

## JP asks EC

**FROM PAGE 1**  
divisions across the country are held on six different days.

The delegation also proposed more changes in the electoral rules that include bar on retired government officials from contesting in any election before five years of their retirement, meeting sources said.

However, country's two leading political parties – the ruling Awami League and mainstream opposition BNP who earlier had talks with the EC on its reforms agenda supported the EC's recommendation of 5-lakh-taka ceiling for election expenses.

At yesterday's meeting, the CEC informed the JP delegation that the Commission has taken necessary measures to make all future elections credible. "We need cooperation from all quarters to conduct free, fair and realistic elections," the CEC was quoted as saying.

## Showcause

**FROM PAGE 12**  
also directed the authorities concern not to 'torture or harass' the detainee in custody.

The writ petition was moved by Barrister Rafiq-ul-Huq and filed by Barrister Andalib Rahman Partho.

Mostafa was picked up by police on March 16 and later shown arrested in the murder case of Obaidul Huq Babul, a garments factory owner in Mirpur on October 10, 1996. He was not a charge sheeted accused in the case, his lawyers said.

He was taken on remand for the third time yesterday in the custody of Detective Branch of DMP for two days.

Magistrate Narayan Chandra Das granted the remand after he was produced before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court.

## Erratum

In our news article titled 'Appeal for help' published on page 11 yesterday, the photograph published with the item was not of Mosharrar Hossain. We deeply regret the inadvertent mistake, and publish the item again today with the picture of Mosharrar Hossain.



## Appeal for help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The founder of Ayomoy Sangskritik Sangshad and actor Mosharrar Hossain has been suffering from cancer for long. Doctors suggested him to go abroad for better treatment, said a press release by the Sangshad.

But his family can not afford to send him abroad for treatment. He needs support from the wealthy people and well-wishers. The people who want to help him have been requested to send money to his bank account.

His account number is savings account, 4248/30 at Sonali Bank Bananibazar Branch, the press release added.

## Opportunism is name of game

**FROM PAGE 1**  
dominates the party, not Anwar Hossain Monju.

Khaleda maintained that if JP went to the parliament, it would create confusion in the four-party alliance, leading to misunderstanding among the opposition parties. Her emphasis on the unity of the alliance clearly suggests that the BNP chief wants Ershad on her side to return to power.

On the other hand, Awami League wants the pro-Ershad JP faction break away from the alliance, as the ruling party feels that the outcome of the polls will definitely go its way, if the alliance is broken. The government's intent was made too apparent by Ershad's detention under the Special Powers Act, even after fines were paid to secure his release from jail.

In exchange of his support, Ershad got bail against 15 pending corruption cases and one murder case by December 1996. Previously he never got bail in any single case, which were all filed by the BNP government.

After being released on January 9, 1997 on bail, Ershad had maintained his anti-BNP stand for two years. However, at one point, Ershad joined hands with BNP to

to JS, a decision completely unacceptable to Khaleda Zia.

Back in 1996, after the June 12 elections, JP gave support to the newly elected AL government on condition of Ershad's release from jail. On the basis of this support, AL formed its "government of consensus." At that time, several BNP and JP leaders met Ershad at jail, violating all rules and regulations, and asked him not to give any support to AL.

Ershad told the press later, "BNP had offered me the post of the prime minister. But I did not agree, because it's they who had put me in jail."

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After being released on January 9, 1997 on bail, Ershad had maintained his anti-BNP stand for two years. However, at one point, Ershad joined hands with BNP to

form the four-party alliance and, when Monju opposed it and refused to resign from the cabinet, he removed him from party position. (Interestingly, as Nazir Rahman Manzur tried to dissuade the pro-Ershad legislators from rejoining the parliament against the alliance's decision, he, too, lost his party position.)

Since then he became a target of the government and was punished in a corruption case, filed by the Khaleda government. Due to the court verdict, he also lost his parliamentary membership. Upon hearing the verdict, Khaleda rushed to Ershad's residence to express her sympathy on August 24, 2000. Now all the pending cases against Ershad are being revived and his bail prayers rejected.

Ironically, it was due to the combined agitation of Khaleda and Hasina, a powerful military autocrat like Ershad had to quit power. Now, in the interest of power, both Khaleda and Hasina befriended the autocrat at one time or the other over the last decade.

## Award 2001

**FROM PAGE 12**  
the War of Liberation, and late poet Syeda Motaheera Banu for literature.

Ashfaqur Rahman Khan was conferred with the award for his role in independence and the War of Liberation.

M R Akhtar Mukul got the Independence Day Award for journalism, while Bangladesh Cricket Board for games and sports.

Each award consists of a gold medal, Taka 50,000 and a citation.

## Pepsi car

**FROM PAGE 12**  
department store in the city. He did his master's (preliminary) in political science.

Rahat hailing from Chakoria of Cox's Bazar is running his computer business after completing MBA.

Hossain, who lives on Ayesha Khatun Lane in the city's Chandanpura area, already has two cars in his possession while his friend Rahat owns one.

Both of them have decided to sell off the car out and share the money.

They said that they had bought two bottles of Pepsi after having lunch at a hotel in Agrabad commercial area on March 3.

The prize distribution ceremony was addressed by Dr. Moinul Islam Mahmud, president, Chittagong Club, Shariq-ul-Islam, resident executive director, Transcom Group, Masud Alam Akanda, area manager, Transcom Electronics Ltd., G.Q. Chowdhury, chief operating officer, Transcom Beverages Ltd., and Alok Malik, country manager of Pepsi company.

## Rupsha Bridge

**FROM PAGE 1**  
preparatory works.

Accordingly, construction materials are expected to reach the site by the first week of next month.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is also expected to approve the project proposal by this month, said a source quoting officials at the Ministry of Communications.

There will be no more formality left for the bidder to start the construction once the prime minister gives her nod, the source further said.

## Independence Day Award 2000

**FROM PAGE 1**  
economic development of the country is not possible, she said and sought cooperation from all quarters for protecting democratic rights of the people.

The Prime Minister said she had offered an early election and declared that she would hand over power to a caretaker government after April 17, the Mujib Nagar Day.

But by issuing an ultimatum the opposition leader had closed the way of understanding and called hartals to cause sufferings to the people, she said.

The Independence Day Award 2000 was given to Maulana Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish (posthumous-Independence and Liberation War), Maj Gen Mohammad Abdur Rab Bir Uttam (posthumous-Independence

and Liberation War), Sardar Fazlul Karim (Education), Syed Shamsul Huq (Literature), Artist Shahabuddin (Fine Arts), Sultana Kamal Khuki (posthumous-Sports and Games), Sree Binod Bihari Chowdhury (Social Service), Ostad Khurshid Khan (Music), Sree Ajit Roy (Music) and Rokonzaman Dadabhai (posthumous-Children's Organisation).

Cabinet Secretary Kazi Shamsul Alam presented the award recipients to the Prime Minister and read out the citation.

The Independence Award, the highest national award, is given for outstanding performances in different fields and for contribution to national development and progress. One gold medal, Tk 50,000 and a citation are included in the award.

## Dry spell may be over

**FROM PAGE 12**  
In February, Sylhet region experienced considerable rainfall. But the northern region of the country had only 14 per cent of the expected rainfall.

This month there was seven mm of rainfall in Dhaka on March 17 and a 'trace amount' on March 22 but the rest of the country went without rain.

Experts feared that the dry spell would have an adverse impact on agricultural output during the current season.

According to reports from the northern region, although production of wheat was not affected due to lack of rain, cultivation of boro which requires extensive irrigation suffered a setback.

Usually rainfall is a supplementary source of water for boro cultivation, in addition to irrigation. Farmers have to spend more on irrigation purpose due to absence of rain. Besides, the extra expenditure on fuel for irrigation pumps, frequent disruption in electricity supply made it difficult to operate the power pumps.

Cultivation of aus paddy and various summer and seasonal crops might also be delayed because of the dry spell, experts said.

However, a weather expert said,

"Nor'westers accompanied by rains in late March and early April, ending the current dry spell, might be followed by a series of localised cyclones in mid and late April."

## Ershad okays

**FROM PAGE 1**  
asked us to begin discussion on seat sharing in the upcoming election," Kader said.

However, Ershad was quoted by a source as saying to his wife and his brother, "My life comes first, before either the party or the opposition alliance."

Meanwhile, a faction of JP led by Nazir Rahman Manzur is still disobeying Ershad's decision to relieve Nazir from his post.

A process has already begun to form another party. Sources said the split would take place after JP goes to the parliament. This rebel group led by Dr. MA Matin last night met Khaleda Zia.

In a statement, Manzur said those who had not contributed in any way to party activities during the last four years have now stepped into the trap of the government, and thus engaged in heinous conspiracy to cause disunity and division in the party.

## Nepotism, corruption by NU VC

**FROM PAGE 1**

The meeting called upon all concerned including teachers, students, guardians and politicians to refrain from politicising educational institutions and help curb cheating in examinations, meeting sources said.

The call came in the wake of widespread cheating in secondary and higher secondary certificate exams.

The committee urged all to come forward to save future generations from the destruction of moral values by resisting unfair practices in examinations.

The committee underscored the need for more effective measures to prevent cheating in examinations. The committee decided on a 25-point recommendation to prevent cheating in examinations after discussing various steps to develop standard of education.

A committee member said the authorities concerned should take strict security measures like imposition of section 144 around examination centres to keep the centres free

from prospective aides.

He said the meeting recommended adequate safety measures for the teachers and invigilators on duty at the examination centres.

The committee urged the government to introduce reward for those who sincerely discharge their duty at the examination centres.

The meeting also recommended steps to promote moral values among students so that they do not resort to cheating in the examinations and make them understand that a certificate obtained through cheating cannot guarantee them decent jobs or reward in practical life.

The lawmakers called for cooperation from all segments of society towards initiating a 'social movement' against the menace of cheating.

The committee put accent on the teachers' role, saying that they should discharge their duties properly and impart lessons in such a way that students would not need copying to pass the exams.

Local administration and examination centres should hold public rallies or briefing in the area adjacent to examination centres so that local people of that certain locality could remain vigilant against copying, the JS body suggested.

There should be a system of inter-transfer among different board officials to curtail their prolonged authority on different issues, which would help curb corruption, in which board officials mostly engaged, it said.

The committee also urged the board authorities to take adequate measures so that students of a certain school do not appear at the examination at his or her school or teachers of a certain school do not get invigilation duty at his or her school.

Education Minister ASHK Sadik, Whip Abdus Shahid, Rawshan Ershad, Panchanan Biswas and Alamgir Kabir among others attended the meeting while Chairman of the committee Nurul Islam Nahid presided over.

# What can the President do?

**FROM PAGE 1**

Here again, the ultimatum and the calling of 48 hours hartals for the government to quit, which have now been added to by JCD's call on the following day, is something totally unconstitutional.

As we had said earlier, substantive offers have been placed on the table by the Prime Minister on all the above questions. About early elections, there is a specific offer of holding it by 12 June 2000, as compared to opposition's demand of holding it by 30 May. The difference here is of a mere 12 days. It may be mentioned here that both these dates are only important to the extent that they reflect the 'wish' of their respective parties. It is only the Chief Election Commissioner who can fix the actual date, which more realistically can be towards the end of June or early July. About resignation, the opposition demands it on 30th March and the offer of the government is 'anytime after 17th

April'. Even if the PM takes a few more days, we are still talking about April 20th or 21st. The point we are trying to make is that there is a significant convergence of views regarding the timeframe of resignation and election has already been publicly expressed. To move further into more acceptable dates may not be difficult if we can bring the rivals to a dialogue. There is a recent example of flexibility when, earlier, the Prime Minister asked the opposition to return to parliament to demand early elections but later stepped back from it. This created the opening for Khaleda Zia to meet the President and ask for elections by end of May. This example encourages us to believe that there is a role for the President in this crisis.

There are two other reasons why we feel encouraged. Originally the opposition had reservations about the CEC, M A Syed. But recent indications are that they have developed confidence in his neutrality and are quite willing to go to polls with him at the helms of the Election Commission. The other significant development is their acceptance, though the Constitution does not

give them any option, of former Justice Latifur Rahman as the Chief Advisor of the coming caretaker government. The opposition had never said anything in public about him yet there was simmering discontent, which now appears to have totally disappeared. This again brightens the prospect of a smooth functioning of the coming caretaker government.

In this background, we feel that the President should play a role in resolving the present crisis. The possibility of his taking an initiative exists because of the public invitation of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina (given before the present mood of confrontation triggered by the opposition's ultimatum and the PM's counter challenge of "Topple me if you can") asking the President to organise a dialogue with the opposition. As a first step the President should ascertain whether or not the PM's offer for early polls and resignation after 17th April is still valid. If not, then there is nothing he can do and he should not proceed any further. In the event the answer is in the affirmative, which we hope, pray and think it is, then Justice Shahabuddin should send words to the opposition and invite them to talk

to him. It is our belief that the opposition will respond to the President's invitation and thus a dialogue will start between our two rivals. There are obvious differences in the perception of the two parties (discussed in details yesterday) as to what conditions need to be fulfilled before elections can be held. However, sufficient grounds exist for an amicable solution to all of them.

We insist that such a dialogue get started because the alternative is extremely dangerous. The ultimatum and the counter challenge are nothing short of open invitation for street fights. As these groups will fight each other it will be the mastaans and terrorists of both the parties who will gain the upper hand and the real political workers will become sidelined. As more violence takes place more ground will be created for further violence. Each incident, each clash and each death will be justification for a repetition of the same. With each such recurrence more and more of the mastaans and terrorists will come into prominence and politics will slip out of the hands of real politicians and into the hands of gun-wielding and mob-controlling gangsters.

Given the proliferation of illegal arms and both home made and smuggled bombs and weapons, one can easily visualise what the nature and form our politics will take if we get into a free fight in the streets for supremacy between our main political rivals. Whatever little politics of issues and substance that still exists will be replaced by crude muscle power and the jungle rule of 'might is right.' Is this what we want for our children and ourselves? What sort of an election will result after months of such violence?

We draw this picture of what will happen if our political rivals chose the path of confrontation instead of dialogue, for all to think and reflect as to our immediate future. This picture, we hope, will rudely awaken our leaders and prod them to act responsibly. Therefore, we think, it is extremely urgent and vitally necessary that President Justice Shahabuddin takes upon himself to save us from the dire consequences of the present political trend that we foresee coming our way.

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## Bangladesh

**FROM PAGE 1**  
"All should reach consensus on important national issues," he said in view of the hostile political postures of the government and the opposition parties.

The government as well as different political parties and socio-cultural organisations have drawn up elaborate programmes to celebrate the occasion. The day is a public holiday.

The daylong programme will begin at daybreak with the hoisting of national flag atop all public and private buildings across the country. National leaders, all political and socio-cultural organisations and people from all walks of life will place wreaths at the National Memorial at Savar throughout the day.

The president will place wreath at the Memorial at 5:30 am. He will also host a reception at Bangabhaban at 4 pm.

The prime minister will place wreath at the National Memorial at 5:57 am and at the portrait of the Father of the Nation at Bangabandhu Bhaban at 7:30 am. She will also attend children's rally in the Bangabandhu National Stadium at 8 am.

## Tofail

**FROM PAGE 12**  
was scheduled to take part in the Paltan programme, however did not.

The ruling party leaders bitterly criticised the Opposition alliance for giving an ultimatum to the government to quit power by March 31 and for calling hartals when the Prime Minister had already announced her government's plan to resign after April 17.

Tofail said the government is willing to settle all election-related issues through dialogue with the Opposition but "they (Opposition) want to take up the issues with the caretaker government." He then reminded the Opposition about the Constitutional provision of 15 days' time for takeover by a caretaker government after expiry of tenure of the present government.

Zillur said instead of going to the President, the BNP chief should have gone to the Prime Minister to have talks about early polls.

He expressed surprise at the Opposition's March 30 ultimatum despite the government's announcement that it would step down only 17 days later.

## Badruddoza

**FROM PAGE 12**  
given 90 days' time, as provided in the Constitution, to take all necessary steps to ensure a fair election.

He criticised the Prime Minister for 'shifting' from her announcement made from Madina about the election. She used to wear 'Islamic dress' before the 1996 polls and is doing the same this time also to 'beg vote in the name of Islam', he said and called upon the people not to be misguided by this.

The other speakers included Oli Ahmed, Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed, Maj (Retd) Hafizuddin Ahmed, Alamgir Kabir, Prof M Maniruzzaman Miah, Redwan Ahmed, Khandaker Monirul Alam, Chowdhury Abu Taleb and Msebahuddin Sabu.

## Muslehuddin

**FROM PAGE 12**  
his split judgement cited testimony of a witness saying that the accused came to 32 Dhanmondi after the killings were over.

Justice Amin had said, therefore, the charge against Muslehuddin that he lent his weapon to co-accused lieutenant colonel Aziz Pasha to kill Begum Mujib, Sheikh Jamal and two daughters-in-law of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman did not stand to reason.

But the prosecution said according to the evidences and witnesses testimonies the killings at 32 Dhanmondi residence of the Father of the Nation took place in between 5 and 5:30 am when Muslehuddin was very much present at the spot.