



EC to invite all parties for talks on Nov 4

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission will sit with all registered political parties ahead of the announcement of the schedule for the upcoming parliamentary polls.

The move came amid a political stalemate over the polls time government as Awami League and BNP are at odds over the issue.

The EC will sit with all 44 parties on November 4, EC Secretariat Secretary Jahangir Alam told The Daily Star yesterday afternoon.

The dialogue will be split into two halves as the EC will meet 22 parties in the morning and the 22 others in the evening.

Jahangir said the commission plans to inform the parties about the commission's preparations for the polls at the dialogue and will also listen to their recommendations, if they have any, regarding the election.

The EC is likely to announce the election schedule in mid-November and it is likely to be held at the beginning of January.

The commission will invite two top

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Two boats carrying tourists head for Niladri Lake, a popular tourist attraction in Sunamganj. Such boats designed specially for tourists take them on a daylong trip to the picturesque lake to give them a break from the busy urban life. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

POLITICAL TURMOIL UN concerned over violence

US calls for probe, UK urges calm

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Expressing concern over the ongoing violence ahead of the upcoming general election, the United Nations, the United States, and the United Kingdom yesterday called on political parties in Bangladesh to refrain from violence or the use of excessive force.

According to a statement from the UN Human Rights Office, as of yesterday morning, "at least 11 people died in connection with the protests in many parts of the country. The victims include two policemen, six opposition party members, and two bystanders."

The statement urged police to ensure that force is only used when strictly necessary and, if so, in full compliance with the principles of legality, precaution, and proportionality.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres emphasised the importance of respecting the right to free expression and peaceful assembly, said his spokesperson, Stéphane Dujarric, in response to a question at Monday's regular briefing in New York.

On the same note, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, said, "We urge the government to observe the greatest restraint to curb political tensions at this critical time and to take steps to ensure that human rights are fully upheld for all Bangladeshis before, during, and after the elections."

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Dust caused 15-yr winter that killed dinosaurs: study

AFP, Paris

Around 66 million years ago, an asteroid bigger than Mount Everest smashed into Earth, killing off three quarters of all life on the planet -- including the dinosaurs. This much we know.

But exactly how the impact of the asteroid Chicxulub caused all those animals to go extinct has remained a matter of debate.

The leading theory recently has been that sulphur from the asteroid's impact -- or soot from global wildfires it sparked -- blocked out the sky and plunged the world into a long, dark winter, killing all but the lucky few.

However, research published Monday based on particles found at a key fossil site reasserted an earlier hypothesis: that the impact winter was caused by dust kicked up by the asteroid.

Fine silicate dust from pulverised rock would have stayed in the atmosphere for 15 years, dropping global temperatures by up to 15 degrees Celsius, researchers said in a study in the journal Nature Geoscience.

Back in 1980, father-and-son scientists Luis and Walter Alvarez first proposed that the dinosaurs were killed off by an asteroid strike that shrouded the world in dust.

Their claim was initially met with some scepticism -- until a decade later when the massive crater of Chicxulub was found in what is now the Yucatan Peninsula on the Gulf of Mexico.



Onions now Tk 140, potatoes Tk 65 a kg

SUKANTA HALDER

Prices of potatoes and onions have skyrocketed in the kitchen markets.

The local variety of onions was selling for Tk 120-140 a kg in Mohammadpur Krishi Market, and kitchen markets of Mirpur-1, New Market, and Karwan Bazar in the capital yesterday.

Traders say the price of all types of the bulb increased mainly due to the rise in the price of imported onions.

Over the last seven days, the price of local onions jumped up to Tk 130-140 from Tk 90-95 per kg. Imported onions were sold at Tk 120-125 a kg, up from Tk 70-80.

Mohammad Anwar Hossain, a retailer at Mirpur-1 kitchen market, said prices of potatoes and onions are increasing every day. He did not get any satisfactory answers from wholesalers when asked about the reason for the abnormal increase in prices.

He added that the sale of onions and potatoes decreased by 30 percent due to high prices.

A large portion of the onion demand is met by imports from India. On Saturday, India decided to impose a floor price on onion exports to discourage outbound shipments and thereby ensure stability in its domestic market.

Shahid Alam, a shopper in Mirpur-1, yesterday said he had to pay Tk 30 extra to buy a kg of local onions.

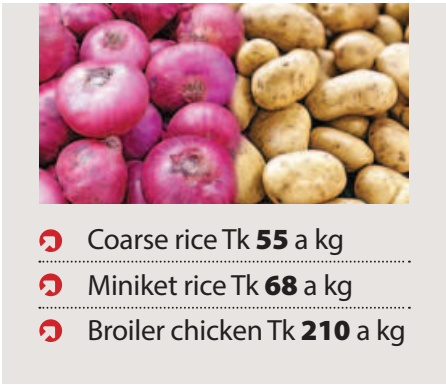
"When the grocer asked for the extra, I could not believe my ears. I asked him why the price hike but he could not give any

reasonable answer," he said.

Shahid said he had to cut consumption of several essentials because of high prices.

Potatoes were being sold for Tk 50-55 a kg a week ago and the price increased to Tk 60-65 yesterday.

According to traders, there is a shortage in supply. Besides, the demand for potatoes has gone up due to high prices of



- Coarse rice Tk 55 a kg
- Miniket rice Tk 68 a kg
- Broiler chicken Tk 210 a kg

other vegetables.

On September 14, the commerce ministry fixed the prices of potatoes at Tk 35-36 per kg, onions at Tk 64-65 a kg, and eggs Tk 12 per piece. But the ministry's move fell flat as traders did not comply with it even the next day.

Abdul Majed, an onion importer and wholesaler at Shyambazar in Old Dhaka, said the recent announcement from India caused the price to go up further in domestic markets.

"I don't think the price will come down before the newly harvested onions hit the market in December," he said.

Prices of coarse and fine rice varieties went up Tk 2-3 per kg at retail shops over the last one week.

Nazrul Islam, a retailer at Karwan Bazar, said coarse varieties, including BR-28, rose to Tk 55 per kg from Tk 52 to Tk 53.

The price of miniket rice went up to Tk 68 from Tk 65 per kg. The price of nazirshail, another fine rice, was Tk 67 a kg, which increased to Tk 70, he said.

Omar Faruk, a wholesaler at Mohammadpur Krishi Market, yesterday said the government recently announced that it would increase purchase prices of paddy and rice by Tk 2 per kg this year.

This year, the government fixed the purchase price of Aman paddy at Tk 30 a kg, boiled rice at Tk 44 per kg, and white rice (Apar) at Tk 43 per kg. Since then, mill owners have increased the price of rice, citing shortage of paddy in the market.

The price of broiler chicken has also shot up. A week ago, broiler chicken was sold at Tk 180-190 a kg. It is now being sold at Tk 200-210.

The absence of government vigilance to curb the price and profiteering by a section of business people are mainly responsible for the price spiral of the commodities, said economics professor Selim Raihan at Dhaka University.

"Even after a long period of time, why this problem could not be solved by importing daily essentials or intervention in the market?" he asked.

Countdown to nat'l polls starts today

ROs, AROs may be appointed a week before schedule announcement

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission yesterday said it would hold the next national election on time regardless of whether or not the environment is conducive.

The 90-day countdown to the polls starts today.

This time, the commission is likely to appoint returning officers (ROs) and assistant returning officers (AROs) a week before the announcement of the election schedule.

Usually, they are picked on the day when the schedule is announced.

The ROs and the AROs will be given time to complete their preparations for the polls, said top EC officials.

"We are firmly moving forward to hold the election. Sometimes, we talk about a favourable or unfavourable environment for elections. It makes a lot of sense," Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habiburul Awal said yesterday.

After holding a meeting with US Ambassador Peter Haas at the EC Bhaban, he said whatever the situation might be, they are expecting that ultimately most political parties would take part in the polls and the situation would be conducive.

The CEC said the EC has no option but to conduct the election on time

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Israeli air strike kills 50 at Gaza refugee camp

AFP

The health ministry in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip said at least 50 people were killed yesterday in Israeli bombardment of a refugee camp in the Palestinian territory, which the army confirmed targeted a militant commander.

"More than 50 martyrs and around 150 wounded and dozens under the rubble, in a heinous Israeli massacre that targeted a large area of homes in Jabaliya camp in the northern [Gaza] Strip," a ministry statement said.

AFP video footage from the scene showed at least 47 bodies recovered from the rubble after the strike hit several houses in the densely crowded camp.

Dozens of onlookers could be seen standing on the edges of two vast craters as people searched for survivors.

Hours later, the Israeli military said it targeted Jabaliya camp with a strike, killing Ibrahim Biari -- a key Hamas commander linked to the October 7 attack on Israel by the group.

"His elimination was carried out as part of a wide-scale strike on terrorists and terror infrastructure belonging to the Central Jabaliya Battalion, which had taken control over civilian buildings in Gaza City," the military said.

"The strike damaged Hamas's command and control in the area, as well as its ability to direct military activity against IDF soldiers operating throughout the Gaza Strip.

"As a result of the strike, a large number of terrorists who were with Biari were killed. Underground terror infrastructure embedded beneath the buildings, used by the terrorists, also collapsed after the strike," the army said.



PHOTO: AFP

Palestinians look for survivors in the rubble of a building following Israeli bombing in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

ROHINGYA REPATRIATION Myanmar team in Cox's Bazar to build trust

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A Myanmar delegation yesterday visited Cox's Bazar to discuss Rohingya repatriation with the Bangladesh authorities and hold talks with the refugees.

The delegation held meetings with Bangladeshi officials and Rohingyas at two rest houses in Teknaf.

The visit took place as part of the process of building trust among the Rohingyas about their repatriation and verification, said Mia Md Mainul Kabir, director general of the Myanmar wing at the foreign ministry.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, he said repatriation would take time. "We are trying to ensure voluntary repatriation of Rohingyas."

Md Mizanur Rahman, refugee, relief and repatriation commissioner (RRRC), said the meetings have been arranged to resolve the crisis and dispel the distrust between the Myanmar authorities and the Rohingyas.

The 36-member Myanmar

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