

## BNP renews call for joint survey

FROM PAGE 1  
implement the 1,500MW hydroelectricity project and said it would stand beside the people who are concerned by the move.

"The construction of Tipaimukh dam is against World Heritage Convention, Bio-Diversity Convention, Wetlands Convention and other international laws and conventions," BNP acting Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told reporters at a press conference at the party's Naya Paltan central office.

The press meet was arranged to reveal contents of a letter by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of November 24 to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia. Former ministers Moeen Khan and Hafizuddin Ahmed, among others, were present.

Quoting from the letter, Fakhrul said the Indian prime minister claimed that Tipaimukh is not an irrigation project and it will basically help controlling floods. It will not affect Bangladesh negatively, reiterated Singh.

"But, we believe it would affect the country as well as the people if the dam is built," the BNP leader said adding that the party thinks a joint

survey is necessary before starting the project work.

Following reports that a promoters' agreement had been inked on October 24 among two Indian state-run organisations and the Manipur government over the project, Khaleda on November 22 wrote to Manmohan Singh to stop the project, and also called for discussions and a joint survey.

Meanwhile, Jatiya Party, key ally of the ruling Awami League-led grand alliance, yesterday declared a long march towards Tipaimukh on December 10 protesting the Indian move. The decision was taken in a joint meeting of the party at its Banani office with Presidium Member Kazi Zafar Ahmed in the chair, said a press release.

Referring to the recent visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's two advisers to Delhi, Fakhrul said, "They could not oppose the project and now saying that Tipaimukh dam will be helpful for Bangladesh while it has increased public concern."

One of the duo, International Affairs Adviser Gowher Rizvi, yesterday said, "We are completely satisfied by the Indian gov-

ernment's explanation concerning the Tipaimukh dam. There should not be any further apprehension about this issue."

Singh's letter also mentioned that a parliamentary delegation from Bangladesh had visited the project area in 2009 and was apprised of that Tipaimukh dam would not cast adverse impact on any area of Bangladesh.

Fakhrul told reporters, "Nearly 3 crore people of 10 districts of the north-east region of Bangladesh, their agriculture, fisheries resources, environment and ecology will be affected once the dam is built."

Terming the project "a time bomb" as it is located in an earthquake-prone zone, Fakhrul said the ruling Awami League government failed in its attempt to prevent the construction.

Singh on Saturday at a public rally in Manipur asked all ministries concerned to actively pursue the funding of Tipaimukh hydroelectric project. He also said the environmental clearance has been accorded to the project, to be funded by the World Bank, and the forest clearance process is underway.

## FROM PAGE 1

coups in the nation's forty-year history, it is important that all pro-liberation and democratic forces remain in a state of alert where the future is concerned. We could not agree more with the prime minister, for she voices precisely the sentiments that have been growing in us on this score.

With all this gigantic effort expended by local and international forces towards questioning the trial of the 1971 war criminals, it is indeed for all of us to bear in mind the truth that we must not lose the woods for the trees. The prime minister has also informed us, in unmistakable terms, that civil society members may be privy to high education, but their acceptability among the masses is low. So what is the point here?

Let us now move on, for the very good reason that we must now enlighten the nation on the many sins our civil society has, in very civil manner, putatively been committing in these past many years. Let us all be patient as we go through an enumeration of the sins. Once that is done, let us open the floor to the people of this country.

## The sins of civil society

It is a people's republic we inhabit. Wherefore should we then not leave the ultimate judgement on the sinister activities of civil society in the hands of the millions who struggle, from sunup to sundown, to ensure a decent living for themselves? But, no more obfuscation, no more of bantering. Let us go through our list of civil society sins.

Begin with the recent dramatic conclusion of the Narayanganj City Corporation elections. Bangladesh's civil society clearly rooted for Selina Hayat Ivy. And it did that because it believed that her probity, as against the various and varied allegations of wrongdoing levelled at her rival, was an absolute necessity in these perilous times and that therefore her electoral triumph would send out a message of hope to the rest of the country.

Sheikh Hasina, in the pre-ballot process, ought to have cheered us through making her support clear for Ivy. Now, did civil society take a wrong step here?

Members of civil society have been equally harsh on the ruling Awami League and the opposition BNP. They have unambiguously demanded that the opposi-

tion, as a mark of its adherence to democratic principles, return to the Jatiya Sangsad and thereby convince the country that it means business. The opposition, of course, has in its questionable wisdom chosen the path of street agitation. Which begs the question: why is civil society enlightening the opposition on a theme the latter ought to have embraced on its own?

And yet civil society gets flak, and not just from the prime minister.

The prime ministerial reference to nineteen coups (there were only four successful ones in point of fact, the others being abortive) reminds one of the heartbreak people of the country have gone through for reasons not of their making. Neither can one pin the blame on civil society for these blatant demonstrations of illegitimate military rule. If civil society is to be held responsible for any transgression, it is over its conviction that unless the major political parties are able to push aside their past and move on to a cooperative future between themselves, it will be the forces of darkness perennially waiting in the wings who will stand to benefit from this unmitigated chaos.

Civil society is the messenger here. Must the prime minister or anyone else shoot it down because it serves warning of what might be if our politicians do not look beyond narrow partisan interests?

The rapidity with which the fifteenth amendment to the constitution was passed and the caretaker system of government done away with has convinced us yet once more of the inherent dangers in a party or government enjoying a two-thirds or three-fourths majority in parliament. Exercising such a majority is all right, but going to the people on such critical issues as abolishing the caretaker system is infinitely better. That was, and is, the view of civil society.

Must that emphasis on a strengthening of democratic principles be held against it? Civil society brings citizens across the political divide together. And across that divide has risen the demand, inexorably and inevitably, for a strong, independent local government system in the country. The emasculation of the system through the deliberate actions of the ruling AL has stymied, for now, the chances

of democracy flowering out into its full form.

When civil society argues in defence of substantive local government, is it really undermining democracy?

With huge swathes of public opinion not taking kindly to the manner of the Dhaka City Corporation split, civil society clearly had a stake here. It spoke for all of us, with all our concerns about the ramifications of the move.

If now civil society is guilty of striking at democracy, what penalties must be imposed on it?

It is the public interest which must take precedence over everything else. And public interest dictates that the Election Commission be peopled by men of integrity and conviction, that the Anti-Corruption Commission have full authority to prosecute everyone even remotely suspected of having committed wrongdoing -- beginning right at the top of the pyramid.

If civil society is opposed to a change in the route of the proposed metro rail, it is for the government to put the views of any government agency aside and show respect to public opinion. And that is all, ladies and gentlemen.

## Last few days of Ershad

## FROM PAGE 1

alliances --- the 8-party led by Sheikh Hasina, the 7-party headed by Khaleda Zia and the 5-party alliance of left parties.

Several names came up, but the then Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed turned out to be the frontrunner to become acting president and head of what would be the country's first-ever caretaker administration to oversee general elections.

Ershad would hand over the presidency to his Vice-president Moudud Ahmed, making the latter acting president. Moudud would then resign as acting president and transfer power to a person chosen by the three

about what the whole world was waiting to hear: Who would be Ershad's replacement?

As a correspondent of Associated Press (AP) news agency, I was chasing both Hasina and Khaleda to get their comments. Also with me was Anita Pratap, a New Delhi-based correspondent of Time magazine.

With help from Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury (who later became the country's president) we traced Khaleda at the Dhanmondi residence of BNP leader Advocate Julmat Ali Khan, where she was presiding over a meeting of the 7-party

alliance. We came to know that Hasina was huddled with the leaders of her 8-party alliance at 32, Dhanmondi.

Perched on the second floor of Julmat Ali's residence Anita and I became witness to a rare telephone conversation between Khaleda and Hasina.

Taking a break from her meeting, Khaleda came to the second floor where Col. Mustafizur Rahman (who later became foreign minister) dialled Hasina's number so she could talk with her archrival.

Khaleda: Assalamu Alaikum. How are you? How

did your rally go?

Hasina's reply is inaudible.

Khaleda: Time is running out. Our alliance has confirmed the name of

Justice Shahabuddin as acting president. We also want you to act fast and announce it the soonest.

Again Hasina's reply is not audible. But we get some idea about what she said by Khaleda's reply.

Khaleda: You are the supreme leader of your alliance. I guess you can announce the name right now.

With these words Khaleda offered thanks to Hasina before she hung up.

Downstairs she announced the name of Justice Shahabuddin amid cheers from the leaders.

As we left the house to try to meet with Hasina at 32, Dhanmondi, Ehsanul Kabir, a journalist-turned-press official of BNP, quipped: "Farid Bhai, you have been a witness to a historic conversation."

When we met Hasina about 15 minutes later, she explained why she was delaying the formal announcement about Justice Shahabuddin.

"We had to make sure Justice Shahabuddin has all the security and protection he needs before we make the announcement," she said. "This is a very trying time. Anything can happen."

Note: The Ershad regime came to an end when Justice Shahabuddin, on December 6, 1990 took over power.

আমাদের এ অর্জন সকল গ্রাহক,  
ল্যান্ডওনার, শুভানুধ্যায়ী, পৃষ্ঠপোষক,  
সরবরাহকারী, ঠিকাদার ও SEL  
পরিবারের সকল সদস্যবৃন্দের।  
আজকের এ দিনে আমাদের সকল  
শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের জানাই আন্তরিক  
কৃতজ্ঞতা ও শুভেচ্ছা।

www.sel.com.bd | ISO 9001:2008 certified

নির্মাণ ও আবাসন শিল্প  
SEL এর  
২৮  
বছর পূর্তি

আমাদের এ অর্জন সকল গ্রাহক,  
ল্যান্ডওনার, শুভানুধ্যায়ী, পৃষ্ঠপোষক,  
সরবরাহকারী, ঠিকাদার ও SEL  
পরিবারের সকল সদস্যবৃন্দের।  
আজকের এ দিনে আমাদের সকল  
শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের জানাই আন্তরিক  
কৃতজ্ঞতা ও শুভেচ্ছা।

আমাদের এ অর্জন সকল গ্রাহক,  
ল্যান্ডওনার, শুভানুধ্যায়ী, পৃষ্ঠপোষক,  
সরবরাহকারী, ঠিকাদার ও SEL  
পরিবারের সকল সদস্যবৃন্দের।  
আজকের এ দিনে আমাদের সকল  
শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের জানাই আন্তরিক  
কৃতজ্ঞতা ও শুভেচ্ছা।

আমাদের এ অর্জন সকল গ্রাহক,  
ল্যান্ডওনার, শুভানুধ্যায়ী, পৃষ্ঠপোষক,  
সরবরাহকারী, ঠিকাদার ও SEL  
পরিবারের সকল সদস্যবৃন্দের।  
আজকের এ দিনে আমাদের সকল  
শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের জানাই আন্তরিক  
কৃতজ্ঞতা ও শুভেচ্ছা।

আমাদের এ অর্জন সকল গ্রাহক,  
ল্যান্ডওনার, শুভানুধ্যায়ী, পৃষ্ঠপোষক,  
সরবরাহকারী, ঠিকাদার ও SEL  
পরিবারের সকল সদস্যবৃন্দের।  
আজকের এ দিনে আমাদের সকল  
শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের জানাই আন্তরিক  
কৃতজ্ঞতা ও শুভেচ্ছা।

আমাদের এ অর্জন সকল গ্রাহক,  
ল্যান্ডওনার, শুভানুধ্যায়ী, পৃষ্ঠপোষক,  
সরবরাহকারী, ঠিকাদার ও SEL  
পরিবারের সকল সদস্যবৃন্দের।  
আজকের এ দিনে আমাদের সকল  
শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের জানাই আন্তরিক  
কৃতজ্ঞতা ও শুভেচ্ছা।

আমাদের এ অর্জন সকল গ্রাহক,  
ল্যান্ডওনার, শুভানুধ্যায়ী, পৃষ্ঠপোষক,  
সরবরাহকারী, ঠিকাদার ও SEL  
পরিবারের সকল সদস্যবৃন্দের।  
আজকের এ দিনে আমাদের সকল  
শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের জানাই আন্তরিক  
কৃতজ্ঞতা ও শুভেচ্ছা।

আমাদের এ অর্জন সকল গ্রাহক,  
ল্যান্ডওনার, শুভানুধ্যায়ী, পৃষ্ঠপোষক,  
সরবরাহকারী, ঠিকাদার ও SEL  
পরিবারের সকল সদস্যবৃন্দের।  
আজকের এ দিনে আমাদের সকল  
শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের জানাই আন্তরিক  
কৃতজ্ঞতা ও শুভেচ্ছা।

আমাদের এ অর্জন সকল গ্রাহক,  
ল্যান্ডওনার, শুভানুধ্যায়ী, পৃষ্ঠপোষক,  
সরবরাহকারী, ঠিকাদার ও SEL  
পরিবারের সকল সদস্যবৃন্দের।  
আজকের এ দিনে আমাদের সকল  
শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের জানাই আন্তরিক  
কৃতজ্ঞতা ও শুভেচ্ছা।

আমাদের এ অর্জন সকল গ্রাহক,  
ল্যান্ডওনার, শুভানুধ্যায়ী, পৃষ্ঠপোষক,  
সরবরাহকারী, ঠিকাদার ও SEL  
পরিবারের সকল সদস্যবৃন্দের।  
আজকের এ দিনে আমাদের সকল  
শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের জানাই আন্তরিক  
কৃতজ্ঞতা ও শুভেচ্ছা।

আমাদের এ অর্জন সকল গ্রাহক,  
ল্যান্ডওনার, শুভানুধ্যায়ী, পৃষ্ঠপোষক,  
সরবরাহকারী, ঠিকাদার ও SEL  
পরিবারের সকল সদস্যবৃন্দের।  
আজকের এ দিনে আমাদের সকল  
শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের জানাই আন্তরিক  
কৃতজ্ঞতা ও শুভেচ্ছা।

আমাদের এ অর্জন সকল গ্রাহক,  
ল্যান্ডওনার, শুভানুধ্যায়ী, পৃষ্ঠপোষক,  
সরবরাহকারী, ঠিকাদার ও SEL  
পরিবারের সকল সদস্যবৃন্দের।  
আজকের এ দিনে আমাদের সকল  
শুভানুধ্যায়ীদের জানাই আন্তরিক  
কৃতজ্ঞতা ও শুভেচ্ছা।

আমাদের এ অর্জন সকল গ্রাহক,  
ল্যান্ডওনার, শুভানুধ্যায়ী, পৃষ্ঠপোষক,  
সরবরাহকারী, ঠিকাদার ও SEL  
পরিবারের সকল সদস্যবৃন্দের।