

Udichi ignored govt directives on Baishakh programmes

Says state minister for info; Udichi strongly protests his statement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Udichi Shilpigoshthi holding Pahela Baishakh celebratory programmes in Dhaka, defying the government directives was “unexpected” and “unfortunate”, State Minister for Information and Broadcasting Md Ali Arafat said yesterday.

The directives were issued for the sake of public security, he said, adding that the “negative statement” that Udichi issued before Pahela Baishakh was also “unfortunate”.

“The government is saddened and shocked at Udichi’s behaviour,” he told reporters at his secretariat office.

Hours after Arafat’s reaction, Udichi, one of the country’s prominent cultural organisations, strongly protested the state minister’s remarks.

“Such a remark from a responsible

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her younger sister Sheikh Rehana at the Gono Bhaban on Eid day. Hasina exchanged Eid greetings with citizens, including judges, political party leaders, and activists.

PHOTO: PTD

POLLS IN 150 UPAZILAS

1,891 aspirants file nomination papers online

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 1,891 aspirants have submitted nomination papers to contest in the first phase of upazila elections slated for May 8, when 150 upazilas will go to polls.

Yesterday was the last day to submit the nomination papers.

A total of 696 aspirants submitted nominations for the chairman posts, 724 for the vice chairman posts, and 471 for the vice chairman posts reserved for women. Election Commission Additional Secretary Ashok Kumar Debnath told The Daily Star yesterday afternoon.

Meanwhile, because of uncontested candidates, elections will not be held for chairman positions in Bagherhat Sadar and Munshiganj Sadar; vice chairman positions in Cox’s Bazar Sadar, Chattogram’s Swandip upazila, and Noakhali’s Hatiya upazila; and vice chairman positions reserved for women in seven other upazilas.

The Election Commission this year made it mandatory for all the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Upazila chairman aspirant abducted, beaten up

He was left in front of his home an hour later

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

An upazila chairman candidate was abducted allegedly by his political rivals from in front of the Natore district election office in broad daylight yesterday afternoon and was beaten before being left in front of his home around an hour later.

Delwar Hossain, a chairman candidate in the upcoming Singra Upazila Parishad polls, suffered injuries to his head and legs, according to doctors.

Delwar’s family accused his rival candidate Lutful Habib Rubel and his supporters of abduction and assault.

Rubel, joint general secretary of Singra upazila Awami League and a former chairman of Sherkol Union Parishad, is also a brother-in-law of State Minister for ICT Zunaed Ahmed Palak.

Police later went to Delwar’s house and took him to Natore Sadar Hospital. From there, he was transferred to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital for better treatment.

Roshan Ara, emergency medical officer at Natore Sadar Hospital, said, “The patient suffered injuries to his head. He was sent to Rajshahi so that a CT scan of his head could be done to find out if he

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



Delwar Hossain

Israel presses on in Gaza after Iran attack

68 more Palestinians killed in 24 hours

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli air strikes and tanks continued to hammer Gaza, Hamas and witnesses said yesterday, as world leaders urged de-escalation awaiting Israel’s reaction to Iran’s unprecedented attack that heightened fears of wider conflict.

World powers have urged restraint after Iran launched more than 300 drones and missiles at Israel late Saturday, though the Israeli military has said nearly all were intercepted.

Tehran’s first direct assault on Israel, in retaliation for a deadly April 1 strike on its Damascus consulate, followed months of violence across the region involving Iranian proxies and allies who say they act in support of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

After the attack, US President Joe Biden reaffirmed the Washington’s “ironclad” support for Israel. However, a senior US official said Biden had also told Netanyahu that his administration would not offer military support for any retaliation on Iran.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with his war cabinet on Sunday, but no decision has been made on how or when Israel could respond to the Iran attack, local media said, reporting another meeting planned later yesterday.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi has

warned that a “reckless” Israeli move would spark a “much stronger response”, while foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said yesterday that Western nations should “appreciate Iran’s restraint” in recent months.

The Israeli military said it would not be distracted from its offensive against Tehran-backed Hamas in Gaza.

As mediators eye a deal to halt the fighting, fears persisted over Israeli plans to send ground troops into Rafah, a far-southern city where the majority of Gaza’s 2.4 million people have taken refuge.

“Hamas is still holding our hostages in Gaza,” Israeli military spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said of the roughly 130 people, including 34 presumed dead, who Israel says remain in the hands of Hamas.

“We also have hostages in Rafah, and we will do everything we can to bring them back home,” the military spokesman told a briefing.

The army said it was calling up “two reserve brigades for operational activities”, about a week after withdrawing most ground troops from Gaza.

Meanwhile, Gaza’s crossings authority said Israel released around 150 detainees from the Palestinian territory yesterday, alleging that they had been mistreated in detention.

- Fears grow over Israeli plans to send troops into Rafah
- Gaza officials say Israel released 150 detainees
- Death toll in enclave rises to 33,797

Heatwave likely to continue for 5 days

Says Met office

UNB, Dhaka

Six divisions including Dhaka have been experiencing mild to moderate heat waves and it may continue for the next five days, according to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD).

“Mild to moderate heat wave is sweeping Rajshahi, Dhaka, Khulna, Barishal, Chattogram, Sylhet divisions and Rangpur and Nilphamari districts and it may continue,” said a Met office bulletin yesterday.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged and night temperature may rise slightly over the country.

A trough of westerly low lies over West Bengal and adjoining areas. Seasonal low lies over South Bay.

The Met office also forecasts rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind at one or two places in Rangpur, Mymensingh and Sylhet divisions with hails

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Australia reunites magpie, dog following uproar over separation

AFP, Sydney



Australian authorities yesterday issued a licence allowing a magpie called Molly to reunite with a pet dog, after sparking public outrage by keeping the unlikely friends apart.

A Queensland couple’s pictures of the bird cozying up with their Staffordshire bull terrier Peggy

drew an audience of hundreds of thousands of followers on Instagram.

But the Gold Coast couple, who took the magpie in as a nestling in 2020, had to surrender the bird more than six weeks ago to the Queensland department of environment, science and innovation.

Under state law, magpies and other protected wildlife can only be cared for by people with a licence to show they have the needed skills.

The couple’s Instagram page was deluged with outraged reactions to the separation, and an online petition titled “Don’t Break Their 4-Year Bond” garnered more than 150,000 signatures.

Now, the department says it has issued a “specialised licence” to the couple, Juliette Wells and Reece Mortensen, after they agreed to undergo wildlife carer training and make no commercial gain from the bird or its image.

The bird was returned home, it said.

LIQUOR POLICY ‘SCAM’

Kejriwal’s custody extended till April 23

REUTERS, New Delhi



A Delhi court yesterday extended the detention of opposition leader Arvind Kejriwal in a graft case until April 23, legal news website Live Law reported, a setback to the opposition which needs him to campaign in general elections that begin this week.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED), India’s financial crime-fighting agency, arrested Kejriwal, the chief minister of the national capital territory of Delhi, in a corruption case related to the city’s liquor policy and he had been remanded to custody until April 15.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Hand fans made from palm leaves are on sale on a rickshaw van in Dhaka’s Kamrangirchar yesterday. The fans were selling for Tk 50 to Tk 100 each, depending on size and quality. The sale of hand fans has picked up as many areas experience power cuts during the summer.

Myanmar rebels seize army base near Thai border

Raise their own flag; commander confident of retaining control

REUTERS, Myawaddy

Myanmar resistance fighters yesterday burned the flag used by the military government and raised their own banner at a newly captured army base, as a senior rebel commander vowed they would hold the strategic area near the Thai border.

The celebrations by fighters linked to the armed ethnic Karen National Union (KNU) came less than a week after the capture of Myawaddy, a key trading town on Thailand’s western border.

Myawaddy’s fall marked another battlefield loss for the powerful military regime that seized control in 2021 from an elected government led by Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, who remains in detention.

Simmering anger against the junta has turned into a nationwide armed resistance movement that is now increasingly operating in coordination with established ethnic rebel groups to challenge the military across large parts of Myanmar.

Since last October, the army has lost control of key areas near its borders with both India and China to a loose coalition of allied resistance forces. The loss of Myawaddy at the Thai border could further dent trade revenue for the junta.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1