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'No new probe commission over Pilkhana'

Salahuddin backtracks on decision, says existing report to be implemented in phases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday said the government would not form a new investigation commission over the 2009 Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) mutiny in Dhaka's Pilkhana.

"Since a national independent investigation commission has already been formed, we will implement its report step by step. I have taken a glance at the recommendations, though I have not yet reviewed the entire report," he said.

Salahuddin said this to reporters after placing wreaths at the Banani Military Graveyard, marking National Martyred Army Day.

He also said he wanted to correct his earlier remarks that he had made without fully reviewing the report.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Sellers busy arranging books and other items at a stall on the Suhrawardy Udyan premises yesterday, ahead of the Amar Ekushey Book Fair that begins today.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Ekushey book fair begins today

DIPAN NANDY

The Amar Ekushey Book Fair begins today, marking the shortest edition in its history. Organisers, however, say it is not the length but the breadth of ideas that will define this year's fair, themed "Multidimensional Bangladesh".

Rooted in the spirit of the Language Movement, the fair will continue until March 15, making its duration 19 days. It will remain open daily from 2:00pm to 9:00pm, while on weekends and holidays it will run from 11:00am to 9:00pm.



549 publishing houses are participating this year, with 1,018 units set up across the Bangla Academy and Suhrawardy Udyan. Last year, 708 publishing houses participated with 1,084 units.

This year's fair also comes after tension over its schedule. Until Sunday evening, "Prokashok Oikya", a platform representing leading publishers, had announced it would not participate, objecting to holding the fair during Ramadan. More than 300 publishing houses initially took a boycott stance. Following mediation by the government and discussions among the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Bangla Academy and publisher organisations, a consensus was reached.

Under the agreement, stalls will be allocated free of cost and no pavilions will be allowed other than those of the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Advance Eid train tickets go on sale March 3

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Railway will begin selling advance train tickets from March 3 to ensure hassle-free journeys ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

According to a press release issued by the railway in this regard yesterday, sales of advance train tickets for the Eid travels will start on March 3 and continue until March 9.

Tickets for March 13 will be sold on March 3, while tickets for March 14 to 19 will be sold on March 4 to 9, respectively. Tickets for March 20 to 22 will be sold depending on the sighting of the moon.

All tickets will be sold online, as in previous occasions. Ticket sales for trains in the western zone will start at 8:00am, and for the eastern zone at 2:00pm.

A passenger can buy a maximum of four tickets at a time, including both advance and return tickets. However, advance and return tickets for Eid cannot be refunded, added the release.

This year, Bangladesh Railway will also operate five pairs of special trains in addition to regular intercity trains. The special trains will run on the Chattogram-Chandpur, Dhaka-Devanganj, Bhairab Bazar-Kishoreganj, Mymensingh-Kishoreganj, and Joydebpur-Parbotipur routes.

The authority will start selling return tickets from

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Yet another unelected VC set to take DU helm

Next appointment likely under temporary clause of 1973 Order

MAHATHIR MOHAMMED

Dhaka University is all set to get another unelected vice chancellor for the third consecutive term, as the current VC has resigned without calling a Senate session to appoint a new one.

Usually, after being appointed by the president, the VC calls a Senate session to validate the appointment or to appoint another.

According to the DU Order, 1973, the principal executive officer (VC) of the university must be appointed by the chancellor from a panel of three elected teachers or officials.

If that is not possible, the sitting VC is required to call a Senate session to elect the panel.

However, outgoing VC Prof Niaz Ahmed Khan did not initiate such a session after taking office in August 2024. He was appointed on a temporary basis when the post fell vacant following the July uprising.

On February 22, Prof Niaz

submitted his resignation to the chancellor through the education minister.

Officials said the ministry will now move to appoint a new VC.

They said there are two provisions for appointing a VC.

We have been observing this for the last forty years. Most vice chancellors have been appointed in this way. They always describe it as an emergency.



PROF SERAJUL ISLAM CHOUHDURY

Clause 11(f) of the 1973 Order states that the VC shall be appointed by the chancellor for four years from a panel of three persons nominated by the Senate.

Clause 11(2) states that if a temporary vacancy occurs due to

leave, illness, resignation or any other reason, the chancellor may make arrangements to carry out the duties of the office as he deems fit.

Prof Niaz was appointed under Clause 11(2), and since he resigned, the next appointment is also likely to follow the same provision, officials said.

Pro-VC (Administration) Sayema Haque Bidisha said there is little possibility of following the electoral procedure for appointing the next VC at this stage.

"The fundamental condition before arranging the electoral procedure is to call a Senate session," she said, adding that once the new VC assumes office, the electoral process can be initiated through a Senate meeting.

The Senate, one of the university's prime decision-making bodies, has 104 members across 11 categories. However, five categories comprising 60 members

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

'February polls largely peaceful'

Says Shujan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The February polls were generally peaceful and all political parties had accepted the results, said Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan), yesterday.

"Some irregularities did occur in certain places, but overall, voters were able to exercise their right to vote freely," he said at a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club.

Asked how he would evaluate the election in one sentence, Majumdar said, "The polls were largely peaceful, though there were some inconsistencies and incidents of unrest. Above all, all parties accepted the outcome."

Majumdar said elections should be judged not only by polling day but by the entire electoral process, including the legal framework, voter list accuracy, candidate participation and access to information.

A peaceful vote alone does not guarantee credibility if earlier stages are flawed, he added.

He said Shujan had monitored the full process

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

Some irregularities did occur in certain places, but overall, voters were able to exercise their right to vote freely.

BADIUL ALAM MAJUMDAR

Impeach, arrest the president

Demands Nahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

NCP leader and parliament's opposition chief whip Nahid Islam yesterday demanded the impeachment and arrest of President Mohammed Shahabuddin.

While visiting the graves of the martyrs of the Pilkhana massacre at the Banani Military Graveyard in the afternoon, the National Citizen Party convener said, "He (the president) did not take effective measures to prevent the mass killings of July 2024. Hence, he cannot avoid responsibility for it."

"He should be impeached in the first session of Parliament. Then he should be arrested for the July mass killings," he said.

"The government and the opposition must work together, as we have national unity against fascism," he added.

He alleged that the president represents a "fascist era" and had made statements against Nationalist Leader Ziaur Rahman and Khaleda Zia. He further claimed that a recent interview by the president violated his oath.

Nahid also alleged that the Awami League had reopened its office and attacked NCP leaders and activists.

"From the activities we can see, the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Submit polls expense reports by March 15

EC asks candidates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) has directed all candidates who contested the 13th national parliamentary election to submit their election expenditure statements to returning officers by March 15.

The commission instructed district election officials to forward these reports to the EC headquarters by March 25, according to a letter signed by ASM Iqbal Hasan, senior assistant secretary of the EC, issued yesterday.

The letter was sent yesterday to all returning officers across the country.

According to the Representation of the People Order, 1972, Article 44(g), every contesting candidate must file a return of election expenses with the returning officer within 30 days of the gazette notification of elected members.

The gazette listing the names and addresses of elected lawmakers from the February 12 polls was published on February

13.

The EC letter further stated that officials must ensure compliance with Circular-18, issued for the 13th parliamentary election, to verify that all candidates submit their expenditure statements. It also instructed that details of the returns filed with returning officers be sent to the commission by the March 25 deadline.

A total of 2,028 candidates contested in the 13th national parliamentary election that was held on Feb 12 this year.

EC TO PUBLISH REPORT ON FOREIGN OBSERVERS

Meanwhile, the EC is preparing a comprehensive report on the activities of foreign observers who monitored the 13th National Parliamentary Election and Referendum held on February 12.

A 33-member committee has been formed to compile the documentation, EC Director of Public Relations Ruhul Amin Mollik told reporters yesterday afternoon.



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