



Disclose agreed reforms and announce polls: Khasru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The people of Bangladesh are ready to cast their votes and are eagerly awaiting a national election by December, said BNP Standing Committee Member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday.

"Let the people decide who supports democracy and who does not; who supports a democratic order and who doesn't. The people are not fools -- they're observing everything closely," he said.

He made these remarks after a meeting with leaders of the Left Democratic Alliance and the Bangladesh Jono Adhikar Party at the BNP chairperson's office in Gulshan.

Khasru said elections are essential for restoring democracy and forming a democratic government through the people's right to vote. He stressed that the reform issues, on which consensus has already been reached, should be made public without delay.



UAE envoy calls on army chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A delegation led by UAE Ambassador Abdulla Ali Abdulla Khaseef Alhmoudi paid a courtesy call on Chief of Army Staff General Waker Uz Zaman at the Army Headquarters yesterday.

Discussions were held on strengthening relationship between Bangladesh and UAE military, as well as enhancing technological and military cooperation between the forces of both countries, according to an army headquarters notification. The envoy also commended the professionalism of Bangladesh Army personnel currently engaged in aid to civil power operations within the country.



A mother shields her child from the scorching sun with a piece of cloth while waiting in a long queue at a TCB truck sale in the capital's Mohammadpur area yesterday. With market prices still out of reach for many, low-income families rely on such OMS sales to buy daily essentials at subsidised rates.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

BCS exam backlog to be cleared within 18 months

Says PSC chairman on 4 pending exams

STAR REPORT

The Public Service Commission (PSC) has developed a plan to resolve the backlog of four pending BCS examinations within the next 12 to 18 months, said the commission's chairman Mobassher Monem yesterday.

"There is a clear roadmap to eliminate the BCS backlog. We expect to see visible progress within the next few months. We are not considering postponing any upcoming exams," he said during a press briefing at the PSC Bhaban in the capital's Agargaon.

"In a bid to make the civil service exams more accessible, the PSC has slashed the application fee from Tk 700 to Tk 200. This reduction is part of our broader reforms to ease the financial burden on candidates," Mobassher said.

He said they want to complete the entire process for a single BCS -- from preliminaries to recruitment -- in 12 months.

When asked whether a full BCS cycle can be completed within a year, Monem said, "If the overall situation remains stable, we are planning a roadmap to complete the 47th BCS in about a year or slightly more," reports BSS.

Security measures around question paper preparation have also been strengthened. "Previously, question setters would submit questions prepared outside. Now, they come to the PSC office and complete the question-setting process here, ensuring better security," he said.

Also, BCS candidates will now be allowed to submit their cadre preferences after passing the preliminary and written exams, said the PSC chairman.

He also said the viva voce score has been reduced from 200 to 100 marks starting from the 47th BCS to ensure a more balanced evaluation process.

Addressing concerns of harassment during police verification of candidates before recruitment, Mobassher said to prevent any

Application fees reduced from Tk 700 to Tk 200

Goal set to complete full BCS cycle within a year

Strengthening security measures for question papers

Viva voce marks reduced from 200 to 100

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'We must not let fascism return'

Says Prof Ali Riaz

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The result of institutional weaknesses and the failure to build a democratic state over the past 53 years are the reasons behind the establishment of a fascist regime in Bangladesh, said Prof Ali Riaz, vice-chairman of the National Consensus Commission.

He made the remarks at the beginning of a discussion between the commission and the Amjanata Party, at the LD Hall of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban in Dhaka yesterday.

Commission members Iftekharuzzaman, Badiul Alam Majumdar, Safar Raj Hossain, and Monir Haidar, special assistant to the chief adviser, were present at the discussion.

In his opening speech, Prof Riaz also said the aim of the commission is to develop an inclusive national charter through discussions with all stakeholders -- a charter that would serve as a roadmap for the future of Bangladesh.

He further noted that people across all levels of society have endured the oppression of fascism for the past 16 years and emphasised that such a period must never return.

He said the time has come to build a new Bangladesh and that

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31 killed by mobs in 3 months

Says HRSS report on Jan-March, suggests strengthening rule of law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

If urgent steps are not taken to strengthen the rule of law, democracy, and fundamental freedoms, the country's overall human rights situation may deteriorate further, the Human Rights Support Society (HRSS) has warned.

In its quarterly report released yesterday, the rights body emphasised the need for inclusive dialogue with political parties, civil society, journalists, and citizens to improve governance and ensure constitutional rights through proper law enforcement.

At least 47 people were killed and 2,475 injured in 325 incidents of political violence across the country in the first three months of this year, according to the HRSS.

Most of the violent incidents were linked to struggles for supremacy, political vengeance, extortion, and attempts to control various establishments, the rights body said in its report for January-March, based on media reports and its own findings.

Of the total incidents, 190 were intra-party clashes between rival factions of the BNP, while six were within the Awami League and nine within the National Citizen Party (NCP).

In addition, 58 clashes occurred between BNP and AL, 16 between BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, five between BNP and NCP, nine between AL and NCP, and three between AL and Jamaat. The remaining 29 incidents involved confrontations among other political parties.

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Speak up against sexual harassment on public transport

Urge speakers; awareness campaign launched

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sexual harassment on public transport is not just a women's issue, but a serious societal concern that requires collective action, said speakers at an event yesterday.

They stressed that staying silent in the face of such behaviour only perpetuates the issue and urged bystanders to intervene and support victims.

The remarks were made during the launch of an awareness campaign titled "Hold the Bar, Not Her Space," aimed at making public transport safe and harassment-free for women.

The campaign was launched at the Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA) premises, jointly organised by Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), DTCA, and UN Women Bangladesh, with support from the Embassy of Sweden in Bangladesh.

Sheikh Moinuddin, special assistant to the chief adviser on road transport and bridges,

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Zainul Abedin's wife Jahanara Abedin dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jahanara Abedin, wife of renowned artist Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin, passed away yesterday at the age of 94.

"My mother died at around 2:00pm at her residence in the capital. She has been suffering from old-age related complexities including dementia," Mainul Abedin, youngest son of Jahanara Abedin, told The Daily Star.

She left behind three sons, relatives, friends, and well-wishers to mourn her death.

Jahanara's body was kept at the Bir Dem mortuary, Mainul said.

"My mother's janaza and burial are likely to be held on Sunday following my brother's and

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204 held between April 18-23: ISPR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Army, in coordination with other law enforcement agencies, arrested 204 individuals during joint operations conducted across the country between April 18-23.

The Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) issued a press release to inform the update yesterday.

The operations were carried out by units under different infantry divisions and independent brigades of the army in Dhaka and several other districts.

The arrestees include those accused in murder cases, illegal arms holders, listed criminals, smugglers, juvenile gang members, drug dealers and addicts, and members of illegal syndicates. They were handed over to local police stations for further legal procedures following preliminary interrogation, according to the release.

Illegal items including 16 firearms, 410 rounds of

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Workers set up the stage as part of last-minute preparations for the 116th edition of the traditional Jabbarer Boli Khela (Jabbar's Wrestling Competition), scheduled to be held at Laldighi in Chattogram today. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Declare April 24 as National Workers' Day

Demand activists on 12th anniv of Rana Plaza collapse; seek compensation for victim families

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Relatives of the deceased, survivors, and labour leaders gathered at the Rana Plaza site in Savar yesterday to mark the 12th anniversary of the tragedy and renew their calls for justice and compensation.

From the early hours of the morning, mourners placed flowers at a makeshift altar erected in front of the remains of the collapsed building, where 1,136 workers were killed and more than 2,000 injured when the 10-storey structure collapsed during working hours on April 24, 2013.

Survivors and their families say little has changed in the years since. Many have yet to receive adequate compensation or see justice delivered.

They called for the harshest punishment for those responsible, including building owner Sohel Rana, and for the fulfilment of compensation claims.



"My son was murdered. I've cried until my tears have run dry," she said. "We deserve justice. We demand the Tk 48 lakh compensation promised to us."

Despite years of inaction, labour leaders remain cautiously hopeful that the interim government will finally act on

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