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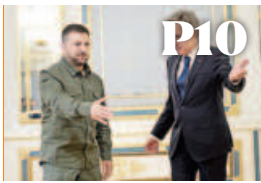
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Polls schedule likely today

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission is likely to announce the schedule for the 12th parliamentary polls this evening.

The EC may also announce that ballot papers will be sent to the polling stations on the morning of the election day, and deputy commissioners and divisional commissioners will act as returning officers, instead of EC officials, something that had earlier been planned.

More than one election commissioner also said they were unlikely to set up CCTV cameras in any polling centres. Monitoring so many feeds would be tough, they said.

While preparing its work plan for the national polls in September 2022, the EC had said it would install CCTV cameras in all polling centres.

Two election commissioners and EC sources yesterday said the commissioners would meet at 5:00pm today to finalise the schedule, and Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal is likely to unveil the details in a televised address to the nation afterwards.

Asked, EC spokesperson and Secretary Jahangir Alam yesterday said he would have a press briefing at 10:00am today about when and how the schedule would be announced.

He said that traditionally the CEC announces the schedule in an address to the nation. "The tradition will continue..."

Asked about US Assistant Secretary Donald Lu's letter to the Awami League, BNP, and Jatiya Party, urging talks without any conditions,

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A partial view of the Purbachal expressway, now named Sheikh Hasina Sarani, in the capital. Inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday, the 12.5km expressway connects Kuril with Kanchan Bridge via Purbachal. The photo was taken last night.

PHOTO: NAIMUR RAHMAN

Election-time government anyone's guess

BAHARAM KHAN

As the schedule of the 12th national election is likely to be announced today, many wonder what the polls-time government will look like.

Experts say the constitution does not specifically mention the structure of the polls-time government.

But it gives the prime minister four choices: keep all members of the cabinet; remove the technocrat ministers or any number of ministers along with the technocrats; introduce new members to the cabinet; or come up with something that belies the political situation, says Prof Shantanu Majumder, a teacher of political science at Dhaka University.

However, former cabinet secretary Ali Imam Majumdar points out that not all the choices that the prime minister has will give an effective solution.

"A better solution would be to make fundamental changes to the existing structure and ensure a participatory election. It could be done through political consensus or by amending the constitution as the parliament's tenure is not over yet," he said.

POLLS-TIME GOVT IN 2014, 2018

Before the 2014 national election, more than half the cabinet members – 16 ministers and 14 state ministers – resigned. The prime minister then formed a cabinet with 22 ministers and seven state-ministers from the ruling Awami League and its allies.

In 2018, the prime minister asked

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AFTER POLLS SCHEDULE BNP may lay siege to EC Secretariat

AL to take out processions welcoming start of election process

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The BNP activists will take to the streets once the Election Commission unveils the polls schedule, party insiders said.

It is likely to announce a siege to the Election Commission Secretariat along with the blockade that is on, they added.

The party is also considering replying to the letter from US Assistant Secretary of State Donald Lu about talks on the upcoming Jatiya Sangsad polls.

The insiders said if the election schedule is declared keeping thousands of BNP leaders and activists behind bars, the atmosphere would not be conducive to holding any talks.

"Stop the drama in the name of polls schedule. Otherwise, the blockade will continue until the government steps down," Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, senior joint secretary general of the BNP, said yesterday.

The Election Commission is likely to roll out the polls schedule today when the BNP's 48-hour nationwide blockade starts. This is the fifth round of blockade being enforced by the opposition party since October 30, demanding resignation of the government and a general election under a non-party neutral administration.

Meanwhile, the Awami League has decided to take out processions

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"Stop the drama in the name of polls schedule. Otherwise, the blockade programme will continue until the government steps down."

Ruhul Kabir Rizvi
Senior joint secretary general of BNP

People can vote freely in next polls

Says PM, flags off 157 projects involving Tk 1 lakh crore

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has reiterated her firm conviction that the people will cast votes freely in the next general election.

"The Election Commission may announce the polls schedule in a day or two and the people will cast their votes freely," she said.

The premier was speaking at a programme marking the inauguration and laying of foundation stones of 10,041 structures under 157 development projects involving about Tk 1 lakh crore.

The projects include Sheikh Hasina Sarani (Purbachal expressway) in the capital and the first elevated expressway in Chattogram.

Joining the event from the Gono Bhaban virtually, Hasina said, "If the people vote for us [Awami League], we will come to power. If they don't, we will have no regret."

Referring to the AL's assumption of power through the 2014 and 2018 parliamentary polls, she said her party never comes to power undemocratically.

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Initiate talks with political parties to defuse tensions

Business leaders urge FBCCI

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Business leaders yesterday urged the country's apex trade body to initiate a dialogue with the political parties to defuse the current instability and violence that is aggravating the health of the already fragile economy.

The call came at a closed-door meeting at the headquarters of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry that was attended by the leaders of various chambers and former FBCCI presidents.

"In 2014-15, when the political situation was much worse, the FBCCI took an initiative to hold a dialogue with the political parties. Something of that nature can be done this time as well," Sheikh Fazle Fahim, a former FBCCI president, told The Daily Star after the meeting.

The current situation has seriously disrupted the supply chain, and that is impacting production, exports, the service sector and the prices of goods, said FBCCI President Mahbubul Alam.

"The political instability is pushing the country's economy towards an uncertainty," he added.

Fahim urged those concerned to refrain from politically violent programmes at this time of economic crisis.

He also urged government officials to refrain from making controversial remarks that can inflame the political situation.

"The size of the economy has increased to almost half a trillion dollars – perhaps it is also time for a qualitative change in the political culture," said Asif Ibrahim, a former president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Ibrahim, also the chairman of the Chittagong Stock Exchange, urged all to exercise restraint so as not to further jeopardise the economic recovery.

"Democratic right of expression of dissent can no longer hold the economy and the citizens hostage," he added.

Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, recommended that business leaders play a role in

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Can Black Caps derail the Indian juggernaut?

AL-AMIN

As a perfect India team appear in the first semifinal of the 2023 World Cup against New Zealand at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai today, a pertinent question would be if the Black Caps have any magic left in their tank to stop the rampant hosts from taking a bold step closer to winning the coveted trophy for a third time.

India have been so dominant in the group stage that they hardly broke a sweat to win all nine games, which included a comprehensive four-wicket win against New Zealand.

Grabbing the thunder from the lacklustre champions England, India have so far shown little to no weakness in both batting and bowling departments, notwithstanding the fact that their fielding has been equally impressive. With right-arm pacer Jasprit

Bumrah at his best in this tournament and Mohammad Sami enjoying every bit of his replacement role after injury cut short all-rounder Hardik Pandya's World Cup, India won six of their games they chased with the opponents bowled out well

Complacency could be an unlikely enemy for India at a stage where a defeat could be the end of a billion dreams.

below the 300-run mark.

When it was their turn to bat first, runs flew like a cascade from the vaulted top order, consisting of Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, Shubman Gill and KL Rahul.

Kohli, who is out to make the tournament his own, has already struck two centuries to equal Sachin Tendulkar's record of 49 ODI hundreds along with five half-centuries at a staggering average of 99.

And with three versatile spinners – Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav and Ravichandran Ashwin – in their ranks, India look invincible on home soil.

Still, complacency could be an unlikely enemy for India at a stage where a defeat could be the end of a billion dreams. The other aspect is that like the other teams, India have not been tested to the limit and their underbelly has not been exposed so far.

With Pandya not around, someone who has provided the solidity in the lower middle-order like MS Dhoni did in the past, India would be really tested in the event of

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In Everlasting Memory of

MD. MUJIBUR RAHMAN

Founder Chairman of Blessing Group
Managing Director of Roxy Paints Ltd.
Former President of Bangladesh Paints Dyes & Chemicals Merchants Association

On his 3rd Death Anniversary

The void he left, no one can heal. The memories that we cherish no one can steal. His values will continue to inspire us to take his noble works forward. He will live on with us always in our thoughts and forever in our hearts.

Deeply missed and remembered by.....

(15 November, 2020)

BLESSING GROUP