

Presidential election to be held by Feb 23

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission yesterday said the presidential election will be held sometime between January 23 and February 23.

EC Secretary Jahangir Alam, after a meeting at the EC office, said the election process has already begun.

"We will contact the Parliament Secretariat and fix the date of a meeting between the chief election commissioner and the Speaker. The election will be held sometime between January 23 and February 23."

On April 24, 2018, President Abdul Hamid took oath as the head of the state for the second consecutive term, which will expire on April 24 this year.

Hamid's first five-year tenure had expired on the same date in 2018, after he took office in 2013.

According to article 123 of the constitution, the presidential election must be held 90 to 60 days before the expiry of the five-year term.

And as per the constitution, Hamid cannot become president for another term, as he was elected for two terms.

Speaking to reporters at her Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban office yesterday,

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Bill to allow govt adjust power, gas prices placed in JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The amendment to the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission act that empowers the government to adjust the gas and electricity tariffs without hearing has been placed in the parliament yesterday.

Nasrul Hamid, the state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, placed the bill, which was then forwarded to the parliamentary standing committee on the power ministry for vetting.

The parliamentary watchdog has been asked to submit its report within five working days.

Earlier on January 5, Law Minister Anisul Huq placed the "Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (amendment) Ordinance, 2022" in the

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Local residents lay flowers at a bus stop in front of a residential building in the Ukrainian city of Dnipro yesterday. The building was destroyed as a result of a missile strike that killed at least 45 people on January 14.

PHOTO: AFP

BIDEN'S HOME SEARCH Six more classified documents found

AFP, Washington

Officials from the US Department of Justice found six more classified documents during a search of Joe Biden's family home in Delaware this week, the president's personal lawyer said in a statement Saturday.

The new disclosure served up another embarrassing twist for Biden in an affair dogging him just as he gets ready to declare whether he will run for another term in 2024.

Biden insists he has done nothing wrong and has downplayed the situation as an innocent mistake.

Documents from his time as vice president and marked as classified first turned up in an office at a Biden affiliated think tank in Washington last year, and then again at his home in Delaware. Altogether they are about a dozen documents.

After the second find, the White House offered to let the Department of Justice search the Delaware home – the search was carried out on Friday and is now concluded, Biden attorney Bob Bauer said.

"DOJ took possession of materials it deemed within the scope of its inquiry, including six items consisting of documents with classification markings and surrounding materials," Bauer said.

The search lasted more than 12 hours and covered "all working, living and storage spaces in the home," Bauer said.



"DOJ had full access to the President's home, including personally handwritten notes, files, papers, binders, memorabilia, to-do lists, schedules, and reminders going back decades," he said.

Some of the new papers seized were from Biden's time in the Senate and some were

from his tenure as vice president, according to Bauer.

The White House has said the earlier batches of documents were turned over to the Justice Department and National Archives, which handles presidential records, as soon as they were found.

On Thursday, Biden dismissed the furor over the discovery of the old classified documents.

Asked by reporters during a trip to California about the issue, he said: "I think you're going to find there's nothing there."

"I have no regrets. I'm following what the lawyers have told me they want me to do. It's exactly what we're doing."

"We found a handful of documents... were filed in the wrong place. We immediately turned them over to the Archives and the Justice Department. We're fully cooperating and looking forward to getting this resolved quickly," he added.

Attorney General Merrick Garland earlier this month appointed a special counsel, former government lawyer Robert Hur, to act as special counsel for the investigation.

Still elusive after all these years

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on large tertiary hospitals could be halved. Presently, many go straight to those hospitals with minor illnesses, deterring the hospital's ability to properly treat critical and emergency patients.

They said a solid patient referral system could connect around 18,000 public and 16,000 private healthcare facilities with all other high-level hospitals countrywide.

NO TRUST IN PRIMARY CARE

About 5,000 union healthcare centres countrywide are supposed to be the first place for patients to go to. But none of them work 24/7 due to a lack of doctors and other support staff, health officials said.

Most of the upazila health complexes also fail to properly serve patients due to shortages of doctors, support staff, logistics, and inefficiency in hospital operations.

Without options, people rush to large hospitals in cities.

Joyal Abedin, 62, of Cumilla, had been suffering from chest pain for six months. He had no confidence in the upazila health complex or the medical college hospital in Cumilla. "There's no proper treatment there," he said.

He travelled 70km to Dhaka and stood in a queue of 500 patients at the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD).

The NICVD doctor, Nurun Un Nobi Khandaker, said Abedin could have had treatment in his locality. "This is a specialised hospital that handles complex heart-related illnesses. But we have to handle a large number of patients with minor illnesses every day," he said, adding, "The rush could have been halved if these patients had visited primary healthcare hospitals first."

Avoid middle-income trap at all costs

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For this, rationalising the tariff system to reduce the nominal protection rate, removing non-tariff barriers and liberalising trade in services will be critically important.

To safeguard the country's successful development outcomes and support sustained growth and poverty reduction, it is important that the country maintains stable macroeconomic conditions underpinned by sound macroeconomic fiscal management.

"There should be no compromise in improving education as this is the key to improving human capital. Primary and secondary education needs long-term investment so that a child can get proper guidelines from a very early

grassroots.

But keeping medical professionals in rural areas has been a big challenge.

The health and family welfare ministry issued a circular on August 27, 2021, proposing to extend the year-long internship programme for MBBS graduates to two years.

If the proposal had been adopted, the interns would have had to spend the second year at union-level healthcare centres.

The government, however, backtracked amid protests from interns and medical students.

"This was a very good move. But I don't know why the government retracted. It exposes a lack of political commitment," Gonoshasthaya Kendra Founder Zafnullah Chowdhury told The Daily Star.

He, however, said the rural healthcare centres were not suitable for interns and doctors to stay.

Currently, doctors under the government healthcare service are required to spend the first three years of their job in rural areas. In many cases, they do not stay the full three years, citing poor lodging facilities and a lack of other amenities.

"Healthcare professionals serving in rural areas are incentivised in developed countries. Unless the government incentivises medical students and professionals, they will not like to stay in rural areas. There are issues too," Zafnullah said.

Syed Abdul Hamid, professor at the Institute of Health Economics (IHE) at Dhaka University, said secondary and tertiary hospitals need to be simultaneously readied before introducing the referral system.

"There are well-defined and established practices of referral systems in many countries. But the

policymakers fail to understand it when they speak about the referral system," said Muhammad Abdur Sabur, adjunct faculty at the IHE of DU.

Prof Md Eshreshamul Huq Chowdhury, secretary general of Bangladesh Medical Association, said the country's doctors would happily comply with any initiative to introduce a referral system.

"A referral system will pave the way for utilising the full capacity of our healthcare system and create more jobs," he said.

In India, there is no nationwide referral system, but many provinces have their own system that connects healthcare facilities at different levels, according to Shariful Haque, deputy programme manager (hospital service management) at the DGHS.

In England, the NHS e-Referral Service (e-RS) is a national digital platform refers patients from primary care to elective care services. e-RS allows patients to choose their first hospital or general practitioner.

WHAT NEXT

Currently, the hospital service management at the DGHS is working on a referral system, involving public and private facilities, in Manikganj and Gopalganj.

There will be a round-the-clock referral desk at each hospital where the staffers will connect patients to upper-level hospitals, said Borsha Jchinta Soren, deputy programme manager for the structural referral system at the DGHS.

"We have been designing this in a way that hospitals will stay ready with proper treatment arrangements so that patients don't struggle to get treatment in time," added Borsha.

There are well-defined and established practices of referral systems in many countries. But the

region.

The present economic situation of Bangladesh is mainly due to the global situation, so the government has already taken steps in the situation, said Ahmad Kaikaus, the WB's alternate executive director.

The government ordered to bring down the demand, so that foreign exchange dependency is reduced.

Another order is not to keep any land unfarmed, he said in a panel discussion on 'Celebrating Success: Exploring Possibilities'.

In the present supply chain disruption, Bangladesh is trying to improve connectivity with development partners and bilateral relationships, said Kaikaus, who is also the former principal secretary of Bangladesh.

The Washington-based multilateral lender is committed to working with the government in the upcoming months, said Martin Raiser, the WB's vice-president for the South Asia

1 dead after being hit by train

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A young man was killed, and two others were injured, after being hit by a train at the Brahmanbaria Railway Station in Poniout area on Saturday.

They were playing games on their mobile phones while sitting on the railway tracks with their headphones on.

The dead was identified as Rimjhim, 20. The injured are Arifat Mia, 22, and Al-Amin alias Dipu, 25.

Hatem Ali Bhuiyan, SI and in-charge of Brahmanbaria Railway Police Outpost, said, "The three were on the tracks around 11:30pm. As they had their headphones on, none of them heard the incoming Surma mail train."

"Rimjhim was crushed under the wheels and died on the spot. The others were critically injured ... Locals rescued them and took them to Brahmanbaria General Hospital."

No Covid-19 death in 24 hrs, positivity rate 0.41%

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

No Covid-19 deaths were reported in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, said a press release by the Directorate General of Health Services.

This means, the total number of Covid deaths in the country remains at 29,441, with the mortality rate at 1.44 percent.

Meanwhile, at least 11 new cases were reported during the same period after testing 2,674 samples across the country, raising the total number of cases to 20,37,444, the release added.

At least 199 patients have recovered during this time, with the number of recoveries now at 19,90,960.

1 killed, 2 injured after sand pile collapses on them

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A worker was killed and two others were injured after they were crushed under a sand pile at a sand unloading station in Tangail's Bhuanpur upazila yesterday.

The dead was identified as Rashedul Islam, 25.

Masudul Haque Masud, chairman of Nikrail union parishad, said the incident occurred at Sarpolsha area around 4:00am, when the sand pile collapsed on the three while they were working.

Rashedul died on the spot and the two others were sent to the local hospital.

Faridul Islam, OC of Bhuanpur police, said Rashedul's body was handed over to his family after autopsy.

Govt bodies in Dhaka

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obstruction of the original route of

Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) Line 6 in

Sayyababu

while Mouchak-Moghobazar

flyover was an obstruction of the

planned Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Line 3

between the airport and Keraniganj.

Yesterday's DTCA meeting held at

its new building was its 16th governing

council meeting. The previous meeting

was held in June 2021.

The DTCA is tasked with providing

regular supervision and coordination

for planning for all transportation

infrastructure development work in

Dhaka, Narayanganj, Munshiganj,

Manikganj, Gazipur and Narsingdi.

After the meeting, Quader said

undertaking and implementing of

different projects in Dhaka city lacked

coordination and other participants of

the meeting made similar observations.

Quader did not directly answer

when he was asked whether the new

committee was formed because the

DTCA failed to play its role as a

coordinator.

"He [the LGRD minister] is a vital

part of the DTCA...We are not going

beyond our jurisdiction. We have

formed it [the committee] for better

coordination..." Quader said.

There can be disagreements