

## EC for indoor politics

FROM PAGE 1  
leaders are currently helping informally. "It will be more helpful for us if local units of the political parties are able to assist us formally. We hope, they will be able to do that soon," he added.

The field level task of preparing the voter list with photographs will begin at full throttle next month with an aim to having the finalised list ready by October next year, which is the set deadline for it.

In response to the EC's proposals, the caretaker government allowed indoor politics only in the capital on a limited scale with a set of conditions attached, to create an atmosphere conducive to holding electoral reform talks between the commission and political parties.

After indoor politics had been allowed in the capital, CEC Huda said the EC had expected the government to allow indoor politics all across the country with similar conditions attached.

According to the EC's electoral roadmap, the government will have to either lift or relax the countrywide state of emergency in phases from January as holding of due elections to local governments is scheduled to begin in January.

The local government and rural development ministry in a letter last month asked the EC to hold the due polls to local governments as soon as the voter lists for the areas are ready.

Senior officials of the EC Secretariat said apart from holding polls to the city corporations, polls to over 4,000 union parishes will also be due between January and March of the next year.

"According to the electoral roadmap, we will try to hold polls to union parishes of some areas where the voter list will be ready," a senior official said.

Voter lists of many areas will be ready within this year for holding polls to local governments early next year, said the EC official adding that before holding the polls in those areas, voter lists of other areas might also be ready.

Meanwhile in another move the EC is planning to seek the power to cancel candidacies of contestants in local government elections including for city corporations, municipalities, and union parishes, if irregularities are found in election campaigns. Earlier, the commission sought the same power for the parliamentary election too.

The EC is also mulling a provision for restricting retired military and civil servants, and officials of NGOs that run on foreign grants, from contesting in local government polls within three years of their retirement, the commission sources said.

## Kibria murder

FROM PAGE 1  
are now cross-checking a list of possible suspects, belonging to Islamist outfit Harkatul Jihad Al Islami (Huji). A number of detained Huji leaders in their statements had disclosed several names of Huji members, who they claimed to have been involved in the murder of Kibria and four others, the officials added.

The supplementary investigation of the Kibria assassination case was started by the government in March this year as the slain leader's family appealed to the chief adviser on January 19 this year to conduct a fresh and fair probe into the case.

On January 27, 2005, Shah AMS Kibria -- a noted economist, finance minister from 1996 to 2001 during the term of Awami League (AL) government, parliamentarian (Habiganj 3) and a veteran AL leader -- was killed along with four AL activists in a grenade attack on an AL rally at Boidder Bazar in Habiganj.

The High Court stayed the proceedings of the sensational case on May 14, 2006 following a petition by the complainant of the case, advocate Majid Khan, also a local AL leader.

Following the murder, advocate Majid Khan, on behalf of the Kibria family, filed two cases -- one for the murder and the other under explosives act.

In less than two months into the murder, on March 20, 2005, Munshi Atiqur Rahman, senior ASP of CID and the then investigation officer (IO) of the cases, submitted charge sheets of the two cases naming 10 local BNP leaders and workers as accused.

Both Kibria family and the complainant, advocate Majid Khan, rejected the charge sheets outright and demanded reinvestigation into the cases as both the charge sheets were identical to a government probe report and lacked any specific information about the masterminds of the murder or the source of the grenade used in the attack.

Kibria family maintained that the names of the masterminds could be revealed if the investigators are allowed to work freely and interrogate powerful individuals. They also demanded a neutral probe into the attack conducted by international investigators.

Despite the controversy over the investigation and objection raised by the complainant and the Kibria family, the trial of the cases got underway in May 2006 at a Sylhet court until being stayed by the High Court on May 14, 2006.

In January 2006, while talking to The Daily Star, senior ASP of CID Munshi Atiqur Rahman, the then investigation officer (IO) of the cases, brushed aside the necessity of further investigation of the case.

On March 7 this year, Munshi Atiqur Rahman contradicted him self when he pleaded to the Sylhet

regarding local government elections scheduled to start in January.

In line with its plan, the EC emphasised holding of overdue polls to city corporations first. It already announced that the polls to Rajshahi and Khulna city corporations will be held sometime between the end of January and February as the voter lists for the area are almost ready.

Holding of the long overdue polls to Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is scheduled for sometime between March and April next year, while the EC decided to have the voter list for the area ready in January.

The commission is also pondering about holding the elections to Sylhet and Barisal city corporations in early May, the latest month in which the polls to those city corporations may be held staying within the timeframe permitted by the law. The commission is going to start the field level work of voter listing in Sylhet and Barisal city corporations this month with a view to completing the job in a month.

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## NBR

FROM PAGE 16

income, the NBR chairman said, "An individual may pay tax at any moment he or she wants."

Earlier, NBR extended the deadline for submitting individual tax return for 2007-'08 tax year till October 31.

As the process of recovering the money smuggled offshore began, ACC Secretary Mukhles said, "We might send a director general of investigation to Scotland Yard for training and we might get assistance from our embassy in this regard."

The secretary refused to make any comment on the issue of signing an agreement between Bangladesh and the UK as it is a matter of two states and the concern of government high-ups.

## Middleman chain

FROM PAGE 16

The workers however claimed they had paid Tk 2.3 lakh to Tk 2.5 lakh to the middlemen.

Hamidul Haque, a manpower broker in Asrafpur, Meherpur, said he paid Tk 1.95 lakh to recruiting agency Tangail Overseas for sending Shahabuddin to Malaysia.

"Tangail Overseas entrusted Golden Arrow with the responsibility. I don't know how much Tangail Overseas gave to Golden Arrow," he told investigation officer Lokman Hossain Miah, deputy director of BMET, during quizzing.

However, Shahabuddin who hailed from Chaudanga said he had paid Tk 2.3 lakh to Mamunur Rashid, an employee of Hamidul's NGO Sobah in Meherpur.

In response, Hamidul said, "I don't know if Rashid took Tk 2.3 lakh from Shahabuddin. I received from Rashid Tk 1.95 lakh and gave it to Tangail Overseas."

Rashid was supposed to give me Tk 2.2 lakh from which my share of profit was to be Tk 25,000."

On the other hand, Siraj Mia, managing director of recruiting agency Liza Overseas, said one Rajdoot came to him through his relative Delwar.

"On receiving assurance, I told Delwar to contact Golden Arrow. He paid them Tk 1.75 lakh and subsequently Rajdoot went to Malaysia in April. Unfortunately, he returned home finding no job there," Siraj said.

Rajdoot told the investigation officer he paid Tk 1.98 lakh and his parents sent him Tk 35,000 more when he along with many other workers was unemployed and half-fed or unfed in Malaysia.

Quizzing revealed almost similar amount of money paid to the middlemen and Golden Arrow. But Ittekhbar also said Dhaka should look to utilising the country's rich intellectual and cultural resources to advance the foreign policy interests.

Earlier, delivering a speech at the conference of Islamic foreign ministers, Ittekhbar said, "We must strengthen cooperation among member states to prevent conflicts, achieve an independent Palestine, safeguard the rights of the Muslims where they are minority, and prevent unilateral actions against Muslim states."

He said the Islamic world must use its "abundant resources" to achieve higher levels of development in the fields of economy and science. He urged the OIC to pay special attention to the least developed Muslim countries.

The foreign adviser said the West mistakenly equates Islam with terrorism, but "Islam is a faith of peace and the Islamic world is united against terrorism".

## AL for lifting

FROM PAGE 1

political leaders and workers could get involved in the voter listing process.

Their stance on the lifting of the emergency came as Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda Tuesday suggested that emergency should be withdrawn from places at least two months before local-body polls in a bid to help the candidates conduct campaigns.

The meeting, which was held at the AL's acting President Zillur Rahman's Gulshan residence, also agreed in principle to fully cooperate with the Election Commission (EC) in implementing its electoral roadmap.

The meeting is part of a series of talks among the AL's allies that aim at thrashing out a common position on reforms issues at the dialogue with the EC.

The AL and the SD leaders agreed in principle that the alliance's 31-point reform proposal would be at the core of their contention with the electoral body.

They pointed out that both the government and the EC would have to play a responsible role in implementing the roadmap.

The two parties decided that they will make out a strong to the EC in a bid to have war criminals, patrons of religious extremism and communal activities and urged the EC to take initiatives to that end.

The AL leader also demanded that the EC simplify the rules for registering the political parties as many parties otherwise would not be able to get registered.

Tofail said they do not support any bid of the Election Commission to control political parties in the name of registering the SD.

The SD's General Secretary Dilip Barua said the EC should take measures so that religion-based political parties cannot participate in the elections as, he said, these parties divide the nation.

## CG can

FROM PAGE 1

The workers however claimed they had paid Tk 2.3 lakh to Tk 2.5 lakh to the middlemen.

The returnees said the ministry's acting secretary during his visit to Malaysia promised them Tk 2.3 lakh each in compensation upon their return.

"He [acting secretary] also promised that all the 80 workers who staged a hunger strike on the High Commission premises in Kuala Lumpur will be sent home by October 5. But until now only 13 have returned," said Shahidul Islam, a returnee worker.

He will send our proposals to the local government ministry," he said.

The proposed code of conduct by the EC for political parties and electoral candidates in the parliamentary polls are likely to be recommended for local government elections too, the EC sources added.

The proposals are for strict regulations on holding campaign rallies and processions, putting up of posters, graffiti writings, display of banners and festoons, making of caps, constructions of archways and gates, decorative illumination, and use of helicopters for the campaign.

The EC is also looking for options to remove differences in campaign spending. During the last polls, a mayoral candidate was allowed to spend up to Tk 5 lakh, although there were big differences in numbers of voters in different city corporations.

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The agency will pay each of the workers claim if they can prove it," he said.

The investigation officer fixed October 29 for another hearing and asked the workers to wait for com-

## Soldiers hunt

FROM PAGE 16

Villarosa said embassy staff had gone to some monasteries in recent days and found them completely empty. Others were barricaded by the military and declared off-limits to outsiders.

There is a significantly reduced number of monks on the streets. Where are the monks? What has happened to them?" she said. The Democratic Voice of Burma, a dissident radio station based in Norway, says 10 people were killed in the violence, but dissident groups put the death toll at up to 200 and say 6,000 people were detained.

Gambari went to Myanmar on Saturday to convey the international community's outrage at the junta's actions. He also hoped to persuade the junta to take the people's aspirations seriously.

He met junta leader Senior Gen. Than Shwe and his deputies and talked to detained pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi twice.

Gambari avoided the media in Singapore, where he arrived Tuesday night en route to New York. He was not expected to issue any statement before briefing UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Friday.

The junta has not commented on Gambari's visit and the United Nations has only released photos of Gambari and a somber, haggard-looking Suu Kyi who has spent nearly 12 of the last 18 years under house arrest shaking hands during their meeting in a state guest house in Yangon.

In Singapore, Gambari met with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, the chairman of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations bloc of which Myanmar is a member.

A Singapore government statement said Lee told Gambari that ASEAN is "fully behind his mission" to bring about a "political solution for national reconciliation and a peaceful transition to democracy."

## Flood losses

FROM PAGE 1

Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The contribution would include both loans and grants.

After meeting Aziz, Senga told reporters that the ADB's contribution would depend on an ongoing flood damage and needs assessment study.

"Initially, we weren't expected to come in to help this year....we hoped the problem was not so severe. But the finance adviser in his recent trip to Manila indicated the importance of extending support to the flood victims in the country," he said.

"So we quickly managed to form a team in full cooperation with other development partners to formulate our assistance," Senga said adding, "Hopefully we will be able to provide substantive assistance for rehabilitation."

The WB director general said that he and Aziz also discussed about ongoing regional cooperation on an information superhighway project.

"Essentially this is about information communication technology," he said, adding, "If Bangladesh and its neighbours get together there will be a multiplier effect of having joint access to information and this will be very helpful for Bangladesh."

They would finalise the technical scope of the project soon, Senga added.

Khaleda

FROM PAGE 1

sourced the news agency.

According to our staff correspondent, the lawyers for Khaleda yesterday submitted a petition to Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court seeking permission to furnish a bail bond after the bail order granted by the High Court to the former prime minister reached the court.

The HC granted bail to Khaleda on September 30 in the case filed by the ACC for awarding container-handling work at Chittagong Port and Dhaka Inland Container Yard to Gato, violating tender rules.

The lawyers could not furnish the bail bond yesterday as the judge concerned was not available.

Meanwhile, detained former state minister for energy AKM Mosharaf Hossain was questioned yesterday at the jail gate regarding the container handling case.

Competent sources said a team comprising Anti-Corruption Commission Deputy Director Jafir Huda and Taskforce-23 Officer Major Mostafa Kamal questioned him for about an hour in the afternoon at Dhaka Central Jailgate.

Detained former health minister Khandaker Mosharaf Hossain, who is now in Dhaka jail, was scheduled to be questioned in connection with the case. He could not be questioned because of time constraint. The former minister will be questioned within a day or two.

Both the ministers were the members of the purchase committee that approved the awarding of contract to Gato, a private company.

The Yongbyon facilities, as well as two other minor ones, were shut down in July as part of