

## EVM USE IN 150 SEATS

## AL upbeat, BNP rejects decision

## AGENCIES

The Election Commission has decided to use EVMs in up to 150 parliamentary seats in the next general elections.

Speaking to journalists, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said his party welcomed the decision.



OBABDUL QUADER

**Using EVM is trouble-free. Those who are afraid of EVM, do they want free and fair elections at all?**



MIRZA FAKHRUL

**This decision of the EC has proved that it has become an associate body of the ruling party.**

Terming the EVM use trouble-free, he said those who are afraid of EVM, "do they want free and fair elections at all?"

Meanwhile, BNP turned down the EC's decision, saying the move was taken as per the government's desire to help it retain power.

Party Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir also renewed their demand

"We wanted EVM in 300 constituencies but the EC agreed to use EVM in half of all constituencies... and we welcome the decision," Quader said.

Referring to a dialogue with the EC, he said AL had suggested the EC for using the EVM in 2018 as a modern technology because his party never wants recurrence of vote rigging and forgery in the elections.

that the next polls must be held through traditional ballots under a non-partisan government to be conducted by a fresh EC.

Fakhrul also said this decision of the EC has proved that it has become an associate body of the ruling party. "Because, they (AL) sought the use of EVMs in 300 seats, but the EC fixed it in 150 through a compromise."



Many people were seen walking down Mayor Hanif Flyover yesterday, a structure only meant for vehicles, not pedestrians. The reason behind this scene is that local buses stop on the downward slope of the flyover, disregarding commuters' safety and traffic rules, to pick and drop off passengers. This not only causes long tailbacks but may also lead to serious accidents.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## PK Halder's 2 associates arrested

The sisters were trying to flee country, says Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion has arrested two associates of former NRB Global Bank Managing Director (MD) PK Halder, as they were attempting to flee the country.

They are: Sharmin Ahmed (42) and her sister Tania Ahmed (37). Both are daughters of Khair Uddin Ahmed, a director of Peoples Leasing and Financial Service.

Khair and his family members took loan of over Tk 200 crore from the financial institute, Rab said.

The sisters, who had been staying in Canada since 2003, took loan of Tk 66 crore but never paid back, Khandaker Al Moin, Rab's Legal and Media wing director, told a press briefing at Rab media centre yesterday.

They arrived in the country on July 28 to attend a family programme and were preparing to leave the country yesterday. Based on a tip off, Rab arrested them, Moin said.

The sisters had their luggage sent to Dhaka airport in an ambulance. They planned to reach the airport in an ambulance too, the Rab official said.

Replying to a query, the Rab director said Khair was arrested earlier. He is unwell and on bail.

The two sisters were last summoned by the court in April.

## 5 YEARS OF ROHINGYA CRISIS

## Bhasan Char: better conditions, but home still beckons

MOHAMMAD AL MASUM MOLLA

When Abdul Hakim landed on a remote island in the Bay of Bengal some 20 months ago, finding a job was his main concern. There were little to no employment opportunities in Bhasan Char when he arrived in the first batch from a cramped Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar.

"Now I work as a day labourer, earning Tk 400 per day. But I also have options of farming and fishing, so I grow vegetables in the backyard of my house," said the 45-year-old Rohingya man over the phone from the island.

Hakim is one of 30,000 Rohingyas who have so far been shifted to Noakhali's Bhasan Char in multiple phases from the Rohingya camps in Ukha and Teknaf. The government started relocating the population in December 2020 to provide them with a better life and reduce the loads on the camps.

Formed within the last 20 years by the silt at the mouth of the Meghna River, the island currently has 120 brick-built cluster villages and 120 cyclone shelters. Bangladesh Navy developed the island under a Tk 3,100-crore housing project funded with taxpayers' money.

The project was taken after some 750,000 Rohingyas fled a brutal military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine and took shelter in Cox's Bazar in the months following August 2017. They joined some 300,000 other Rohingyas, who had fled previous



This aerial view of Bhasan Char shows a portion of the housing facilities that has been built on the island to relocate the Rohingyas from Cox's Bazar.

FILE PHOTO

waves of violence in Rakhine.

As today marks the fifth year of the largest exodus, around 1,000 more Rohingyas are scheduled to arrive at Bhasan Char.

The quiet, calm and isolated island with a few shops, Bhasan Char has seen a massive change with around a hundred small shops being set up by the refugees. A shopping mall has also been built in Bhasan Char.

"When I first came here, there was no sign of life, only structures. Now the island is bustling," said Amzad Ali, who came to the island last year.

Currently, a total of 56 local and international NGOs, including the United Nations, are working here in various sectors despite the UN not being involved in the Bhasan Char project at the initial stage.

However, Rohingyas have been urging to get permission for movement between Cox's Bazar

and Bhasan Char, a demand that has the United Nations' support.

Following the demand, around 2,500 Rohingyas have already gone to Cox's Bazar and returned to the island, said officials.

"This helps a lot to mobilise the Rohingya population to come to Bhasan Char. Now more of them are interested to come here," Commodore Rashed Sattar, project director of Ashrayan-3 Project – popularly known as the Bhasan Char project – told this correspondent.

He mentioned that another challenge was to create employment opportunities, which has seen great success so far.

A local electronic manufacturing company trained around 100 Rohingya people in assembling electronic parts.

"Currently, 500 Bhasan Char residents working in the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## Strengthen repatriation efforts

Speakers urge int'l community

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

International community has to take responsibility for the 1.2 million Rohingyas who are creating enormous pressure on Bangladesh, said civil society groups at a webinar yesterday.

They said not a single Rohingya could be repatriated to Myanmar since the 2017 influx, which is putting various kinds of pressure on Bangladesh.

Besides, the funding for them is also dwindling. While the budget allocated for the Rohingyas this year was \$881 million, so far only \$426 million or 49 percent has been met.

Cox's Bazar CSO-NGO Forum, a network of around 50 local organisations, organised the event. Stressing the importance of repatriation, speakers said Rohingya crisis could pose a serious threat to Cox's Bazar and the entire nation if it's not ensured.

Abu Murshed Chowdhury, chief executive of Programme for Helpless And Lagged Societies; Disaster Forum Member Secretary Gawher Nayeem Wahra; Manzoor Hasan, executive director at Brac University's Center for Peace and Justice; Chief Executive of Mukti Cox's Bazar Bimal Chandra Dey Sarkar; and COAST Foundation Executive Director Rezaul Karim Chowdhury were key speakers.

## Old habits die hard

Many govt officials arrive late on first day of new office schedule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Many government officials failed to join their respective offices at the secretariat on time yesterday, the day the new office schedule went into effect.

Office hours have been reduced to seven hours for government officials. They now work from 8:00am to 3:00pm to make more use of daylight and save electricity.

Around 8:25am, this correspondent saw officials getting off vehicles at the entrance of building-1 and long queues of vehicles on secretariat premises.

Even an hour later, some officials were seen running towards the elevator of building-6 after arriving.

The correspondent asked the officials about their delay, but most refused to answer. On his way to the elevator, a joint secretary said he was stuck in traffic.

Before the new schedule, work started at 9:00am and ended at 5:00pm.

Office hours have been reduced to seven hours for government officials. They now work from 8:00am to 3:00pm to make more use of daylight and save electricity.

Reducing working hours for the country's benefit, but some seem nonchalant about the matter. "We've to understand that this is an unusual time, and we have to act accordingly."

Later at a programme at the secretariat, State Minister for Public Administration Farhad Hossain said failing to deliver assigned tasks on time will be reflected on respective officers' performance.

Replying to a question, he said, "Right now, days are longer; we're getting more daylight. We want to use it. Besides, electricity will be required for irrigation. This [schedule] will be changed later."

Talking to journalists, State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid said they will examine the benefits of the new schedule for about a week.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Dengue death toll 19

Total number of patients 4,937

521 still undergoing treatment

Number of recovered patients 4,397

165 more hospitalised yesterday

SOURCE: DGHS

PRAYER TIMING

AUGUST 25

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 4:30 12:45 4:45 6:33 8:00

JAMAAT 5:05 1:15 5:00 6:36 8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## Implement DAP properly for a liveable Dhaka

Demands Institute of Planning, Development

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Institute of Planning and Development (IPD) yesterday demanded the government properly implement the Detailed Area Plan (DAP) to make the city liveable.

They made the demand through a press statement, a day after the gazette notification for the new DAP of Rajuk was published.

Adil Mohammad Khan, executive director of IPD, said several aspects of modern town-planning have been incorporated in this DAP. They include community-based and transport-oriented development, decentralisation of services, population-density zoning, ward-based health care, quality government educational institutions, and recreational centres.

Creating local, green parks; building pedestrian-friendly infrastructure; encouraging bicycle lanes; and integrating non-motorised transport into the overall plan have been included in the DAP, he mentioned.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



While leather wallets at premium stores cost around Tk 1,000 or more, this vendor at Purana Paltan sells such ones for Tk 100 each. He claimed that he can sell those at such low prices as they were made by companies that procure scrap leather from different tanneries and then sells them to vendors like him wholesale. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## ARREST OF GOVT OFFICIAL HC verdict on seeking prior permission today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday fixed today for delivering its verdict on a petition that challenged the legality of a provision for the law enforcers to seek permission from the government to arrest public service holders in any criminal case against them.

The HC bench of Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Justice Kazi Md Ejarul Haque Akondo set the date after concluding hearing arguments on the petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh on October 14, 2019.