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ELECTION TIMING EC waiting for formal talks with govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission will understand the government's stance on election timing after holding formal discussions with it, Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin said yesterday.

The EC may then decide when to set the date for polling, he told reporters at his office.

"Whether the national election is held in February or April — whenever it takes place, the Election Commission must be prepared," he said.

The EC and the government have yet to hold formal discussions on when the next national election should be, he added.

The election schedule is usually issued two months prior to the election date, he said, adding that it was not possible to set a date eight to 10 months ahead.

He reiterated the EC's commitment to holding a free, fair, and acceptable national election, saying that all preparations are being made with that objective in mind.

Before finalising the election schedule, the EC will assess the overall political and administrative situation, he said.

The preparatory process includes amending the Voter List Act to address certain legal gaps, he added.



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Israeli fire kills 25 in Gaza Five of them waiting to receive aid

AGENCIES

Israeli fire and airstrikes killed at least 25 Palestinians across the enclave yesterday, local health authorities said, at least five of them near two aid sites operated by the US-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF).

Medics at Al-Awda Hospital in the central Gaza Strip said at least three people were killed and dozens wounded by Israeli fire as they tried to approach a GHF site near the Netzarim corridor. Two others were killed en route to another aid site in Rafah in the south.

An airstrike killed seven other people in Beit Lahiya town north of the enclave, medics said. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military.

The GHF began distributing food packages in Gaza at the end of May after Israel partially lifted a near three-month total blockade. Scores of Palestinians have been killed in nearly daily mass shootings trying to reach the food, reports Reuters.

The United Nations rejects the Israeli-backed new distribution system as inadequate, dangerous, and a violation of humanitarian impartiality principles.

Hamas, which denies Israeli charges that it steals aid, accused Israel of "employing hunger as a weapon of war and turning aid distribution sites into traps of mass deaths of innocent civilians."

In a separate development, the Israeli army said yesterday that a soldier had been killed in battle in Gaza one day earlier.

"Noam Shemesh aged 21 from Jerusalem... fell during combat in the southern Gaza Strip," the army said in a statement.

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- Hamas accuses Israel of turning aid centres into traps
- Internet restored in Gaza after 3 days

Road crashes claim 10 lives

STAR REPORT

At least 10 people were killed and several others injured in separate road crashes in Bogura, Madaripur, Nilphamari, Sirajganj, Sherpur, Narsingdi, Brahmanbaria, Faridpur, and Gopalganj yesterday.

In Gopalganj, two people were killed and at least 15 others injured in a pile-up involving three buses, a car and a stationary truck in Bhatiapara area of Kashiani upazila around 3:30am.

One of the deceased was Rafiqul Islam, an assistant sub-inspector of Bhatiapara Highway Police. The identity of the other deceased could not be confirmed immediately.

Police said a bus lost control and hit a stationary truck, which triggered a pile-up involving two other buses and a car.

Inspector Maksudur Rahman Murad of Bhatiapara Highway Police said, "Vehicular movement remained suspended for three hours. All vehicles involved have been seized."

In Sherpur, a man was killed on the spot after being run over by a Dhaka-bound bus in Sadar upazila around 11:30am.

Deceased Moznu Mia, 52, was a retired army personnel of Shapmari village.

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A tow truck taking away a bus that was involved in a pile-up near the Gopinathpur police outpost on the Dhaka-Khulna Highway in Gopalganj yesterday. The crash killed two people and injured at least 15 others.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Draft data law gives unfettered power to cops
Says Article 19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The draft Personal Data Protection Ordinance lacks clear definitions and safeguards, and gives unchecked power to the government and law enforcement agencies, said Article 19.

This could lead to arbitrary surveillance, discriminatory profiling, and suppression of dissent, warned the organisation, which advocates for the right to freedom of expression.

"In its current form, the draft ordinance raises significant concerns," said Article 19. It called for the ordinance to be restructured to place human rights, including the rights to privacy, freedom of expression, and access to information, at its core.

According to Article 19, the ordinance grants

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Two demonstrators in front of a policeman after police use sound grenades and truncheons to stop a march to the Secretariat by registered teachers of the 17th batch, who are over the age limit for government jobs but are demanding special consideration. The photo was taken in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

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Women MPs should be elected directly

Speakers at Star discussion say it'll ensure better representation of women in JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women representatives should be elected through direct voting rather than relying on party nominations, as only direct electoral mandates can ensure meaningful empowerment, accountability, and connection with constituencies, said speakers at an event yesterday.

They made the remarks while speaking at a discussion titled "Women's Empowerment through Direct Election to Parliament: Necessity, Challenges and Solutions" held at The Daily Star Centre in Dhaka.

Addressing the discussion, Debapriya Bhattacharya, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said, "If we go for direct voting, we can also avoid the recurring debate between proportional and majoritarian systems — whether nomination or allocation should be based on proportional party votes or not."

Referring to his personal experience, he said that female lawmakers in reserved seats often lack political influence, as many don't hold party positions.

"Without strong political standing within their parties, these women cannot utilise



opportunities fully. I witnessed this firsthand."

Debapriya did not endorse the dual representation model suggested by the Women's Affairs Reform Commission, which suggests having two MPs — a male and a female — for the same parliamentary constituency.

"Beginning something entirely new during this transitional period would be very difficult. Therefore, if we currently have 50 reserved seats and they seem inadequate, we can look at increasing them to 100 as part of a gradual process."

Also speaking at the event, Badil Alami Majumdar, head of

the Electoral Reform Commission, also expressed doubts over the effectiveness of the proposed dual representation.

This would not be ideal because two people in the leadership position may lead to conflict and poor results, said Badiul.

He noted that in the current system, women MPs often face resistance from their male counterparts within the same constituency.

"There is already reluctance in many places to let women MPs function effectively. So we must question whether a dual MP

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Newly discovered dinosaur rewrites T rex family history

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A newly discovered dinosaur from Mongolia, named *Khankhuluu mongoliensis*, or "Dragon Prince," is believed to be a crucial ancestor of the *Tyrannosaurus rex* (T rex), shedding light on the T rex's complex evolutionary history.

Living approximately 86 million years ago during the Cretaceous Period, *Khankhuluu* predates the *Tyrannosaurus rex* by around 20 million years. This mid-sized dinosaur, measuring about 13 feet in length and weighing roughly 1,600 pounds, walked on two legs and possessed a long snout filled with sharp teeth.

In comparison to the more heavily built T rex, *Khankhuluu*'s body proportions suggest it was a swift predator, likely hunting smaller prey such as *oviraptorosaurs* and *ornithomimosaurs*. The largest known T rex specimen reached a length of 40-1/2 feet. *Khankhuluu* means "Dragon Prince" in the Mongolian language. *Tyrannosaurus rex* means "tyrant king of the lizards."

"In the name, we wanted to capture that *Khankhuluu* was a small, early form that had not evolved into a king. It was still a prince," said palaeontologist Darla Zelenitsky of the University of Calgary in Canada, co-author of the study published in the journal *Nature*.

Tyrannosaurs and all other meat-eating dinosaurs are part of a group called *theropods*. *Tyrannosaurs* appeared late in the age of dinosaurs, roaming Asia and North America.



Ex-UP chairman of Savar found dead in Dhaka jail Family alleges foul play

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A former union parishad chairman of Savar, who drew widespread attention during last year's mass uprising for allegedly opening fire on protesters, was found hanging in his cell at Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj yesterday, according to prison authorities.

Saidur Rahman Sujon, a local Awami League leader and former chairman of Birulia Union Parishad, had been in custody since January 20 following his arrest in Uttara.

He was accused in more than a dozen cases, including charges of murder, attempted murder, and illegal possession of firearms, police and jail sources said.

Sujon came under intense public scrutiny after a video of him brandishing a firearm at demonstrators in Savar went viral on social media during the mass uprising.

Senior Jail Superintendent Suriya Akter said Sujon was found hanging in the Surjomukhi Building of the prison around 11:00am. He had been sharing the

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