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AL won't accept upazila polls first: Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her party will never accept elections to upazila parishad ahead of the general election.

She however vowed to hold local-government polls in six months if her party were voted to power in the next elections.

She was speaking at a view-exchange meeting with the AL's US chapter leaders in New York City, according to US-based news agency NewsWorld.

The AL chief again called on the interim government to hand over power to an elected government through holding the national elections first, saying the present crises will not otherwise go away.

Laying out the plan of a future Awami League government, she said they will raise literacy to 80-90 percent, provide free education for all up to honours level, ensure food

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BNP knot in talks starts to untie fast

The party asks EC for dialogue in a day or two; EC hopes to announce dates for JS, upazila polls early next week

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission (EC) might sit with BNP in a day or two, and announce dates for upazila and parliamentary polls early next week.

In a major breakthrough, BNP yesterday asked the EC to arrange a meeting to discuss the electoral issues including the most contentious one that is registration of the political parties.

The party that has only recently agreed to join dialogue with the EC communicated its formal acceptance of invitation in a letter to the chief election commissioner (CEC)

at around 1:30pm.

"After the talks with BNP, we will announce specific dates for all polls," CEC ATM Shamsul Huda told reporters following brief discussions with a two-member BNP delegation that handed him the letter.

Asked if they will declare election schedules along with polls dates, he replied in the negative.

According to meeting sources, the polls chief told the BNP leaders that the EC is ready to sit with them formally any day between today (Tuesday) and Saturday.

In reply, BNP Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan, who

was accompanied by Office Secretary Rizvi Ahmed, said they will inform the EC about the date after consultation with Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain.

Both Huda and Nazrul said hopefully they will sit before the weekends.

The BNP leader said, "The talks might be held in a day or two." Despite queries from journalists, the CEC did not drop any hints whether upazila elections will precede the long-stalled ninth parliamentary polls planned for December.

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4-party sits today to talk dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Key leaders of the BNP-led four-party alliance will sit today to fix a possible date for holding dialogue with the caretaker government and the Election Commission (EC).

BNP leaders said the issue of holding dialogue with the Election Commission (EC) and the caretaker government would be at the top of the agenda at the meeting to be held for the first time since the imposition of the state of emergency.

The meeting will finalise the strategies to run political activities ahead of the national polls and discuss issues including election preparations and latest political situation.

The meeting will be held at the BNP central office at Naya Paltan in the capital at 3:00pm with just-released BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in the chair, party leaders said.

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Govt at final stage to hold fair polls by December

CA tells reception in Beijing

UNB, Beijing

Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday said his government is at the final stage of achieving its goal to hold a free, fair and credible general election by December this year.

"We hope and believe that election will be held by December this year," the head of the caretaker government said at a reception hosted in his honour at Bangladesh House (Bangladesh Embassy) in the Chinese capital.

Bangladeshi students, businessmen, experts of different professions, officials of the embassy as well as Chinese elite were present at the function.

The CA said the Election

Commission has already completed the voter list with photographs of more than 80 million voters. "Such gigantic task in a short time is a remarkable achievement," he said.

On economy, the CA said the economy has had difficult times in last several months for rise in prices of petroleum products and food on the international market. "We have really overcome the situation."

Referring to the meeting on Sunday of Bangladesh Better Business Forum (BBBF) in Dhaka to mark its first founding anniversary, he said the forum was formed last year to forge a strong public-private partnership. "We have made some progress in this sector,"

he told the function.

He said private sector is the engine of growth and government is the facilitator.

Despite a difficult situation on the economic front last year, he said, "we have done well."

Mentioning China's economic boom, he said China remains as an example to Bangladesh. Economic relations with China are also very strong and growing day by day, he noted. Many Chinese businessmen are investing in Bangladesh.

He urged the Bangladeshi students studying in China to learn what China was able to do for its economy and its people and hoped that the students, after completing their studies, would be able to

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HC stay on 2 cases against Hasina upheld

SC turns down govt petitions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court (SC) yesterday turned down government petitions seeking stay of the effectiveness of High Court (HC) orders suspending earlier the proceedings of Niko and barge-mounted power plant graft cases against former premier Sheikh Hasina.

The cases were filed by the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) against Hasina, also the Awami League chief, who is currently in the US on parole for treatment.

After hearing the petitions moved by Attorney General (AG) Salaudin Ahmed, Chamber Judge of the Appellate Division Justice Md Joydul Abedin asked the government to file regular appeals with the SC against the HC orders, and fixed October 13 for hearing the regular appeals before the full bench of the court.

Meanwhile yesterday, an HC bench comprising Justice Mirza Hussain Haider and Justice Mamnoon Rahman scheduled today for hearing the petitions filed

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A doctor and a nurse treat a patient on a corridor as DMCH fails to provide beds to all its patients. The photo was taken a couple of days ago.

Patients turn up for 'torture' at DMCH

Lack of staff makes medicare all the more awful

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Facilities available at the 1,700-bed Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) are inadequate to meet the demand of patients who throng there every day for treatment.

Experts say the hospital, running with one-third of the manpower it needs, is also making ill use of its available -- though inadequate -- infrastructure and logistics.

On an average some 2,500 patients receive indoor service from the hospital round the clock.

According to hospital sources, the total manpower of DMCH stands at 2,027 at present including 246 doctors in 48 units under 24 departments and 653 nurses. Meanwhile, 172 posts of doctors, nurses and other class three and four employees remain vacant.

Experts say, the size of the hospital demands at least triple the manpower it possesses at present. There has been no recruitment at

the hospital since 2004 and the existing number of staff is on the decline because of retirements.

There are, however, some professors, associate and assistant professors and honorary physicians, other than the staff, who are attached with the medical college and are considered visiting experts at the hospital.

Dr Mohammad Faizullah, assistant director of the hospital, says at least 650 additional manpower, including doctors, are needed to deal with the existing patient load which is already beyond the capacity of the hospital.

Experts say that a hospital providing 24-hour service must have at least three shifts, as it is not possible for any person to work round the clock. At present the DMCH staff capability means that only the needs of a single shift are met, on paper. In reality these employees are scattered to work round the clock at the hospital.

In practice, this inadequacy of

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Tough agitation if Hasina not freed before Eid

Threatens Zillur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Acting Awami League (AL) President Zillur Rahman yesterday said his party would go for a tough movement after Eid-ul-Fitr if party President Sheikh Hasina is not released permanently before the Eid.

"The government must release our leader permanently before the Eid. Otherwise, we shall have no option but to go for a tough movement," Zillur told reporters after a meeting with Phulbaria Municipality Mayor Golam Kibria at his Gulshan residence.

Later, at a discussion at the Supreme Court Bar Association auditorium Zillur said a deep-rooted conspiracy is being hatched in the country to foil the next parliamentary election.

The discussion organised by Tungipara Association in Dhaka was chaired by former chairman of Bangladesh Red Crescent Sheikh Kabir Hossain.

"Conspiracies are being hatched in the name of holding the upazila parishad elections. The

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Two leaders have to sit for talks

Adviser tells of patience, pressure to make them sit together

STAR REPORT

Commerce and Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman yesterday pinned hopes on patience and pressure to make the chiefs of Awami League and BNP -- Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia -- sit together for a discussion.

Meanwhile, Barrister Rafique-ul-Huq, who defends both former prime ministers in court, yesterday said he is ready to mediate the desired talk between the two top political leaders, responding to a request from the military backed caretaker government.

On September 14, two govern-

ment advisers -- Hossain Zillur Rahman and AF Hassan Arif -- phoned the veteran lawyer and requested him to take an initiative to bring Khaleda and Hasina to a discussion table, according to news reports.

The lawyer who is now in Singapore told private television channel Bangla Vision last night that after returning home he will communicate with the two leaders in an effort to bring them to a table.

"We should not be deterred easily. We succeeded in getting results earlier by showing patience, and we'll have to be patient and

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Corruption case against Justice Fazlul stayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday stayed for three months proceedings against former caretaker government adviser Justice Fazlul Huq in a graft case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

Responding to a writ petition filed by Justice Fazlul Huq, a vacation bench of the HC, comprising Justice Mirza Hussain Haider and Justice Mamnoon Rahman, also issued a rule upon the government and ACC to explain within four weeks why the initiation and continuation of the proceedings against the petitioner should not be declared illegal.

Earlier on September 4, the HC granted the former judge anticipatory bail for three months in the

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MARITIME BORDER DISCUSSIONS Disputed channels rule first day's talks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On the first day of Bangladesh-India Maritime Delimitation Talks that resumed yesterday in the capital after 28 years, the issue of determining the main flow of Hariabhanga channels featured prominently as delegates discussed the starting point of demarcation.

Tied to the determination of the main flow of Hariabhanga channels, is the decades-old dispute between the two neighbouring countries regarding jurisdiction over South Talpatty Island that formed the channels.

Experts of Bangladesh claimed that the main channel of the Hariabhanga River is flowing

through the west side of South Talpatty while their Indian counter parts claimed the eastern channel is the main flow.

Sources said when Bangladesh and India talked last time about the maritime boundary 28 years ago, the major issue was determining the main channel of the Hariabhanga River following emergence of South Talpatty, which is called Purbasha or New Moor Island by the Indians.

Back then the two countries agreed to settle the issue soon after studying additional information exchanged between the two governments. But things did not progress as planned.

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Industrialist gunned down

Police suspect row over garment 'jhut' or 'partnership rivalry' behind daring murder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Armed criminals yesterday gunned down an industrialist in broad daylight at Kakrail in the capital.

The dead was identified as Mohammad Abdus Salam alias Babu, 40, a director of Yolk Garments Ltd and also a partner of Yolk Group.

The victim's family members said Babu along with his son Sanjiddul Alam left his house at 7:00am and dropped Sanjiddul at Oxford International School in the city's Dhanmondi.

Babu came under attack when he reached near his office on Purana Paltan Lane at about 7:30am, sources said.

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Industrialist Babu's brother Alam breaks down in tears on a relative's shoulder at DMCH morgue yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

BNP to part ways with Hawa Bhaban soon

SHAMIM ASHRAF and RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

The BNP is soon going to close its chairperson's Hawa Bhaban office, which became the alternative powerhouse within the BNP-led four-party coalition government and earned the reputation as "epicentre of corruption" during 2001-2006.

Party sources confirmed the decision but failed to give any specific date for handover of the Banani house to the owner, who has long been trying to get it back.

The decision would definitely come as a relief to many BNP leaders and activists who wanted during the four-party rule to see its closure as a means to stop the

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Hawa Bhaban, also known as "alternative power centre of BNP", is set to be closed soon.

PHOTO: STAR

Sheikh Selim, Abbas, Babar granted bail

SC upholds bail for Falu, Pintu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday granted an interim bail for three months to former ministers Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim and Mirza Abbas and former state minister Lutfozzaman Babar in separate cases filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) on charges of amassing illegal wealth and concealing information from ACC.

After hearing separate writ petitions filed by Selim, Abbas and Babar, a vacation bench of Justice Mirza Hussain Haider and Justice Mamnoon Rahman stayed for the same period the proceedings against the petitioners.

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DISCLOSURE OF ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH 7 Titas, Desa men have only Tk 5 lakh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven Titas Gas and Dhaka Electricity Supply Authority (Desa) staffs yesterday voluntarily disclosed before the Truth and Accountability Commission (Tac) of having ill-gotten wealth worth only about Tk 5 lakh.

Meanwhile, Tac has sent a list of five people to ACC to unfreeze their bank accounts, movable and immovable property so that they can deposit their confessed ill-gotten money to the state.

Besides, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has initiated a move to dispose of the backlog of 2,963 allegations and cases pending with the commission since

1986.

In the last two days, 15 more graft suspects applied to ACC to face Tac for disclosing their ill-gotten wealth voluntarily.

Sources in Tac however deny mentioning any details about the Tac and Desa officials.

With yesterday's hearing, Tac has so far heard disclosure from 64 corruption-suspects, mostly government staffs, and primarily ordered them to deposit about Tk 15.31 crore to the state.

The body has so far heard about 30 Titas officials who confessed to having ill-gotten property worth about Tk 30 lakh only. Tac sources say.

An accounts assistant told the

commission he had earned Tk 25,000 illegally, the lowest amount willingly reported so far by 49 corrupt-suspects.

But a taskforce investigation into corruption at Titas in February reveals massive anomalies at the state-owned company.

It found that 135 of its staffs, high officials and minions alike are millionaires, owning on average at least Tk 1 crore each.

The National Coordination Committee (NCC) on corruption and serious crimes referred 107 corrupt Titas staffs to the commission for redemption without sending along the investigation reports.

The NCC only mentioned the

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Home adviser alarmed at crime spiral

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The home ministry yesterday directed the law enforcement agencies to take 'toughest action' against criminals to improve law and order.

The directive followed a special meeting on law and order chaired by the home adviser.

"From tomorrow (today), toughest action will be taken against criminals and, if necessary, they will be lifted and detained," Home Adviser Maj General (ret'd) MA Matin told reporters.

The meeting was held at the home ministry in the wake of snatching of Tk 46 lakh by shooting an assistant manager of ACL group on Gulshan Link Road on Sunday and gunning down of a garments factory owner at Kakrail in the

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