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## Polls should be within 4 to 6 months

Says BNP leader Salahuddin Ahmed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The next parliamentary election should be held within four to six months, said Salahuddin Ahmed, a member of the BNP's standing committee, yesterday.

The interim government's main and first task is to hold free, fair, and participatory elections, and for that, some legal, institutional, and field reforms are necessary, he told reporters after inaugurating a medical camp at Mohakhali's Korail slum.

"Based on our observation and analysis, it should not take more than four to six months. Therefore, I would like to appeal to the interim government not to use any tactics on the road to democracy."

Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's recent speech on the election roadmap failed to meet public expectations, Salahuddin said.

"The public had expected the chief adviser of the interim government to

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# Domestic workers seek legal protection, dignity

Share ordeal at Star-CAMPE roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"When I am thirsty, my employers do not let me drink water from a clean glass. They only offer me a dirty one that is designated for house helps. Even though I clean their sofa everyday, I am not allowed to sit on it. During Eid or other festivals, if I ask for a holiday, they refuse. If I accidentally break anything, they demand compensation from me," said Laiza Banu, a domestic worker who resides in a slum in the capital.

"There are no fixed working hours. Even when I am sick, if I ask for a leave, they threaten to fire me. If I lose my job, then how will I raise my children and pay for their education?" she added.

Another domestic worker from the same slum, Salma Akhter said that she was forced to keep working even when she was pregnant. If she even makes the slightest of mistakes, her employers torture her physically by slapping her. Other times, they just make her feel stupid.

The two house helps shared the stories of their struggles at a roundtable titled "Protect domestic workers and improve their quality of life: What we can do?" which took place at The Daily Star Centre in the capital yesterday.

The event was jointly organised by The Daily Star and Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) in collaboration with Oxfam in Bangladesh and sponsored by the European Union.

Alongside Laiza and Salma, numerous other house helps were present at the event and shared their own stories and struggles. They



Participants at the roundtable titled "Protect domestic workers and improve their quality of life: What we can do?", jointly organised by The Daily Star and CAMPE at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

demanding that their profession be included under Bangladesh Labour Law as soon as possible so that their rights are secured.

Other speakers stressed the need for the immediate implementation and monitoring of The Domestic Workers' Protection and Welfare Policy, 2015.

Women and Children Affairs Adviser Sharmeen S Murshid, the chief guest of the event, said that this issue should have been solved years ago.

"How can people neglect the humiliation faced by domestic workers from a human

perspective? We must understand that as fellow human beings, they also need health, education and holidays. The state can only protect them by making laws. Often times, many children are also engaged in domestic work, which should be completely banned as they are more likely to be abused," she noted.

"We are trying to create a structure through the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs to address the violence faced by house helps. There can also be a separate authority for domestic workers as well," she added.

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## Hajj registration deadline extended by eight days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Due to a poor response in hajj pre-registration, the government on Tuesday extended the registration deadline for eight days, which begins today.

This will be the final deadline for hajj registration, said the religious affairs ministry in a notice.

The deadline will end on December 26.

During this period, intended pilgrims can make a preliminary registration by depositing Tk 3 lakh. Then the final registration will have to be completed by paying the full amount of the hajj package.

According to the notice, the deadline was extended considering special circumstances and

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## Mikel Changma lodges complaint against Hasina

DU CORRESPONDENT



United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) leader Mikel Changma yesterday lodged a complaint with the International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) against former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in connection with his enforced disappearance.

He went missing in April 2019 from Dhaka and returned home two days after the fall of the Hasina-led government on August 5 this year.

In his complaint, Mikel shared his experience of five years of captivity. He presented his statement to ICT Chief Prosecutor Md Tajul Islam.

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## Five die of dengue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least five people died from dengue while 274 others were hospitalised in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

With the latest, the death toll rose to 556 while the number of cases reached 99,295, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Currently, 1,348 dengue patients are undergoing treatment across the country. Of them, 836 are from outside Dhaka.

A total of 97,665 patients have so far been released throughout the country.

PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 19				
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5:20	12:45	3:45	5:22	7:00
JAMAT 5:55	1:15	4:00	5:25	7:30
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION				

## Only 3pc teachers trained in pre-primary edn: study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Teachers lack the capacity to employ effective learning methods, particularly at the pre-primary and secondary education level, as only three percent of teachers received specialised training in pre-primary education, said a study by Educo Bangladesh.

Moreover, only one or two teachers in secondary schools of semi-urban to rural areas received training on generating and delivering multimedia materials effectively, the study noted.

Also, around 60 percent of teachers said they did not participate in any mental or physical well-being sessions, it added.

The findings of the study, titled "Child Rights and Wellbeing Situational Analysis", were unveiled in a ceremony held at a hotel in the capital yesterday.

The primary data of the study was collected through

interviews and focus group discussions with children, parents, teachers, government stakeholders, and experts from 11 districts -- Rajshahi, Thakurgaon, Mymensingh, Gazipur, Dhaka, Shariatpur, Barishal, Barguna, Satkhira, Moulvibazar, and Cox's Bazar.

Few rural teachers use multimedia tools
60pc of teachers lack well-being support
60pc of children with disabilities don't attend school
42pc drop out during transition to secondary education

The research also used secondary data from national surveys, reports, academic journals, and databases.

The findings were presented by Mohammad Adnan Rahman, portfolio manager of Inspira Advisory and Consulting Limited.

He highlighted major issues faced by children in areas such as education, protection, and well-being, such as child marriage and child labour.

Around 88 percent of children aged one to 14 years were subjected to either physical punishment or psychological aggression by their caregivers, the study shared.

According to the study, around 42 percent of students dropped out while transitioning to secondary education from primary education due to academic struggles, financial constraints, and the need to earn money often leading to a lack of motivation.

Due to the lack of motivation, most children do not have a happy time at school, it said.

Furthermore, 50 percent of children did not participate in extracurricular activities, while 75 percent of parents did not know about the ambitions of their children, it added.

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## 'Can't save all rivers in limited time'

Says Rizwana

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government will not be able to evict land grabbers from all the rivers and waterbodies of the country within its tenure, said Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan yesterday.

"It is not possible to clean all the waste from the last 53 years within four months, or even within one and a half years," she added.

"If we want to clean the Buriganga, where there are around 3-6 metres of plastics and polythene, who has the machinery needed to clear these?" she asked.

Rizwana was speaking as the chief guest at a

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A fire broke out at Dhaka's Korail slum yesterday afternoon. The cause of the fire could not be known immediately, and no casualties were reported.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES HC delivers first-ever rule on adult custody

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court for the first time pronounced a judgement addressing the issue of guardianship and custody of an adult person with intellectual disabilities.

A civil suit was filed by the person's father against the maternal aunt under Section 21(1) of the Mental Health Act 2018, seeking guardianship and custody, according to Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust.

Previously, the Senior District Judge Court, Dhaka, ruled in favour of the aunt. Following the father's petition, the HC issued a rule requiring the aunt to explain why custody should not be given to the father.

Upon hearing the parties, Justice AKM Zahid Sarwar discharged the rule, stating that mental illness is distinct from intellectual disability, and the Mental Health Act does not apply in cases of guardianship for individuals with intellectual disabilities.

Senior Advocate Sara Hossain, representing the maternal aunt, said the judgement is a significant step in interpreting the 2013 Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act. She highlighted that the 2013 Act aligns with Bangladesh's obligations under the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, emphasising autonomy, independence, and equal rights for individuals with disabilities.

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