in Tuesday's Khulna City Corporation (KCC) elections but congratulated all the parties on making the elections inclusive.

US Ambassador in Dhaka Marcia Bernicat made the observation yesterday saying it was encouraging that a wide range of political parties participated in the polls. "I congratulate everyone."

Expressing disappointment over the reported irregularities, the US envoy says it necessitates transparent investigation and the reported irregularities and intimidation are "very disappointing".

She encouraged all parties to stay with

the boundary of the rule of law in the future elections as pledged.

The US envoy was speaking to reporters at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after her hour-long meeting with Foreign Secretary M Shahidul Haque.

Meanwhile, the United Nations at its regular briefing on Tuesday reiterated its call for holding free and fair elections in Bangladesh.

Awami League-nominated mayoral candidate Talukder Abdul Khaleque won the KCC polls with a big margin on Tuesday.

But, BNP alleged that the KCC elections were marred by irregularities, including ballot stuffing and driving out polling agents of the rival group while ruling party criticised BNP for misleading people and asked the party to take a lesson from the KCC elections.

Country wastes food crops worth several thousand crores

Say speakers at seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday said the country wastes food crops worth several thousand crore taka each year during the post-harvest period alone, which could be saved using apt technology.

They said generating awareness among farmers and other stakeholders would also help address the issue. In addition, capacity of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) and storage facility have to be increased.

Right to Food Bangladesh (RFB) and Christian Aid arranged the seminar on "State's Role in Tackling Food Loss and Right to Food" in the capital's Roidap.

Presenting a paper, Sanwar Sayeed Shaheen, general secretary of Bangladesh Krishi Sangbadik Forum, said the post-harvest waste of food crops was 77.5 lakh tonnes in 2015-16 fiscal year -- 14 percent of the total produced crops. The waste was worth around Tk 30,400 crore that year, he said, referring to a survey by Horticulture Export Development Foundation (Hortex Foundation).

Shaheen said the losses had been counted from farmers' production to reaching consumers. At farm level, reasons behind food crop waste included breaking, scattering, insect infection, lack of applying technology, and drying.

At marketing level, the reasons were storage limitation, inefficient transportation and packaging.

Referring to a recent study by Bangladesh Rice Research Institute, Shaheen said about 70 percent of the rice was processed using traditional husking machine in the last fiscal year. The process caused waste of 1 to 1.5 percent or about 3.5 lakh tonnes of the total produced rice (about 5 crore tonnes)

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A street vendor pours sugary syrup containing questionable artificial colouring agents on a crushed-ice lolly before serving it. Coming in different shapes and colours, this street-side lolly is known as "ice golla" and is particularly popular among the youth. Inset, students enjoying ice golla in Shahinbagh area of the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Monju rejects polls results

STAR REPORT

Bringing allegation of irregularities, BNP's defeated mayoral candidate Nazrul Islam Monju rejected the Khulna City Corporation (KCC) polls results.

On the other hand, Khulna mayor-elect Talukder Abdul Khaleque claimed that the election was held amid fair and free atmosphere.

They said the above at separate press conferences yesterday.

Khaleque, at Khulna Press Club, said if vote rigging did take place, how the BNP candidate got so many votes.

People want to see

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ALLEGATION AGAINST TUREEN AFROZ Fair probe demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sector Commanders Forum -- Muktijuddho '71 yesterday demanded an impartial investigation into the allegation raised against war crimes prosecutor Tureen Afroz.

Issuing a statement, the forum members said the truth behind the sensitive issue will come to light through a fair probe.

"All related quarters should be cautious so that the reputation of the war crimes tribunal is in no way tainted and the historic trial process that fulfilled the nation's expectation is not put in question," the statement reads.

They said the allegation brought against Tureen, who conducted some important war crimes cases, is "grave and sensitive". Such news reports on her are "unexpected and sad".

The chief prosecutor's office of International Crimes Tribunal has recently requested the law ministry to launch an investigation against Tureen over an alleged meeting held secretly with a war crimes accused.

Earlier, the chief prosecutor's office withdrew Tureen -- who earned much acclaim for her performance in dealing with the war crimes cases -- from all cases and asked the prosecutor to submit all documents.

In a letter, signed by Chief Prosecutor Ghulam Arief

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