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Ceramics sales go down



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Test aggression on agenda for Tigers



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Gujarat court grants bail to Rahul Gandhi



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Indebted to my family for everything I have: Oyshee

No EVM in next JS polls

EC to hold the elections in all constituencies with paper ballots, transparent ballot boxes

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission has decided not to use Electronic Voting Machines in the next parliamentary election.

Major opposition political parties, including the BNP, are dead against the use of the machines.

The decision is a major deviation from the EC's work plan for the next polls. It had planned to use EVMs in up to 150 constituencies.

After a meeting of the election commissioners yesterday, EC Secretary Jahangir Alam revealed the decision. He said that a lack of funding by the government to buy new machines and refurbish the old ones is a reason behind the decision.

Jahangir told reporters that paper ballots and transparent ballot boxes would be used in all 300 constituencies during the polls, slated for late December or early January 2024.

On the EC's earlier plans to use EVMs in up to 150 constituencies, he said a Tk 8,000 crore project was undertaken in this regard, but the Planning Commission did not let the project go further.



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Prothom Alo reporter Samsuzzaman Shams walks out of Dhaka Central Jail on bail yesterday evening. He was picked up on March 29 from his Savar home hours after a case was filed against him under the Digital Security Act.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

5 cities to go to polls from May to June

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Gazipur City Corporation election will be held on May 25, while for Khulna and Barishal city corporations, it will take place on June 12. Rajshahi and Sylhet city corporations will go to polls on June 21.

Voting in all five cities will be held from 8:00am to 4:00pm through electronic voting machines, said Md Jahangir Alam, secretary of the Election Commission, yesterday.

CCTV cameras will also be installed in all the polling centres, he added.

The decisions were taken at a meeting of the EC yesterday, with Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal in the chair.

Election Commissioners Ahsan Habib Khan, Rasheda Sultana, Md

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Unease in BNP over city polls

It fears some party men may join the polls defying directives

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Though the BNP has said it will not take part in the coming elections to five city corporations, the party fears that some of its leaders may run in the polls violating its directive.

Going beyond the party's decision, BNP leaders Taimur Alam Khandaker and Monirul Haque Sakku had contested the last polls to Narayanganj and Cumilla city corporations as independents and both of them were defeated.

Party insiders said local BNP leaders who have been working in their electoral areas for a long time may join the city polls.

"We have decided that we will not take part in any election under the incumbent government. So, if anyone violates the party's order, we will take steps after seeing the situation," Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, secretary general of the BNP, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said those who contested city polls previously going against the party's decision were expelled. "We are in a movement. So, there is no question of joining any polls under the incumbent government."

The Election Commission has already announced the schedule for the polls to five city corporations - Gazipur, Sylhet, Khulna, Barishal and Rajshahi. In the 2018 polls to those five city corporations, AL candidates won four mayoral posts while the BNP's nominee became victorious in one.

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FY24 BUDGET

Inflation to determine social safety budget

Allocation likely to be 15pc more

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government is set to increase the amount of allowance under the social safety net programme in the next budget to cushion the poor from the impacts of high inflation.

Inflation averaged 8.74 percent in the first eight months of the fiscal year, way above the budgetary target of 5.6 percent, according to data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

"If inflation shoots up by 5 percentage points, we will increase the allowance by the same proportion," Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal told The Daily Star yesterday.

The amount of allowance is likely to be increased by Tk 50 to Tk 100 in different safety net programmes, as per a decision taken at the meeting of the cabinet committee on social safety presided over by Kamal.

The global economy has been impacted by the Ukraine war.



"If inflation shoots up by 5 percentage points, we will increase the allowance by the same proportion,"

AHM Mustafa Kamal
Finance Minister

"We are struggling to move forward amid this crisis period," Kamal said.

The government has targeted to broaden its safety net programme to cover about 8 lakh people under three programmes: old age allowance, allowance for widowed, deserted and destitute women and allowance for the financially insolvent disabled.

"Different ministries have made demands and we are addressing those with our limited resources," he said.

Subsequently, the allocation for the social safety net programme will increase by about 15 percent to Tk 1.3 lakh crore in the upcoming budget.

The social safety net budget also includes pensions for retired government employees and their families. This took up about 25 percent of this year's social safety budget of Tk 1.13 lakh crore.

Subsequently, the International Monetary

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Shams freed on bail after 5 days

Vows to continue ethical journalism

STAR REPORT

Prothom Alo reporter Samsuzzaman Shams yesterday said his ordeal won't be able to stop him from telling the truth.

He said this while talking to his colleagues at the newspaper office after his release from Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj.

Five days after his detention from his Savar home, Shams walked out of the jail at 6:22pm.

Earlier in the day, a Dhaka court granted him bail until submission of the police report in a case filed under the Digital Security Act with Ramna Police Station.

Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Muhammad Asaduzzaman Noor, around 3:00pm, came up with the bail order upon Tk 20,000 bond with two guarantors, Chaitanya Chandra Halder, one of Shams' counsels, told The Daily Star.

Upon his release, Shams came to the Prothom Alo office in the capital's Karwan Bazar, where his colleagues greeted him with flowers.

He expressed his gratitude to everyone who wished him well during his ordeal.

"I am not worried at all. But I felt bad twice - when I saw the picture of my mother crying and then when I saw Moti Bhai in court," he said.

"I will continue to tell the truth and do ethical journalism," Shams added.

He said he was treated well by different authorities during his ordeal. "As a member of the Prothom Alo family, I would look forward to doing the journalism properly," he said, adding that he tried several jobs earlier, but came back to Prothom Alo because it was a family to him.

Congratulating Shams on his return, Prothom Alo Editor Matiuur Rahman said, "This is a very happy moment. There are more tests ahead."

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BUSINESS

Tax evasion costing dearly: CPD

Bangladesh is losing potential taxes from as low as Tk 41,800 crore to as high as Tk 223,000 crore every year because of tax evasion committed by individuals and corporates, said the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) yesterday.

The amount of tax losses rises when tax avoidance is taken into consideration. "The amount of tax evasion is estimated to be eight times the social safety net and welfare expenditures," said CPD Research Director Khondaker Golam Moazzem.

STORY ON B1



People save their spots in a queue by placing their bags on the divider of the road where an OMS truck (not in the picture) was parked in the capital's Mirpur-2 yesterday. They do it so they could wait under the shade of roadside trees a few yards away. Consumers from the low-income group have to wait from morning to late afternoon to get essentials at subsidised prices, and the scorching noon sun sometimes becomes unbearable to withstand.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Sultana died from brain haemorrhage

Say forensic experts; family still blaming Rab for death

ANWAR ALL, Rajshahi

The cause of Sultana Jasmine's death was brain haemorrhage due to excessive stress and a sudden rise in blood pressure, forensic experts of Rajshahi Medical College said yesterday.

"As her blood pressure shot up due to stress, two blood vessels inside her brain swelled up and ruptured, causing internal bleeding," Kafil Uddin, associate professor and head of RMC's forensic medicine department, said while explaining the outcome of the autopsy to reporters who went to the hospital for updates.

"Ultimately, her body went into a shock," he said, adding that shock is a medical condition when the brain stops receiving oxygen and other nutrients.

Meanwhile, Sultana's maternal uncle Nazmul Haque Montu held the Rab members, who kept her in custody till her burial, responsible for the death.

"While in their custody, they obviously did something that caused her death," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Sultana, 41, an office assistant of Naogaon's Chandipur union land office, died on March 24, two days after she

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