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POLLS SCHEDULE EC to discuss possible date with president today

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal and four election commissioners are set to meet with President Mohammed Shahabuddin today to discuss whether the election schedule can be announced on November 14 or 15.

The EC will make the final decision about when to announce the election schedule after today's meeting at the Bangabhaban, The Daily Star has learnt from people informed with the proceedings.

It is customary for the EC to make a courtesy call to the president before announcing the poll schedule.

EC secretary Jahangir Alam yesterday said the schedule is likely to be announced in the first half of this month.

At the meeting with the president, the EC will brief the former on the election preparations, Jahangir told reporters.

"If there is any advice and direction

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Light traffic at the Sonargaon intersection in the capital's Karwan Bazar area on the first day of the BNP's two-day blockade around 10:00am yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

‘Don’t intend to form a new political party’ Hafizuddin says he’s still with BNP, refutes info minister’s claim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Vice Chairman Hafizuddin Ahmed yesterday denied any designs to form a new political party, as suggested by the information minister.



On Monday, Hasan Mahmud, the information and broadcasting minister, said many people were lining up to join Trinamool BNP and that another political party would be formed by former BNP minister Hafiz.

"I am a very insignificant person in the politics of Bangladesh, especially in BNP politics. I have lost interest in politics due to my physical condition," Hafiz said at a press conference in the capital's Banani.

The retired army major said he had been in the BNP for 31 years and that he

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Serving time in others’ stead

Ctg jail finds 13 inmates doing time for
someone else for as little as Tk 3,000

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

When "Senuwara Begum" of Cox's Bazar surrendered to a court and eventually landed in prison in connection with a narcotics case, there was no reason for suspicion.

However, when her fingerprints were taken in jail last month so that those could be matched with the records in the NID server, Senuwara turned out to be Monira Begum of Teknaf.

A probe found that Monira was trying to serve Senuwara Begum's time for money.

The Chattogram prison authorities identified around 12 more such incidents in the prison this year.

Among them, two are still behind bars while the rest are on bail, said the jail authorities.

Jail officials and court sources said with the help of a group of dishonest lawyers, the incidents are recurring.

In most incidents, poor people serve the time in someone else's stead.

Tea vendor Mojibur Rahman of the port city's Chandaog area surrendered before a court in Chattogram in a case over cheque fraud.

He served time instead of the actual convict Nasir Ahmed, who gave him just Tk 3,000.

The jail authorities discovered this on March 13.

Public Prosecutor Nasir Akhter told journalists that Mojib is not the accused in the case, so the court acquitted him, but he was sued for fraud and perjury.

Mojib's then lawyer Towhidur Islam told reporters that after learning about the fraudulence, he dropped his client.

Jail sources said Shahidul Islam instead of Md Yousuf of Banskhali, Ariful Islam for Bogura's Nazrul Islam, Rafiqul Islam for Shafiqul Howladar, Painpru Marma for Minu Marma, Khadiza Begum for Nasima Akhter, Kamal Hossen for Didarul Alam, Md Alam for Md Salam, Abu Nesar for Selim Uddin, Abdul Quader for Abdul Karim, and Saif Uddin for Md Babul spent time in prison.

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Thousands flee north Gaza as war escalates

Israel begins work to dismantle Hamas
tunnel network, continues to pound
other parts of the Palestinian enclave

REUTERS, Gaza/Jerusalem

Thousands of Palestinian civilians trudged in a forlorn procession out of the north of Gaza yesterday seeking refuge from Israeli air strikes and fierce ground fighting between Israeli troops and Hamas fighters.

The exodus took place in a four-hour window of opportunity announced by Israel, which has told residents to evacuate the north encircled by its armoured forces or risk being trapped in the violence.

But the central and southern parts of the small, besieged Palestinian enclave also came under fire again as the war entered its second month.

Palestinian health officials said an air strike that hit houses in the Nusseirat refugee camp killed 18 people yesterday morning. In Khan Younis, six people, including a young girl, were killed in an air strike.

"We were sitting in peace when all of a sudden an F16 air strike landed on a house and blew it up, the entire block, three houses next to each other," said a witness, Mohammed Abu Daqa.

"Civilians, all of them civilians. An old woman, an old man and there are others still missing under the rubble."

Gaza City, the Hamas's main bastion in the territory, is now surrounded by

Israeli forces. The military said troops have advanced to the heart of the city, while Hamas says its fighters have inflicted heavy losses.

Chief Israeli military spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said combat engineers were using explosive devices to destroy a Hamas tunnel network that stretches for hundreds of kilometres (miles) beneath Gaza.

G7 backs 'humanitarian
pauses' as Gaza death toll
hits 10,569

Israel says it does not
intend to 'reoccupy' Gaza
forever

Gaza deaths show
something 'wrong' with
Israel operation: UN chief

In a statement, the military yesterday said it had destroyed 130 tunnel shafts so far. "Combat engineers fighting in Gaza are destroying the enemy's weapons and are locating, exposing and detonating tunnel shafts," it said.

Meanwhile, UN officials and G7

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2 ex-student leaders killed as truck hits motorbike



Shouvik Karim Ariful Islam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two former leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra Federation, including its president, were killed when a truck hit their motorcycle and ran them over in the capital's New Eskaton area on Tuesday night.

Ex-president of the student body Ariful Islam, 40, and his friend Shouvik Karim, 42, former joint secretary of the Dhaka University unit, died on the spot.

Arif was the senior manager (sales and distribution) of University Press Limited (UPL). He was also a member of Ganosamhati Andolon's Jatiya Parishad while Shouvik was a private university teacher.

Witnesses said they fell on the road after the truck hit their bike around 11:45pm on Tuesday when the two were heading

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First NDB project to ensure safe water for Dhaka

Tk 4,440cr project expected to get
approval at today's Ecneec meeting

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government is set to take up its first New Development Bank-funded project to ensure safe water supply for Dhaka residents.

The proposal for the Tk 4,440 crore project titled "Extended Dhaka Water Supply Resilience" is expected to be placed at today's meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec).

The NDB, formerly known as the Brics Development Bank, will provide 78 percent of the project cost.

Under the project, a 40-kilometre transmission network and a 1,575 km distribution network will be established, while 170 deep tube wells will be set up at different parts of the capital.

Bangladesh is at the final stage of borrowing \$800 million from the NDB for two projects. The other project is the Dhaka-Narayanganj gas pipeline project.

The country has already agreed to pay \$188.4 million in paid-up capital to become a member of the new multilateral development bank.

Bangladesh will have to pay \$188.4 million in seven instalments in seven years. And it will be able to contribute \$753 million through the purchase of bonds later. This will serve as authorised capital.

This means Bangladesh's share in NDB will come to

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Another Tk
1,181 crore
project will be
placed at Ecneec.
It is aimed at
strengthening
the existing
mosquito
control unit
of the Local
Government
Division.

Shahriar hopes diplomats to be careful about what they say

UNB, Dhaka

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahriar Alam yesterday expressed hope that there will be no need to summon foreign diplomats before the next national election on any issues.

"We have reminded them of their limits in the past. It's too close to the election and they will remain careful," he told reporters at the foreign ministry.

Shahriar made the remarks while responding to a question about the summoning of foreign diplomats after their statements about the country's internal politics.

"After the recent months' engagement, I don't think it will require [summoning any of the diplomats] ... They said they will remain careful as their statements will have a bigger impact at this time," he said.

Shahriar said everyone is now in election mode and it is too close to the election.

He added that the government will take necessary steps if needed.

"However, if needed, it will be sad, and we will have no choice but to do whatever we think is right."



A woman walks holding the body of a Palestinian child killed in Israeli strikes in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Telescopes spot the oldest, most distant black hole formed after the big bang



CNN ONLINE

Two powerful Nasa telescopes have detected the oldest and most distant black hole ever found.

Data captured via energetic X-rays by the Chandra X-ray Observatory and James Webb Space Telescope has helped astronomers spot the signature of a growing black hole within the early universe just 470 million years after the big bang, which occurred 13.8 billion years ago.

The discovery, described in a study published Monday in the journal Nature Astronomy, may help astronomers piece together how some of the first supermassive black holes formed in the cosmos.

"We needed Webb to find this remarkably distant galaxy and Chandra to find its supermassive black hole," said lead study author Akos Bogdan, in a statement.