

# AL wants

**FROM PAGE 1**  
The candidates will add up to those of their parties, says the EC's revised proposals on polls expenditure.

The proposed limit is not rational and so should be changed, the AL observed. "There should be no check on election expenditure of the political parties," said Tofail.

In its proposals, the party asked for the ceiling of donations from individuals and organisations to be raised to Tk 10 lakh and Tk 50 lakh.

According to the EC proposals, an individual can donate a maximum of Tk 5 lakh to a registered political party in a year while the amount for an organisation would be no more than Tk 25 lakh.

The AL suggested that the EC organise projection or publicity meetings giving candidates opportunity to outline their credentials and seek vote for them or their parties.

Besides, the commission should paste election posters for the contenders in designated areas, it said adding that this all would help free the polls from influence of black money.

AL Presidium Member Amir Hossain Amu said if their proposals are implemented a candidate would be able to keep their spending limited to Tk 5 lakh, otherwise they might have to count way beyond Tk 15 lakh, the expenses check proposed by the EC.

In reply to the proposals for the EC to take on the electioneering responsibility for the contestants, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda said it would be a colossal task requiring a huge manpower that the commission does not have. "We can't execute the idea this time. We are however planning some projection meetings on Bangladesh Television for all party candidates."

About the proposal for state funding, he did not make any comment.

During the talks, the AL delegation led by acting president Zillur Rahman sought a date for the election, which it says, would clear the doubt in public mind about the long-stalled ninth parliamentary polls.

The party said they agree on most of the EC's proposals for electoral reforms, but have reservations about a few.

The AL leaders said they do not subscribe to the commission's views that political parties should not have overseas chapters.

They said the organisations that worked against the Liberation War

and patronise militancy must not be allowed to register with the commission.

The party suggested that the EC should not allow election observers in the polling booths. In response, the poll chief said they are preparing some guidelines for the election observers.

It also asked the EC to drop its proposal seeking to disqualify the utility service bill defaulters from contesting the parliamentary elections, saying the matter is too complicated.

About the commission's proposal for requirement of "competent authorities' approval" to hold rallies during electioneering, the AL said the provision is unnecessary and should be dropped.

It suggested that instead of repealing the current Representation of People Order (RPO) 1972, the EC should bring necessary amendments to it.

The same day two other political parties--Jatiya Party (Ershad) and Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB)--participated in the talks with the EC.

Jatiya Party requested the commission to disqualify for registration the parties with brackets attached to their names.

The CPB in their proposals suggested that the EC set the expenditure ceiling for a candidate at Tk 3 lakh, instead of current Tk 5 lakh.

"The proposed ceiling of Tk 15 lakh will encourage the use of black money in the polls," the CPB leaders argued.

They also called for the commission not to allow anti-liberation forces to register as political party.

Besides, the CPB proposed introduction of proportional representation system in parliament and increasing the number of women's reserved seats with a provision of direct election.

**EC MIGHT MONITOR POLLS EXPENDITURES**

In the light of the political parties' demands, the EC might introduce a system to monitor election expenditure of the candidates and political parties, observed CEC Huda.

"We will consider if magistrates can be assigned to do the job during the polls," he told the CPB delegation.

Earlier on the opening day of the second-round talks Sunday, Workers Party too demanded monitoring of spending by candidates and parties.

## Oscar 2008

**FROM PAGE 16**  
pre-Oscars favorite.

The evening's acting awards were dominated by European talent, with France's Marion Cotillard winning best actress for "La Vie En Rose" and Ireland's Daniel Day-Lewis winning best actor for "There Will Be Blood."

The supporting actor and actress awards went to Spain's Javier Bardem for his performance as a psychopathic hitman in "No Country for Old Men" and Britain's Tilda Swinton, who played a scheming corporate legal chief in "Michael Clayton."

In other highlights, Austria's "The Counterfeiters" won the best foreign film award for its true story of a group of Jewish prisoners recruited by the Nazis to mount one of the largest counterfeiting operations in history.

However Paul Thomas Anderson's "There Will Be Blood", which had been nominated in eight categories, finished with only two awards, for cinematography and Day-Lewis.

The second best performing film in terms of Oscars was action movie "The Bourne Ultimatum", which snaffled three prizes in the technical categories.

Oscar host Jon Stewart had opened the show with a joke about the crop of "Oscar-nominated psychopathic killer movies" in his monologue.

## Babar

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Sanbeer allegedly hit Sabbir in the head with an empty bottle leaving him dead.

Another Bashundhara Director Shamsuddin Ahmed, and Sanbeer's close aide Khairul Hasan Uzzal were also indicted in the murder case.

Both Sanbeer and Uzzal went into hiding after the incident.

Sources said the case was transferred to CID from the Detective Branch (DB) for investigation on June 12, 2007 soon after Babar had received the bribe from the Bashundhara chairman.

During an earlier interrogation Babar admitted to taking the bribe of Tk 20 crore from the Bashundhara chairman in exchange for not implicating Sanbeer in the murder case.

## Titas staff

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Shibpur village in Matlab, Chandpur, Mohammad Jahangir Alam, 36, of Bashidpur in Laxmipur, and Mohammad Anisur Rahman, 33, of Chahra village under Kotwali police station in Jessore.

Shawon and Jahangir are traders by profession and Anisur is a driver. The Taskforce members seized Tk 200,000 and various equipment used for metre tampering from their possession.

Talking to The Daily Star, all the arrestees admitted to being involved in illegal activities and corruption. They also promised not to do such acts in future.

Sadequr Rahman submitted his wealth statement to the Taskforce mentioning two flats in Mirpur, a piece of land in Demra and some cash money.

But the Taskforce officials said they have traced more of his ill-gotten property.

Shawon said they had been carrying out the illegal job for several years in connivance with some Titas staffs and owners of various industries and companies.

The sources say the Taskforce has launched a massive drive against metre tampering and identified several groups are involved.

Lt Col ATM Hasan Ahmed told The Daily Star: "Those who are involved have a very strong syndicate and various employees and officials of the Titas Gas are related to this illegal process."

"They have strong syndicates in every industrial and commercial zones, and these syndicates deal with the unscrupulous owners of various industries for dodging the real price of gas they use."

Earlier, the Taskforce discovered astonishing level of corruption by Titas staff and traced among them several hundred billionaires and millionaires.

**Jamuna bridge**  
**FROM PAGE 16**  
could become 20-25 years, if necessary steps are not taken immediately.

The authorities following several investigations think faulty maps, faulty construction, plying of overloaded vehicles and plying of trains could be the reasons behind the bridge's present condition.

However, an official of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge authority said they are not satisfied with the results of investigations made so far.

A recent investigation claimed trains are the main cause for the cracks and suggested closing the bridge to trains. It found cracks in 62 out of 1,262 segment joints of the bridge. The government, however, only reduced speed limit of trains on the bridge to 20kmph. They are even thinking about reducing the number of trains using the bridge.

The authorities also say the present caretaker of the bridge Margra Net One has not been taking proper care of the bridge, apart from collecting toll. They claimed it does not tighten the nuts and bolts of expansion joints at regular intervals, a job the previous caretaker Jomac did very well.

## Cast votes judiciously

**FROM PAGE 1**  
The district administration organised the meeting conducted by Dhaka Divisional Commissioner Ikram Ahmed.

Home Adviser Maj Gen (ret'd) MA Matin, LGRD and Cooperatives Adviser M Anwarul Iqbal and representatives from different professions addressed the meeting.

Home Adviser MA Matin was assigned to gather information about problems and prospects of Kishoreganj and Netrakona districts while M Anwarul Iqbal of Jamalpur and Sherpur districts.

The CA in his introductory remarks said the government and the Election Commission are taking all necessary steps and preparations for holding free, fair transparent and credible elections both at the local and national levels.

Referring to the EC's move to hold local government polls, including elections to the city corporations, the CA said holding of elections to the city corporations will perhaps be the first polls under the present government.

Appreciating the people for their cooperation in preparing the voter list with photographs, he said, "An unprecedented response was received from the people to the ongoing voter listing work."

He hoped that the voter listing would be completed very quickly.

Quoting the Election Commission, the CA informed the meeting that inclusion of half of the total eligible voters in the list would be completed within this (February) month.

Referring to dialogue between the EC and political parties, he said, "On completion of the series of dialogues, everything about the electoral reforms will be made public."

About local government system, the CA said the government has decided in principle to strengthen the local government system and is working to that end to consolidate the foundation of democracy.

He also assured that the government is giving attention to increasing financial solvency of the local government institutions and their institutional capacities.

Mentioning an assembly of the elected representatives of local government bodies in Dhaka, the CA said the allowance of chairmen and members will be raised. He said a decision has been taken to increase their allowance, which is a step towards empowering the local government system.

He said price spiral on the international market has caused the last year's price hike of essential commodities on the local market.

He said the government is giving priority to agriculture sector for boosting rice and food production. "As a result, the farmers will get fair prices of their produces while the market prices of the commodities will be stabilised,"

## Lankan military

**FROM PAGE 16**  
The rebels made no reference to ground attacks.

According to the defence ministry, 1,581 rebels have been killed so far this year. The military estimates the Tigers' strength at 5,000 combatants.

The military says 90 soldiers and police have also been killed in 2008.

Casualty figures provided by both sides differ vastly and cannot be independently verified since the government bars journalists and human rights workers from frontline and rebel-held areas.

The Sri Lankan government last month officially pulled out of a truce with the Tamil guerrillas.

## ECs vow

**FROM PAGE 1**  
military backed caretaker government to lift the state of emergency immediately, and to release detained AL President Sheikh Hasina and other top leaders of the party.

The acting AL chief, who spoke at the opening of yesterday's talks, also suggested the caretaker government to begin its national dialogues with parliamentary parties immediately to overcome the present political crisis in the country.

In response to the AL acting chief's remarks, CEC Huda questioned why confusions are being raised over holding of the parliamentary poll by the end of December this year.

"Election is the only legitimate way to state power. So, the election must be held and all of our activities are for creating an atmosphere for the election," CEC Huda told the AL delegation during the bilateral talk held at noon in the EC Secretariat conference room in presence of journalists.

About the state of emergency, the CEC reiterated that the election cannot be held amid the emergency regime.

"We asked the caretaker government to create an environment conducive to holding elections. Now it depends on the government whether it will lift or relax the state of emergency to create the proper environment for polls," the CEC said referring to the EC's February 4 meeting with the chief adviser.

He also said the government will also have to lift the countrywide restrictions on indoor politics, so political parties may embark on their reform activities.

The AL acting chief asked the EC to properly follow the electoral roadmap. "If you can do so, our full cooperation will be with you," Zillur said.

Earlier in the day, the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) sat in a dialogue with the EC, where its delegation told the commission that the people have doubts about holding of the polls within the timeframe stipulated by the roadmap.

"We don't know why the doubts are there, but those must be removed from the public mind, and the Election Commission must follow the electoral roadmap," CPB Secretary General Mujahidul Islam Selimsaid.

While placing AL's electoral

he assured the people.

In this regard, the CA said, allocation in ADP has been increased for taking short- and mid-term projects like providing better fertilisers and seeds, and ensuring a better irrigation management.

Responding to demands of the people from different districts, he said the government would take effective decisions on short-term schemes, which are essentials to solve the problems.

Besides, the CA said, the government has taken an initiative to launch long-term projects.

About fertiliser distribution, he agreed with some of the speakers that there has been some mismanagement in fertiliser distribution and assured that it would be overcome soon.

The CA said the government is thinking about open market sale of fertiliser and also taking steps for its marketing and distribution.

In this regard, he mentioned that a committee, headed by an adviser, has been formed to make recommendations for proper distribution and management of fertiliser.

**VISITSMARKET**

At around 3:00pm, the chief adviser went to Shombhuganj Bazar in Sadar upazila to see for himself the present market situation.

He talked to the people regarding the supply of agricultural commodities and prices of daily necessities.

Some of the people responded positively, saying that adequate amount of agricultural products, including rice, potatoes and other vegetables, are now available on the market.

The head of caretaker government also talked to some rice traders to know first hand the prices of rice.

## Edible oil

**FROM PAGE 16**  
been fixed at Tk 103.50 and palm oil at Tk 96.50 per kg.

Vice-president of Bangladesh Vegetable Oil Refiners Association and City Group Chairman Fazlur Rahman announced the mill-gate rates while wholesalers Association General Secretary Abul Hashem set the retail prices.

The City Group chairman said the import prices of Soya bean and palm oils are Tk 103 and Tk 96.

The traders said they will sit with the commerce adviser on March 9 for a review of the prices.

Bangladesh Bank deputy governor, NBR chairman, BDR director general and other senior officials of different government agencies were present at the meeting.

Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur said the government has decided to impose a "lock-in" strategy on the edible oil market to keep the prices stable.

"We have discussed with the traders and want to set a negotiated price of edible oil," he said, adding that international edible market is so much volatile.

In this context, he mentioned that in neighbouring India per-kg soya bean oil now sells at a price equivalent to Bangladeshi Tk 120.68.

He said a high-powered institutional market-monitoring committee will be formed, headed by him, with members drawn from Bangladesh Bank, NBR, BDR, and representatives of importers and wholesalers' associations.

The government has made effort to keep the prices of four food items stable on priority basis," he told the meeting. The items are rice, pulses, edible oil and wheat.

## Moeen

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Sudhir Sharma, quartermaster general, and Lt Gen N Mohanty, director general Remount Veterinary Services, were also present at the ceremony.

The horse presentation ceremony was followed by a guard of honour to Gen Moeen by Indian Defence Forces. Moeen laid a wreath at Amar Jawan Jyoti at the India Gate.

The stallions and mares will form a strong breeding germ-plasm for production of quality horses for Bangladesh Army and promote multifarious equestrian activities.

The two stallions and the four broodmares have been bred and produced at Equine Breeding Studs of Remount Veterinary Corps of the Indian Army.

These horses will be transported to India-Bangladesh border by road and will be handed over to Bangladesh Army at Haridaspur-Benapole transit point.

General Moeen, who is accompanied by his wife, is also scheduled to visit Indian Military Academy in Dehradun today and other Army institutions including some naval set-ups in Goa.

He is expected to travel to Kolkata and meet West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee on the last day of his visit before flying back home.

Meanwhile, leading newspaper Indian Express in a top editorial said the Indian army's gift of the six horses to Gen Moeen "is hopefully a symbol of South Block's commitment to a new relationship with the security forces of Bangladesh".

"The very fact that Moeen has chosen to travel to India opens the door for a productive engagement between the security forces of the two countries... Moeen could be seen to represent an opportunity for structural change within Bangladesh and in Indo-Bangla relations," the editorial read.

Press Trust of India (PTI) reported that Gen Moeen also met Indian political leaders including External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee, and State Minister for Defence MM Pallam Raju.

Although there was no official word on the meetings, sources said New Delhi took the opportunity to apprise Gen Moeen on its concerns over 'illegal civilian migration' from Bangladesh, according to the PTI report.

Gen Moeen, during his six-day stay in India, may also call on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and visit the army's key establishments in Dehradun, Agra, and Kolkata.

## Student strike

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Aparajeyo Bangla on the university campus yesterday called the strike at all public universities from February 26 to 28.

However, all the examinations have been kept out of the purview of the strike, a statement of the General Students said yesterday. The agitating students said they would call off the strike as soon as the government announces a revised quota system.

They also threatened to go for tougher movement if their demands are not met by February 28.

Meanwhile, Fair BCS Movement, a platform of students, will hold a press conference at Dhaka University Journalists' Association (DUJA) at 12:00 noon today demanding cancellation of 55 percent non-merit quota.

Students of public universities including DU have been staging demonstrations for the last one month demanding revision of the quota system.

Only 45 percent of the civil servants are selected on merit. Of the rest of the posts for both cadre and non-cadre service, 30 percent are preserved for freedom fighters and their offspring, 10 percent for women, 10 percent for the inhabitants of certain districts and five percent for indigenous people.

## Rejoinder

**FROM PAGE 1**  
rejoinder.

**OUR REPLY**  
The Daily Star report was based on the EC's report on first round of electoral reform talks with political parties held in between September and November last year.

Jamaat joined the talks on October 25 and opposed some of the EC's crucial proposals aimed at ensuring transparency in collection and spending of political parties' election funds.

For instance, on election expenses of parties, the EC proposal said all of them should properly maintain accounts of their collection of funds and expenditures for polls purposes. It also proposed that they should submit reports to it on their election funds and expenditures.

The EC's other proposals say that all sorts of documents relating to polls expenditures of political parties and candidates will be posted on its website so that people can easily get the information.

But Jamaat opposed the EC's proposals, reveals the EC's report.

The EC report, also sent to political parties for the second round of electoral reform talks, is now also available on the EC's website. Anyone can visit the website (www.ecs.gov.bd) to check the authenticity of our report, which was written on the basis of political parties' views on the proposed articles 54, 55 and 56 of the draft representation of people ordinance 2008.

In the rejoinder, Jamaat claimed that it had suggested to the EC to make the conditions easy. But in the EC's report it was found that Jamaat vehemently opposed its proposals, terming those unacceptable. So, we stand by our report.

## Move to break

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Sharif denied and said he is not supporting Aitaz Ahsan for prime ministership. Aitaz himself supported the name of Makhdoom Amin Faheem as the next prime minstre. Conspirators were not discouraged on the missing of their fire.

Aitaz Ahsan announced a rally on March 9th for the restoration of the establishment claimed in front of Asif Ali Zardari that Aitaz Ahsan is trying to project himself as the next president of Pakistan with the help of Nawaz Sharif. PPP co-chairperson never gave any reaction on these claims. He quietly checked it with Nawaz Sharif, and his new political partner outrightly rejected that disinformation.

Meanwhile, Nawaz Sharif contacted Aitaz Ahsan over the telephone from Murree and discussed his March 9th announcement. Aitaz assured him that he has no intention to put undue pressure on the new parliament for restoration of the judges and he can readjust the date accordingly. Nawaz Sharif assured him that he is also committed to restoration of the judges but wants to let the new parliament have 10--15 days for addressing this issue.

Aitaz Ahsan has also complained that some newspapers are trying to twist his statements. He never gave any warning or deadline

## DU teachers

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Golam Rabbani sentenced the teachers to two years' rigorous imprisonment each for violating Emergency Power Rules (EPR) in August last year over the violence on the campus.

The three were released from the prison the same day after President Iajuddin Ahmed pardoned them.

The court acquitted Prof Neem Chandra Bhowmik and 15 students, as charges brought against them were not proved.

## Hasina verdict

**FROM PAGE 1**  
into sight after crossing four gates, and people concerned including lawyers come to court with their identity cards hanging from their necks.

Earlier, when the hearing began, Additional Attorney General (AAG) Salahuddin Ahmad made his arguments for obtaining a stay on the HC judgment that also declared illegal bringing the extortion case against Hasina filed by businessman Azam J Chowdhury under the Emergency Power Rules (EPR).

In the jam-packed courtroom, the AAG said two major objectives of this government are to ensure justice regarding corruption, and to hold elections.

Corruption has taken place in the country year after year, and state of emergency has been declared to try people involved in corruption, he noted.

On the consequence of the HC judgment, Salahuddin said it would not be possible to bring corrupt people to justice if this judgment remains in effect.

He argued that an offence committed before the state of emergency can be brought under emergency power rules. Trial of this case is being held under the existing laws, and the only reason for bringing it under the EPR is to dispose it quickly, he added.

The AAG also said the govern-

ment approves bringing a case under the EPR considering public importance. There is a guideline in the law regarding this, and the extortion case against Hasina has been brought under the EPR considering its public importance.

He pointed out that there are anomalies between the HC rule issued following Hasina's writ petition and the HC judgment.

Hasina's chief counsel barrister Rafique-Ul-Huq told the court that her writ petition was filed challenging the legality of applying the EPR in the extortion case against her.

The state of emergency was declared to ensure socio-economic and state security, he said. And there is no scope to bring any offence committed before the emergency under the EPR.

The counsel said the government unnecessarily brought the extortion case against Hasina under the EPR.

Rafique argued that the constitution has empowered the president to declare state of emergency but he cannot promulgate any such law that would not be passed in parliament.

He noted that judges take oath to uphold and defend the constitution.

Rafique said government approval of bringing the extortion case under the EPR was given considering the status of Hasina, not public importance of the case.

Bidensaid: "Probably". Britain's Sunday Telegraph newspaper cited an anonymous aide as saying that Musharraf was readying such a strategy after Bhutto and Sharif's parties won the elections.

"I firmly believe if they (political parties) do not focus on old grudges -- and there's plenty in Pakistan -- and give him a graceful way to move," then Musharraf would leave office, Biden added.

Musharraf's spokesman rejected Biden's comments and said the president was ready to work with the new government.

"The president has been elected for a period of five years by the assemblies of Pakistan, which have been elected by the Pakistani people and not by senators from the US," he added.

"So I don't think he needs to respond to anything that is said by these people in their capacity."

The opposition's stance on Musharraf is still unclear, with Sharif calling almost daily for him to step down but the PPP avoiding outright calls for him to resign or saying directly whether it will press for his impeachment.

Sharif said Monday that if Musharraf stayed on, then judges sacked by him under emergency rule in November should be restored so they can decide the legality of Musharraf's re-election as president in October last year.