



## POLLS ENVIRONMENT

# 2 commissioners not informed of concept note

## Say EC high officials

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission has sent a concept note to the participants of an EC workshop without the knowledge of two election commissioners.

Election commissioners Md Alamgir and Anisur Rahman were not informed about the note and its contents, said EC high officials.

They said the two commissioners do not agree with the commission's statement in the note regarding the absence of a conducive environment for the national polls.

"I haven't seen the concept note. It was not presented before us even through a file," Anisur told The Daily Star yesterday afternoon.

"A written paper that represents the commission was sent to the participants without our knowledge. We don't know anything. It is not right," he added.

EC officials said they prepared the concept note to provide the workshop participants with ideas on the topic of discussion.

In the note, the EC said the expected

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An excavator flattens the bank of the Turag, inside the demarcated area of the river, so that it can offload sand from vessels and load trucks near Mirpur's Diabari yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

# No individual can hold more than 15pc shares

## Cabinet okays draft law; PM says some firms got more work than they can handle

BAHARAM KHAN and MD ABBAS

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at yesterday's cabinet meeting said a few companies are taking up work beyond their capacities.

"Some companies are handling more work than they can do. They are not functioning properly, causing significant delays in the completion of our development projects," said Cabinet Secretary Mahbub Hossain quoting the PM.

"The prime minister has asked for government procurement to be more open and free," he said while briefing reporters after the meeting.

"She has directed us to ensure competition in government procurement," Mahbub said, adding that the PM also instructed them to amend the relevant rules to address this issue.

A draft policy titled "Sustainable Government Procurement Policy-2023" was approved at the meeting.

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## Bijoya Dashami today

STAR REPORT

The five-day Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of the Hindu community, ends today with the immersion of the Goddess Durga in the capital and elsewhere in the country.

Devotees will throng Puja mandaps to celebrate Bijoya Dashami, the last day of the festival.

Bijoya Dashami is the special ceremony of reaffirming peace and good relations among people.

On this day, families visit each other to share sweets.

Devotees will bid farewell to the mother deity and her children -- Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartik, and Ganesh -- through the immersion of their idols in the water wishing Durga's return next year.

Today is a public holiday.

# Gaza death toll tops 5,000

Nearly half of them children, says Gaza health ministry; Israel reports 300 new strikes in 24 hours

AFP, Rafah

Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry said yesterday that more than 5,000 people have been killed in the besieged Palestinian enclave since Israel launched its withering bombing campaign more than two weeks ago.

Alarm has surged about the spiralling humanitarian crisis in Gaza amid the war sparked by the October 7 Hamas attack.

On a day when Israel's army reported more than 300 new strikes within 24 hours, Gaza's health ministry said that more than 2,000 of the total deceased are children.

Thousands of buildings have been destroyed and more than one million people displaced in the territory that has been under siege and largely deprived of water, food and other basic supplies.

About a dozen trucks carrying desperately needed aid -- the third convoy in three days -- arrived inside Gaza from Egypt yesterday through Rafah, Gaza's only crossing not controlled by Israel.

The United States, which has

brokered the entry of the aid convoys, has vowed a "continued flow" of relief goods into Gaza, even as UN aid agencies have said far more is needed.

Fighting raged unabated overnight, after Prime Minister

**Thousands of buildings have been destroyed and more than one million people displaced in the territory that has been under siege and largely deprived of water, food and other basic supplies.**

Benjamin Netanyahu vowed again that Israel would "erase Hamas" and as a full-scale ground invasion loomed.

Gaza's Hamas-controlled government media office said that "more than 60 were martyred

in the raids" during the night -- including 17 in a single strike that hit a house in Gaza's north -- and at least 10 others were killed in new strikes early yesterday.

Rafah resident Mohammed Abu Sabalah said he had returned home from the local mosque after dawn prayers Monday and that "a quarter of an hour later there was a bombing".

"We couldn't see anything because of the thick smoke," he said, adding that "we thank God that we've emerged safe and sound" with "only a few windows and doors destroyed".

Israeli forces are massed near the Gaza border, and smaller units have already carried out limited incursions, targeting Hamas and hoping to rescue hostages, whose number Israel now puts at 222.

Tensions have been inflamed in the occupied West Bank, where 95 Palestinians have been killed in clashes involving Israeli security forces or settlers since fighting began in Gaza, according to the Ramallah-based health ministry.

In Gaza, where thousands have

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## Polls schedule likely by Nov 15

## Says an election commissioner

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission is likely to announce the schedule for 12th parliamentary polls by November 15.

The election is likely to take place by January 15, an election commissioner told this newspaper yesterday.

According to the constitution, the national election must be held anytime during the final 90 days of the parliament's tenure, which means the EC has to hold the polls by January 29.

The commission is set to hold two meetings with top officials of law enforcement agencies, and secretaries of ministries concerned as it prepares to announce the polls schedule.

The EC would sit with the law enforcers on October 30 and it would sit with top administration officials on November 1.

EC officials said in the meetings the commission will exchange views with officials about the election atmosphere, law and order, and the possible date for announcing the election schedule.

## Rock collected by Apollo 17 astronaut reveals moon's age

REUTERS, Washington

During the Apollo 17 mission in 1972 - the last time people walked on the moon - US astronauts Harrison Schmitt and Eugene Cernan collected about 243 pounds (110.4 kg) of soil and rock samples that were returned to Earth for further study.

A half century later, crystals of the mineral zircon inside a coarse-grained igneous rock fragment collected by Schmitt are giving scientists a deeper understanding about the moon's formation and the precise age of Earth's celestial partner.

The moon is about 40 million years older than previously thought - forming more than 4.46 billion years ago, within 110 million years after the solar system's birth, scientists said yesterday, based on analyses of the crystals.

The leading hypothesis for lunar formation is that during the solar system's chaotic early history a Mars-sized object called Theia slammed into primordial Earth. This blasted magma - molten rock - into space, forming a debris disk that orbited Earth and coalesced into the moon. But the exact timing of the moon's formation has been hard to nail down.

Mineral crystals were able to form after the magma cooled and solidified. The researchers used a method called atom probe tomography to confirm the age of the oldest-known solids that formed after the giant impact, the zircon crystals inside the fragment of a type of rock called norite collected by Schmitt.

## Imran Khan indicted in leaked document case

REUTERS, Islamabad

A Pakistani court indicted former Prime Minister Imran Khan and his deputy in an Official Secrets Act case yesterday, his party said, in another blow for the jailed former cricket star ahead of a general election expected in January.

The charge is related to a classified cable sent to Islamabad by Pakistan's ambassador in Washington early last year, which Khan is accused of making public.

Khan denies that and said its contents appeared in the media from other sources.

A special court indicted Khan and his party's deputy leader, former Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, his party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) told media, adding that the case would begin on Friday. It said it would challenge the indictment.

Khan said the cable was proof of a US conspiracy to push the Pakistani military to oust him in a parliamentary vote in 2022 because he had visited Moscow just before Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Both the United States and the Pakistani military deny that.

Khan was removed from office after losing the 2022 no-confidence vote and he then led protests against the government to push for an early general election, and

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Vehicles in the pouring rain on Manik Mia Avenue while a pedestrian runs for cover yesterday afternoon. The heavy rain eventually waterlogged some streets of the capital and caused traffic snarl-ups.

PHOTO: STAR

## Depression in Bay turns into cyclone Hamoon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A deep depression over the west central Bay had intensified into cyclonic storm Hamoon which was over the west central Bay and adjoining northwest Bay last night, according to Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

At 6:00pm yesterday, it was centred about 670 km west-southwest of Chattogram port, 630 km west-southwest of Cox's Bazar port, 540 km southwest of Mongla port and 540 km south west of Payra port.

It is likely to move north-northeastwards and intensify further.

Maximum sustained wind speed within 54 km of the cyclone centre is about 62 KPH rising to 88 KHP in gusts/squalls.

Sea will remain very rough near the cyclone centre.

Maritime ports of Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Mongla and Payra have been asked to lower local cautionary signal No. 3 and hoist local warning signal No. 4, reports BSS.