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ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং সেবা প্রদানে 'ইসলামী ব্যাংকিং কর্ণার' পূবালী ব্যাংকের প্রায় সকল শাখা এবং উপশাখায়

Local govt polls will be held on time

Says LGRD minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday said the local government election would be held on time as per existing rules and regulations.

"The local government elections are not being delayed and will be held at the right time. This election will be given priority," Fakhru told reporters at the party's Nayapalitan central office.

On finalising candidates for the reserved seats for women, Fakhru said

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Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen pays a courtesy call on Prime Minister Tarique Rahman at the Secretariat's Cabinet Division yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

All publishers to join book fair

Inauguration on Feb 26

DIPAN NANDY

The Amar Ekushey Book Fair will be held with the participation of all publishers, following a decision taken on Sunday night and officially announced yesterday.

However, the fair will now begin on February 26 instead of February 25 and will continue until March 15, making it a 19-day event – the shortest in the fair's history.

Until Sunday evening, Prokashok Oikya, a joint platform representing major publishers in the country, had announced a boycott. More than 300 publishing houses had withdrawn from the fair, citing objections to holding it during Ramadan.

Following intervention by the new government, a meeting on Sunday evening led to their decision to participate. It was also decided that stalls would be allocated free of cost and that no pavilions would be allowed except for those of the organising body, Bangla Academy.



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Jamaat, NCP slam 6 admin appointments

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Mia Golam Porwar yesterday said the newly-formed BNP government has acted against public expectations by appointing party-affiliated individuals as administrators to six city corporations.

He made the remarks in a statement issued yesterday by the party's central publicity department.

According to the statement, a February 22 notification from the Local Government Division appointed party figures as administrators to Dhaka North City Corporation, Dhaka South City Corporation, Khulna City Corporation, Sylhet City Corporation, Narayanganj City Corporation and Gazipur City Corporation.

Porwar alleged that the decision shows the BNP government has, from the outset, gone against the aspirations of the people.

He said the July uprising aimed to establish a discrimination-free and democratic social order, complete the trial of the massacre, and carry out necessary reforms.

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BNP leaders at helm of 6 city corporations

Political appointment of administrators draws flak

DIPAN NANDY

A day after assuming charge as minister for local government, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir announced that the government was considering holding local government elections at the earliest possible time.

Five days later, the government appointed new administrators to six city corporations across the country yesterday.

All of them are office-bearing BNP leaders, including some who recently lost in the national parliamentary elections.

According to a notification, Abdus Salam has been appointed administrator of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), while Shafiqul Islam Khan has been assigned to Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC).

Nazrul Islam Monju has been made administrator of Khulna City Corporation (KCC), Abdul Quiyum Choudhury of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC), Sakhawat Hossain Khan of Narayanganj City Corporation (NCC), and Shawkat Hossain Sarkar of Gazipur City



Clockwise from left, Abdus Salam (DSCC); Shafiqul Islam Khan (DNCC); Nazrul Islam Monju (Khulna); Shawkat Hossain Sarkar (Gazipur); Sakhawat Hossain Khan (Narayanganj) and Abdul Quiyum Choudhury (Sylhet).

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Corporation (GCC).

The notification said the administrators will serve until elected councils are formed or until further instructions are issued.

Criticising the move, Dr Iftakharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), said this is a bad example of targeted partisan political

control of local government institutions.

"If politically affiliated individuals are elected through free and fair elections, no one would raise concerns. But ahead of local government elections, this may be viewed as a strategic move to influence the polls. The electoral playing field will be distorted whenever

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Sovereignty, mutual respect to guide foreign policy: Khalilur

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman yesterday said Bangladesh's foreign policy will be guided by independence, sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, mutual benefit and national dignity.

"We hope to establish and sustain deep relationships with all our friendly nations, both in our region and across the world," he told reporters at the foreign ministry after meetings with foreign diplomats.

He said Bangladesh would resolve all bilateral issues in a dignified manner grounded in mutual respect, ensuring that the national interest is protected.

He said he observed immense confidence among foreign diplomats in the new government and a strong eagerness to work closely with Dhaka.

Yesterday, US Ambassador Brent Christensen, European Union Ambassador Michael Miller and other EU ambassadors of Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden paid a courtesy call on Khalilur.

On Sunday, ambassadors of India,



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Ziaul Ahsan was 'beyond my control'

Iqbal Karim Bhuiya tells ICT

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former army chief General (ret'd) Iqbal Karim Bhuiya yesterday told International Crimes Tribunal-1 that he took no written action against Major General (relieved) Ziaul Ahsan, despite knowing him to be a "serial killer" based on intelligence from multiple sources.

During cross-examination, Iqbal said Ziaul was beyond his direct control at the time, which prevented him from issuing formal orders.

Instead, Iqbal claimed that he verbally instructed the then Director of Military Intelligence (DMI) Jaglul and the commanding officer of the army security unit Brig Gen Fazal to advise Ziaul to refrain from wrongdoing.

"I could not take any action, as Ziaul was out of my control," Iqbal said in response to defence counsel Aminul Ghani Titto's question about whether he had issued any written directive.

Rejecting the defence's claim that no instructions were given, he maintained that he had verbally directed the two officers to counsel Ziaul.

Iqbal said his conclusion that Ziaul was a "serial killer" was personal and based on intelligence from "various sources", though he acknowledged that none of the information was documented.

In response to another defence question, he said the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) might not have submitted any adverse report against Ziaul during promotion board meetings, as DGFI and Rab carried out "misdeeds in mutual cooperation".



SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Sunflower field in Pabna draws crowds

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR
TOPU, Pabna

A vibrant sunflower field at an agricultural farm in Tebunia of Pabna, operated by the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC), has drawn a surge of visitors.

Originally set up for producing and processing pulses and oil seeds, the



facility has begun cultivating sunflowers in the current fiscal year.

The farm's 6.57-acre sunflower field, now in full bloom with a striking expanse of yellow, has attracted people from across the district – from



students on school excursions to social media content creators seeking backdrops for photos and reels.

According to Md Omor Sharif, an office assistant at the BADC Tebunia farm, the primary objective remains seed production. "We have cultivated sunflowers on 6.57 acres this year to meet the rising national demand for seeds. Our target is to produce 2,300 kilogrammes of sunflower seeds," Sharif said.

Visitors said no other such scenic site exists in the district.

Jesmin Ara Shilpi, a schoolteacher, said the farm offers a rare touch of natural beauty close to urban areas.

Md Masud Rana, headteacher of Bhozendrapur Government Primary School, said he visited the farm with his students to observe the natural landscape.

However, the influx of visitors has created

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A worker burns waste, including plastic, in Shahid Nagar of Lalbagh, Kamrangirchar, polluting the environment. Garbage dumping along the Buriganga continues to contaminate the water. Despite nearby garbage stations and ongoing initiatives, such illegal practices persist. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN