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#### The colour of protest

Once confined within the inner courtyard, Bangladeshi women have emerged as a major socio-political force. No longer afraid to speak up, their voices of protest are heard loud, even when threats from religious bigots hang heavy in the air. When would-be assassins attempted to murder poet Shamsur Rahman, these women joined hundreds of their fellows at the Shaheed Minar this week to protest (also see page 10 for photo feature)

—Star Photo: Zahedul I Khan

## Polls drama tears parties from within

By Nazmul Ashraf

All the major political parties including the ruling Awami League and the main opposition BNP are now busy fighting intra-party rebellion brewing up over the ensuing municipal elections. But, insiders said, their efforts have not borne much fruit until yesterday.

For the opposition parties, who have vowed to resist the local polls as their four demands were not met, the battle is to take the rebels out of the election race. But the ruling party's struggle is to tame the party dissidents who have filed nominations to fight against their own men.

A recast Election Commission with its new chief is among the four demands of the alliance of BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and IOJ.

In their struggle to resist the municipal elections slated for February 23-25, the opposition parties enforced a countrywide hartal on Tuesday, the day for filing nominations. It is also planning to call hartals on the election dates.

Defying Tuesday's hartal and threats of punitive action, a large number of leaders of the agitating opposition parties filed nominations to contest the elections.

On the contrary, the AL is facing more than one candidate, especially for the post of municipal chairman, at many

places where opposition men are absent from the race.

A total of 9511 candidates filed nominations for the posts of chairman and commissioner. A total of 140 out of 182 municipalities are going to polls. At least 327 of the nomination papers were canceled after scrutiny Wednesday.

Elections are not being held at 42 other municipalities due to legal complications and other reasons such as non-existence of five-year terms. Each of the municipal councils consists of one chairman and 12 commissioners including three women.

Of the total 9182 candidates, 658 are still in the race for 140 posts of chairman while 6717 for 1333 general seats of commissioners and another 1807 for 441 reserved seats for women commissioners. The last date for withdrawing candidature is February 3.

Party affiliation of all the candidates could not be known until yesterday but initial reports received so far show that the ruling party people are in the election race in all the 140 municipalities. Those belonging to the BNP-JP-Jamaat alliance constitute about 60 per cent of the total candidates, according to press reports.

Nevertheless, there are a large number of candidates from the smaller opposition

parties as well as independent contestants.

According to the press reports, the aspirants for municipal chairmanship include at least 290 from the AL, 58 from BNP, 36 from JP and two from Jamaat.

AL leaders have filed for all 1333 ward commissioners.

The opposition parties do not have candidates for all posts at stake, but there are some 2,000 commissioner aspirants who have filed from these parties.

In some places, there are more than one chairman candidate from BNP and JP in one municipality.

The opposition parties have already taken steps to persuade their men to withdraw. They have also issued threats to those who would defy.

While the opposition liaison committees at local levels have been told to work towards this end, central leaders will soon undertake visits to the municipal areas.

Already, there are reports of dissent among senior local leaders especially MPs who are learnt to be reluctant in the exercise.

Opposition sources now admit that chances are little for the rebels to withdraw from the election race because of the "various compulsions at the local level".

"Many of them see bright chances of winning. Why should they lose the chance?" asked one senior opposition source.

"They do not mind risking their party membership as they think a victory will bring them back to the party fold."

The sources said the opposition parties are unlikely to take any action against the rebels before the last date of withdrawal, February 3.

Meanwhile, AL sources said the party is facing problems with two or more candidates for the same municipal seats, especially those of chairman.

"The problem has become acute this time as all aspirants believe their chances of winning are brighter because of absence of opposition candidates. The trend is more visible where opposition candidates are absent," one AL source said.

An AL sub-committee headed by president member Amir Hossain Anu met yesterday to discuss the problem and possible steps.

AL chief and prime minister Sheikh Hasina at a meeting of the party's national executive committee on Sunday warned against any intra-party bickering over the local government polls. She made it clear that she would be tough with anybody defying the party decision.

## Dhanmandi lake in doldrums

Development on target, but no plan yet for management

By Morshed Ali Khan

The authorities are yet to chalk out a detailed management plan of the income generating components of the Dhanmandi lake development project.

According to Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) sources, although the project is progressing smoothly and likely to be completed as scheduled in June 1999, there is no plan yet as to how the entire set-up would be managed.

There will be at least 17 income generating components in the lake area after the project is completed. These include swimming and health clubs, kiosks, public toilets, souvenir shops, skating arena, sand pool, boat club, restaurant, hawkers' plaza, amphitheatre and angling club.

Local residents and officials

fear that the lack of management planning might have a negative impact on the entire atmosphere of the area.

There are instances in the city where the government allocated or leased out such lucrative business installations, which ended up in mess. In many cases, the beneficiaries of the allocations or leases had "political blessings" and did not have any prior experience in running businesses, they say.

Other sources, involved in implementing the scheme, said that the consultants Viti Schapatti Brindo Ltd submitted a detailed management plan at a meeting with top officials more than a month ago. An official source said that a five-member committee had been formed in the meeting to scrutinise the

plan but the committee never sat down together to work on it. "As a matter of fact so far we do not know how the lake and its infrastructures would be managed and there is no initiative from the authorities," said one source.

Meanwhile, mayor Mohammad Hanif has recently said that all illegal encroachment would be removed from the Dhanmandi lake. At least 40 influential residents are illegally occupying more than two acres of public land in the lake area. Several earlier attempts by the government to recover this land failed.

At present, work on the project is progressing "very smoothly" and "right on schedule" as the DCC has reinforced its monitoring wing on

the scheme, DCC sources say. But with the encroachment, several components of the project are now in question. There are areas in the lake which are already known as 'dead zones' because access to these places have been cut off by the encroachers.

Another source said although relocation of almost all the kitchen and sewerage drains flowing into the lake has been done, only two houses are still refusing to cooperate with the authorities. Both owners are so influential that DCC officials cannot even approach them. The houses nos. 48 and 50 (near road 13/2) have ignored several requests and are continuing to divert their wastes into the lake, the source said.

## Opps torpedo CEC talks offer

By Staff Correspondent

Opposition parties have rejected outright an invitation from the Chief Election Commissioner for dialogue before the municipal elections scheduled for February 23-25.

A senior Election Commission official sent out letters to the leaders of the opposition parties inviting them for discussion ahead of the municipal polls, which these parties have vowed to boycott.

One EC source said the objective is to remove "the gap between the EC and the political parties as well as to pursue them to participate in the elections".

Sources said the EC letter was sent to BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan requesting him for a meeting

with the CEC on February 4. If the date is not convenient to the BNP leader, the meeting can take place on any day on or before February 10, the letter said.

Similar letters, signed by EC Additional Secretary Aziz Ahmed Chowdhury, were also sent Wednesday to leaders of Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh and Islami Oikyo Jote.

The EC proposal was turned down by the central liaison committee of the BNP-led opposition alliance that met at 29 Minto Road with BNP vice chairman M Shamsul Islam MP in the chair.

After the meeting, the liaison committee members had a brief meeting with BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Oppo-

sition in Parliament Khaleida Zia.

Sources said Khaleida Zia agreed with the decisions taken by the liaison committee.

Briefing newsmen, BNP leader Anwar Zahid, who attended the meeting, said the members of the committee rejected the EC invitation outright. He said resignation of CEC Muhammad Abu Hena is the number one demand and that "therefore no dialogue can be held before his resignation".

"Question does not arise at all to sit with the CEC at any stage or any circumstances," he said.

On municipal polls, he said the meeting found that a handful of the opposition leaders have submitted nomination

papers. "But these do not reflect the real situation inside these parties."

The liaison committee also asked the central committees of BNP, JP, Jamaat and IOJ to take effective measures for withdrawing the nomination papers submitted by their partymen.

It also decided to take punitive measure against the persons who would not withdraw. The liaison committee also instructed leaders at division, district and thana levels to persuade the partymen in this regard.

Replying to a question, Zahid said the liaison committee did not discuss the issue of joining the parliament session by the opposition parties.

## MQM favour triggers Pak row with Britain

By Syed Talat Hussain

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's information minister Mushahid Hussain lashed out at the British accusing them of double standards on terrorism. What prompted his diatribe was the decision by the British government to grant Altaf Hussain, chief of the Muttithida Qaumi Movement, at present under fire from Sharif government for sponsoring terrorism in province Sindh, an indefinite stay in the UK.

Altaf Hussain has been in the UK for the last eight years and from there controls his party cadres in Pakistan.

"There is more to the whole issue than meets the eye and we would take up the case with the British government at the foreign office level as to why they gave a terrorist asylum in their country," Mushahid said in a press conference.

However, the British High Commission in Islamabad said that it was "wrong to suggest that Altaf Hussain's case was granted an exceptional treatment."

"His case has been finalised in accordance with the White Paper" issued by the British government issued last year concerning asylum and immigration to clear up a backlog of 10,000 cases. There are other cases as well which have been decided the same way Altaf Hussain's case has been processed because this was a legal requirement, and if we had not he could have sued the British government," said British officials in Islamabad.

They said it was factually incorrect to say that Altaf Hussain has either been granted a refugee status, or asylum, or even British citizenship.

"Altaf Hussain's status has been formalised. He neither holds a British passport, nor is

a British citizen, nor a refugee nor he has been granted asylum."

Sources said that in no way does the granting of an indefinite stay in Britain to Altaf Hussain preclude the possibility of his extradition to Pakistan.

"As far as we are concerned, he has not committed any crime on British soil and the present government has not given us any evidence or proof of his direct involvement in terrorism. Nor has the present government made any effort to take up the issue of Altaf Hussain's extradition to Pakistan," British officials said.

"If there is evidence linking Altaf Hussain, the man with an act of terrorism we would be most happy to co-operate with the government of Pakistan."

Pakistani establishment officials also admit in private that the government of Pakistan had advance knowledge of the fact that Altaf Hussain, the chief of the Muttithida Qaumi Movement, would get official permission to stay indefinitely in Britain.

"We were told (by the British government) in good time that Altaf Hussain's case for indefinite stay in Great Britain has been finalised and it was decided that we would not react to it till a reaction was necessary," government sources said. The two relevant ministries, the interior ministry and the ministry of foreign affairs, besides prime minister Nawaz Sharif all were in the know of the matter.

"We were surprised then (when we were first told), but not when the case was broken by the MQM," sources said. They also say that extradition of Altaf Hussain has not been a major concern with the present

government.

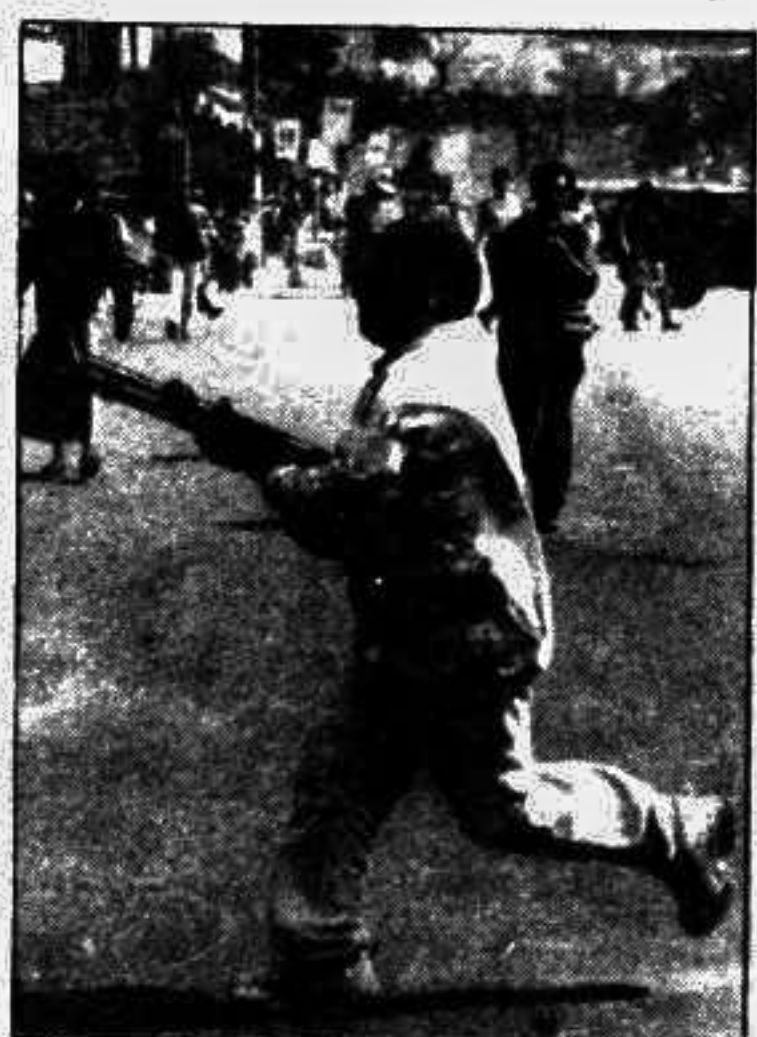
"We have not taken up the subject with the British government. A case of sorts was made against Altaf Hussain under the previous government and the possibility of a formal extradition treaty was also considered but nothing came out of it," said an official.

Important segments of the Pakistani establishment also give the impression that they are not keen on getting Altaf Hussain back for fear that the charges of terrorism against him might be difficult to prove in a court of law.

"Altaf Hussain back home will be a problem much more difficult than he is outside," said one official. That is perhaps why during the recent visit of Sir John Kerr Permanent Under-Secretary of State and Head of the Diplomatic Service, Altaf Hussain was not even discussed.

"Our track record of fighting terrorism speaks for itself. We have toughened our domestic laws and are a signatory to all the eleven International Conventions against terrorism," said British officials. They said that the controversy caused by the decision in Pakistan did not damage the Pak-UK relations at the government level. They admitted that Altaf Hussain may now be entitled to some sort of a travel document enabling him to move around freely.

Prayer Timings		
January 29		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5:23	5:27
Zohr	12:45	1:15
Asr	4:00	4:15
Maghrib	5:42	5:45
Esha	7:10	7:20



### Police 'probe' shotgun show

By Staff Correspondent

Police said that they were trying to identify both the man and the gun that figured in a photo caption of The Daily Star on January 27. However, none has been arrested or no police personnel suspended till yesterday.

Police sources said that a special team of police has launched a probe into the reported incident.

The photo showed an anti-hartal activist during Tuesday's 18-hour hartal was chasing opponents wielding a shotgun. The incident occurred in the afternoon near Purana Paltan police box in the presence of a large number of on-duty police personnel.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Inspector general of Police AYBI Siddiqi said, "We are making every effort to identify the man and the gun."

Asked how a gun was snatched from a policeman, he replied, "We did not lose any gun."

It was learnt that Ramna thana OC Raghibul Islam and a special Detective Branch team headed by AC Baten have been given the responsibility of finding out the errant persons and policemen.

### Expulsion twist in JP plot

By Staff Correspondent

After Wednesday's expulsion drama, the Jatiya Party yesterday again expelled two party MPs out of 11 who joined the parliament session on Monday defying Chairman HM Ershad.

A press release signed by JP office secretary Prof Humayun Kabir Hiru said the party chairman yesterday stripped Tasminia Hossain (Pirojpur-2) and Golam Faruque Ovi (Barisal-2) of their primary membership on charges of violating party instruction.

On Wednesday, JP faxed three separate press releases to newspapers. The first one expelled five MPs, the second one withdrew the first, while the third one claimed that JP Chairman HM Ershad had not taken any decision to expel the five party MPs.

The five MPs were Anwar Hossain Manju, Tasminia Hossain, Tajul Islam Chowdhury, Ahsan Ahmed and Ovi.

Giving his reaction on yesterday's decision, Ovi shrugged off the expulsion order.

"The decision of expulsion is Ershad's and Ershad will have to bear its consequences. I am felling relieved today as I am no longer with a universally acknowledged thief like Ershad," he told The Daily Star.

### Boycotting of poura polls a farce: AL

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League yesterday said Opposition's boycotting of municipal polls is a "farce" because many opposition candidates have submitted nominations papers for the elections.

A meeting of the party's Co-ordination Committee on Pourashava Polls, held at AL central office in the city, also urged people to remain alert against the Opposition's "conspiracy".

## Hasina preaches peace

### Tagore's Viswa Bharati honours Bangladesh PM

CALCUTTA, Jan 28: Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina here today called for united endeavour to ensure peace and friendship in the region and change the destiny of the teeming millions, reports UNB.

"We need concerted efforts as life has become difficult in this competitive world," Hasina said in her acceptance speech at a special convocation ceremony for conferment of Honorary D Litt degree on her by the Viswa-Bharati University.

The Chancellor of the university, former Indian Premier IK Gujral, conferred the honorary degree, Deshikottoma, on her at the ceremony.

To ameliorate the lot of the people of the region, Hasina said, "we are firmly committed to make the South Asian Regional Cooperation, growth quadrangle and other bodies more effective and stronger."

The Prime Minister said those who starve constitute majority population of the sub-continent. "United effort is necessary to free them from starvation and the society from deprivation."

Hasina said the prime precondition for achieving the target is to maintain continuous peace, harmony and friendship among the neighbouring countries.

In this context, she mentioned her government's signing the historic Ganges water sharing treaty with India, the historic CHT peace agreement and bringing back 64,000 Bangladeshi refugees to their homeland.

Referring to her shuttle mediation between India and Pakistan last June when both the countries went for nuclear tests, Hasina said Bangladesh can't remain silent when regional peace is at stake.



**Honoured**  
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina receives the honorary doctorate from I K Gujral at Shantiniketan

economy, she said no country could achieve economic freedom independently under the present global economic order.

She said cooperation is badly needed to achieve economic freedom for the betterment of the mankind.

Vice-Chancellor of the University and Higher Education Minister of West Bengal Dilip K Sinha read out the citation while Chancellor IK Gujral formally conferred the degree on Sheikh Hasina. The singer group then sang "Shanti Vachan".

In his address, IK Gujral welcomed Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, saying "Your arrival created a new sense of love

among us. Paying rich tribute to Bangabandhu, he said Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman liberated Bangladesh while Rabindranath united the two Bengals through his poems and songs.

The hour-long ceremony ended in a calm, cordial and tranquil atmosphere. The girls sang Tagore's song "Barihe Dhara Majhe Shantir Bari."

The Prime Minister later went round Rabindra Bhawan "Uttarayana" and some areas of Shantiniketan. Later, she left for Churulia to visit the birth-place of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam.