

EC wants MPs

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"We will finalise the proposals on the basis of opinions from the political parties and civil society," he added.

Sohul also said the EC believes purging the Jatiya Sangsad of the loan defaulters would help bring about a qualitative change in parliament.

Success of the commission's move, however, depends on how the political parties would take it, said EC officials citing experience they had before the last general election, held on December 29, 2008.

Many defaulters contested the election by rescheduling their loans.

Bangladesh Bank had identified 130 loan defaulters on the EC's list of candidates, many of them belonging to BNP and Awami League.

Some of the contenders did not even reschedule their loans within the time limit stipulated in the electoral laws.

Forty-two of the 130 participated in the election by taking out High Court rulings in their favour. Some of them were even elected to the JS.

The caretaker government in 2008 had at first sought to keep loan defaulters out of the national elections.

But it later gave in to pressure from AL and BNP and relaxed the electoral laws twice enabling the defaulters to stand for the election.

In August 2008, the caretaker government had the RPO amended on recommendations of the EC. The amended RPO had a provision requiring a defaulter to reschedule his loan six months before filing candidacy application.

Had that provision been left unchanged, it would have meant an end to the loan defaulters' election bid, as the polls then were slated to be held in less than six months' time.

But amid growing clamour from the political parties, the Fakhruddin Ahmed-led caretaker administration relaxed the provision, allowing loan rescheduling until 15 days before filing nomination.

Even this could not satisfy the political parties, and the government had to cut the time limit to seven days.

Military's Polling Day Power

At the planned talks with the political parties, the EC will press for reviving the authority of the military men performing election duties, Commissioner Sohul Hussein said.

During the parliamentary elections in 2001 and 2008, members of the armed forces had the power to arrest anyone without warrant within 400-yard radius of a polling station. For that, they had to be defined as "law enforcement agencies".

In exercise of the authority, they could remove notices, signs, banners or flags used in election campaigns in breach of the electoral laws. They could also

seize instruments or apparatus employed in contravention of the electoral laws.

Besides, they could use force, if necessary, to enforce election laws on the polling day.

But parliament on February 24 last year passed a bill scrapping that authority of the military men. The bill ratified the three ordinances promulgated by the caretaker government before the ninth parliamentary polls.

Obama

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personal responsibility for that. And it's something that I've got to examine carefully as I go forward."

Obama had earlier conceded he suffered a "shellacking" in Tuesday's key mid-term congressional and state elections, but had refused to see it as a repudiation of his transformative domestic agenda, instead blaming the loss on deep voter frustration at the sluggish economic recovery, AFP adds.

He told CBS he now recognised that part of his job as the president of all Americans was "giving them confidence and bringing them together and setting a tone. And making an argument that people can understand."

Obama's shortcomings on the salesman front apparently resonated with "some of my Democratic supporters who express some frustration," the president said.

Turkish PM

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foreign ministry officials said. Earlier during his visit, President Abdullah Gül had promised to establish air connectivity between Bangladesh and Turkey to increase trade and commerce between the two countries.

The two countries will also sign an agreement on cooperation in the health sector and an agreement on exchange of land for their embassies in Ankara and Dhaka during Erdoğan's visit, official sources said.

In addition to holding talks with his counterpart, Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister Erdogan is expected to meet President Zillur Rahman, Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, Finance Minister Abdul Muhith and Khaleda Zia, leader of the opposition.

Ministry sources said Bangladesh will prioritise Turkish investment in the agro-food processing industry to ensure food security for the people of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh will also remind Erdoğan of his president's promise to increase bilateral trade volume to one billion US dollar and will discuss ways to increase Bangladesh's exports to Turkey.

Both the countries have been enjoying excellent bilateral relations since they established diplomatic relations in 1974 and Turkey opened its Embassy in Dhaka in 1976 and Bangladesh opened its embassy in Ankara in 1981.

Hasina asks

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level secretaries of publicity affairs, and of information and research in her Gono Bhaban residence in the capital.

At the workshop Hasina, also the president of AL, gave the leaders directions regarding how to use party publications in their organisational work.

She said, "There is a rule, if one gets a piece of government land then he or she can't get any other government land."

"She should vacate the house on humanitarian grounds. There is a housing crisis for army officers. So she should leave the house for the sake of housing army personnel," Hasina added.

Referring to BNP's criticism about presence of police and Rab around Khaleda Zia's Ghulshan office recently, the prime minister said, "The opposition leader goes to office around nine or ten at night, and stays there until three or four in the morning. Police and Rab can patrol around the office for their security."

The prime minister said BNP is trying to create issues out of Khaleda Zia's cantonment residence, and through attempting to protect war criminals, corruptionists, and extremists. At the same time the opposition is carrying out

a propaganda campaign against the government in a bid to hinder its development activities. Hasina directed her party leaders to take a just stand against those "falsehoods".

"Although we kept rice price at ten taka during our previous tenure, that rose to thirty-five taka during the last BNP-Jamaat coalition regime. Why they failed to keep the price at ten taka? They will have to tell it to the people," she said.

The AL chief also said BNP leaders are so adept at telling lies that AL leaders might not be able to match them with appropriate responses. She directed the grassroots leaders to spread through words of mouth what the government is doing in the development sector, so the people are aware.

Referring to the power supply crisis, the prime minister said BNP-Jamaat coalition government is responsible for the current crisis of power supply. "We have to carry the burden of their failures in this regard. But we have not been sitting idle. We are working hard."

Hasina directed her grassroots level leaders to let the people know that power generation reduced sharply during the last BNP-Jamaat coalition regime.

War crimes

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Sayed Rejaur Rahman visited Ishwardi loco-shed, Pakshey Railway colony, Jhautola and Bhuter Goli mass killing grounds of the upazila yesterday.

The names of Maulana Motiur Rahman Nizami, the then minister Maulana Ishaque, Maulana Ismail, Maulana Abdus Subhan, Siraj, Riaz and Khodabox came up during the team's inquiry into the crime, Rejaur said.

The probe team was also told of the alleged involvement of the non-Bengalis in the crimes.

"Local collaborators led by Maulana Ismail and Khodabox picked up my father Moazzem Hossain from his home and took him to a torture cell in loco-shed pump station area on April 12, 1971. They killed my father after beating him mercilessly. My family will never forget the day," Md Tahurul Islam, also an eyewitness of the incident, told the probe team.

Over four to five hundred people were killed in the torture cell with the help of local collaborators during the war, he said.

Md Fazlur Rahman Fantu, a freedom fighter of the upazila, said the local collaborators and non-Bengalis helped the occupation army in the killing. Around 100 to 125 people were killed in Ishwardi Bhuter Goli area, Fantu added.

Local people demanded immediate arrest and exemplary punishment to the war criminals.

The probe team will visit the mass killing spots of Santhia upazila, the constituency of Nizami, today.

Domestic

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around 2:30am.

Mahbubur Rahman, officer-in-charge (OC) of Tejaon Police Station, said Mina had been working for four months at the house of ASP Mohammad Tariquul Islam of Special Security Force (SSF).

Police sources said the motive behind the incident is yet to be known.

Police sent the victim's body to Dhaka Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

ASP Tariquul filed an unnatural death case in this connection, said the OC.

Stalker Rony

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officer of the case.

Earlier in the day, the accused was produced before the Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court that approved the remand prayer. On November 1, he was placed on a three-day remand.

Police will produce him before the court today with a prayer to send him to jail.

Rony drove his motorbike into Champa on October 26 for protesting the harassment of her two daughters.

Arun Kumar Bhownik, Champa's brother, filed a murder case with Madhukhali Police Station in this connection on the following day. The case statement said Rony had been stalking and harassing his twin nieces for the last one year.

Khaleda's

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September 21 had decided that the party chief would address public meetings at some 21 district headquarters in November to drum up public support for an anti-government movement.

"Party is organising protest programmes against government's wrongdoings, that is why we could not start chairperson's district level visit. But it will commence soon," said standing committee member Lt Gen (ret'd) Mahbubur Rahman.

Many central leaders attended the party's upazila level programmes last month aiming to boost organisational activities prior to chairperson's visit to districts.

Besides, BNP is also planning to stage a grand rally of freedom fighters and a seminar aiming to strengthen its campaign to establish party founder Ziaur Rahman as the proclaimer of independence.

Khaleda Zia will attend the grand rally as chief guest, said party leaders, adding she may raise questions about the neutrality of war crimes trial.

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, key ally of BNP, is mounting pressure on the opposition leader to take stance against the government's move to try war criminals.

Several leaders of Jamaat are already in custody for their alleged involvement with crimes against humanity, the insiders added.

Rushanara

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climate change issues continue to be a priority for the British coalition government.

The wealthy nations have a huge role to play in curbing carbon emission and providing financial assistance to the vulnerable countries to enhance their capability to adapt to global warming.

"Climate change affects all of us. So it is their obligations to continue their support," said Rushanara, who has academic background in economics.

The British lawmaker hoped that the present UK government would translate its commitment into action by increasing UK's Overseas Development Assistance to 0.7 percent of the gross domestic production (GDP) by 2013.

"We will continue to push government so that it happens," she said.

The global climate change fund should be utilised to help vulnerable countries like Bangladesh combat adverse impact of the changing climate.

Rushanara said the Labour Party would push for giving support to Bangladesh and ensuring contribution from the UK's funds.

The European Union has also a part to play in terms of financial contributions for countries like Bangladesh that are vulnerable to climate

UN RIGHTS MEET

US faces calls for torture probes

AFP, Geneva

The United States faced a barrage of calls to investigate allegations of torture and shut down Guantanamo Bay detention centre yesterday in its first review by the UN's top human rights assembly.

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Thousands of leaders and activists of the party and its associate bodies joined the rally blocking all busy roads surrounding the venue.

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