

EC keen to hold Cumilla city polls by May 16

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission wants to hold the Cumilla City Corporation election before May 16.

This will be the first major polls under the new EC. The commission, led by Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal, will discuss the issue at its first meeting, to be held in the first week of April.

At the meeting, the commission will take a decision on announcing the election schedule if it gets clearance of Local Government Division, EC secretariat Additional Secretary Ashok Kumar Debnath told The Daily Star yesterday.

The EC on March 7 had sent a letter to the division regarding updated information on whether there was any legal issue to hold the polls, he said. "We hope we'll get a response within two-three days," Ashok said.

The last Cumilla city election was held on March 30, 2017, which was also the first assignment of the immediate past EC led by KM Nurul Huda.

The EC has a legal obligation to complete the polls to a city corporation within the last 180 days of its tenure, according to the Local Government (City Corporation) Act 2009.

Election Commissioner Md Alamgir, while talking to reporters at his EC office yesterday, said, "We are yet to decide whether we will use EVM in the Cumilla polls."



After taking care of the herd, these boys at Sylhet's Fenchuganj got down on the field to kick around a football in the afternoon. Even when they can't play for long, a 10-15 minute's match is usually enough to fill the day's quota for entertainment. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Narrow escape Child rescued after falling into drain; concerns over Ctg open drains, canals flare up

At least five people died or went missing after falling into these open drains and canals in port city in the last one year.



STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

In a repeat of a series of incidents that took place last year, a child fell into a drain while walking with her family members in the port city's Chandgaon area on Saturday evening.

Fortunately, the girl was rescued by her family members soon enough before anything serious could happen.

The incident sparked widespread criticism against Chattogram City Corporation (CCC). Meanwhile, a CCTV footage of the incident went viral on social media. The footage showed the girl walking on the sidewalk holding hands of two women. Suddenly, she fell into the open drain in front of one Safa-Marwa Electronics of the area. Both women immediately pulled the baby out of the hole.

Despite repeated attempts, identity of the victim could not be traced, while police could not provide information of the family.

"We sent a patrol team to the scene after we saw the video footage on social media, but couldn't trace the victim," said OC Mainur Rahman of Chandgaon Police Station.

Contacted, local ward councillor Esrarul Haque denied negligence and said they installed a slab on the drain to fill up the gap.

In another incident, a mentally unstable man jumped in at a canal in Bahaddarhat area yesterday noon.

Enamul Haque, senior station officer of Agrabad Fire Service Office, said upon receiving information, firefighters rushed to the spot and rescued him.

These incidents add to the concern over the open drains and canals in the port city, which some say have become "death traps", said locals.

At least five people died or went missing after falling into these drains and canals in the last one year.

Fagua brings rhythm to lives of tea workers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

The Fagua festival has a special place in the life of tea workers. Besides an attempt to preserve their heritage, the festival brings rhythm to their arduous and monotonous lives.

Yesterday, tea workers from different areas, belonging to different ethnic groups with their own language and culture, came together as one to mark the Fagua festival, held at Fulchhara football field in Moulvibazar's Srimangal.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



PHOTO: STAR

A menace for 20 years

Illegal brick fields operational next to two primary schools in Trishal



PHOTO: COLLECTED

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Brickfields next to primary schools. Children's lives endangered by health hazards. That is how it has been for more than 20 years in Boilor area of Mymensingh's Trishal.

"Modern Bricks" and "Bhai Bhai Bricks" have been running next to Dewaniabari Govt Primary School and Kanhor Govt Primary School respectively in Boilor for more than two decades.

The authorities, however, remain indifferent.

According to locals, Abdus Salam Khokon, owner of "Modern Bricks", and Md Badal Mia, owner of Bhai Bhai Bricks, have been running their brick fields for years on cultivable land in Boilor.

The brick field owners have leased the lands from locals, where crops are harvested twice to thrice every year.

Kazal Kumar Roy, headteacher of Kanhor Govt Primary School, said the presence of the brick fields have created health hazards for both students and teachers due to the dust, fume and constant movement of vehicles near the school area.

"Our children have been suffering for years. But no effective action has been taken by the authorities to address this," said Parvin Sultana, assistant teacher of the school.

During the peak season, around 30 trucks and hand trolleys remain engaged to carry the bricks for different destinations from dawn to dusk, accelerating the menace manifolds.

The frequent movement of the brick carrying vehicles has become a safety concern as well for children also play on the school field, said teachers and guardians.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Humayun Azad murder case verdict Apr 13

COURT CORRESPONDENT



A Dhaka court yesterday fixed April 13 to deliver the judgement on four JMB members in a case filed over the killing of Dhaka University teacher, intellectual and writer Humayun Azad.

Judge Al-Mamun of the Fourth Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court set the date.

The accused are Salehin alias Salahuddin, Anwarul Alam alias Anwar, Mizanur Rahman alias Minhaz and Nur Mohammad.

Of them, Salehin and Nur are on the run. On February 27, 2004, 56-year-old Humayun Azad was stabbed at Ekushey Book Fair on Bangla Academy premises.

A day after the incident, Azad's brother filed an attempted murder case with Ramna Police Station against some unnamed people.

The case later turned into a murder case after he passed away on August 12, 2004.

DESTINY SCAM Verdict on May 12

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday fixed May 12 to deliver judgement against Destiny Group Managing Director Rafiqul Amin and 45 others in a money laundering case.

After concluding the closing arguments, Judge Shaikh Nazmul Alam of the Special Judge's Court-4 set the date. The court recorded statements of 202, out of 303, prosecution witnesses. During the hearing, Amin and five others, now in jail, were produced before the court. Destiny-2000 president Lt Gen (ret'd) Harun-Ar Rashid and two others – now on bail – were also present.

Amin's wife Farah Diba and 36 others are now absconding. The ACC on May 4, 2014 pressed charges against 51 people in two cases filed on charges of misappropriating over Tk 4,200 crore from investors.

Admin work resumes at PUST after a month

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The administrative work of Pabna University of Science and Technology (PUST) resumed yesterday, after a month's halt.

The activities were halted following agitation by its officers' association pushing for a 17-point requirement charter over allegations of nepotism against former VC Prof M Rustom Ali.

"We have resumed administrative work, but a lot of difficulties remain in the absence of a vice chancellor," said Bijan Kumar Brahma, acting registrar of the university.

"The authorities have assured us that they will discuss the issues with the next vice-chancellor," said Md Sohag Hossain, secretary of the officers' association. However, examination results of 21 departments are yet to be published. The time of its publication is still uncertain. "We don't publish the results without the VC's approval even after completing procedures," said Tawhida Khanam, controller of examinations.



BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam speaks at a rally at Polo Ground in the port city yesterday. Earlier in the day, Fakhru and other party members were barred by police when they were on their way to Kalurghat Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra. They were going to the betar kendra to pay tribute to the martyrs marking Independence Day.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN