

# Obama 'wins' final debate

FROM PAGE 20

While tamer than the second debate last week in New York state, the matchup had its share of zingers and putdowns, most of them doled out by an aggressive president eager to stop a surge in polls by the former Massachusetts governor.

"I know you haven't been in a position to actually execute foreign policy, but every time you've offered an opinion, you've been wrong," said Obama.

"Attacking me is not an agenda," was Romney's frequent retort, alluding to Republican accusations that Obama had not laid out enough of a policy plan for a second term.

Snap polls declared Obama the winner, but 60 percent of people in a CNN survey said Romney was capable of being commander in chief, accomplishing a key goal set out by his advisers.

A CBS News poll said 53 percent believed Obama won the debate, versus 23 percent for Romney and 24 percent calling it a draw. The CNN poll put Obama as the winner by 8 percentage points.

With foreign policy a low priority in a campaign focused on the economy, it was unclear what impact the debate would have on

the race. Respondents in the CNN poll were split over whether it would influence their votes in the November election.

The campaign now enters its decisive phase with two weeks of campaign rallies across battleground states. Polls show a tied race, after Romney clawed back from a deficit by outdueling Obama in their first debate on October 3.

The Boca Raton showdown was one last chance for the candidates to appeal to millions of voters watching on television and Obama was the aggressor from start to finish.

He criticised the Republican for lacking ideas on the Middle East, mocked his calls for more ships in the US military and accused Romney of wanting to bring the United States back to a long-abandoned Cold War stance.

He had a biting and perhaps condescending response when the Republican said the US Navy had fewer ships now than at any time since 1917 and needed more.

Romney was cautious throughout and often refused to take the bait when attacked, which may have led viewers to declare Obama the winner.

The former business executive's approach

## POLLS-TIME GOVT CEC for political settlement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad yesterday said the issue of polls-time government might be settled politically soon.

"It is a political issue. Discussions are going on in the political arena. We hope the mode of election-time government will be decided soon," he told reporters at the EC Secretariat in the capital.

Responding to a query, he said it was not the EC the BNP-led opposition party was against. The opposition parties had said they would not join the next parliamentary elections under the incumbent government, Rakibuddin added.

"Under this situation, it is not the election commission's duty to ask the two major political parties to sit for a dialogue on the issue. The matter will be settled in parliament."

On holding electoral talks with political parties after the Eid vacation, the CEC said the commission would sit together with all the parties registered with it.

On the registration of political parties, he said the EC Secretariat had already issued a circular, asking parties willing to get registered to apply to the commission by December 31.

The CEC was talking to reporters after a meeting with members of the law enforcement agencies on the law and order situation in Tangail ahead of the by-election on November 20.

Necessary measures would be taken to maintain law and order and ensure a peaceful atmosphere during the Tangail-3 by-election, he said.

The business leaders urged the government to rescind its move to bring about "the controlling and undemocratic amendment".

Asad said if the government ultimately sticks to its plan to bring about the amendment, it should apply to a specific company such as a multilevel marketing company, but not to the whole business community.

He called upon the government to consult the business community before implementing such decision. "We are ready to sit and give our opinion."

Earlier at the same venue, Law Minister Shafiq Ahmed said the government planned to bring about changes to the law to appoint administrators in companies that cheat people.

"If we continue to follow the traditional way of dealing with a fraud company, its officials may liquidate its assets by the time the probe is completed, leaving nothing for the general shareholders," the minister said at a consultative meeting on the company law.

The two got locked into a fight in the "Our Democracy" programme where yesterday's topic was "Safe Journey Home for Eid and Puja".

The programme, which started at 11:15pm, was taken off air, as the two leaders took to personal attacks while talking about the performances of the incumbent government and the BNP-led four-party government, Prothom Alo online reported.

As it resumed after some time, Shahjahan and Rafiqul shook hands on the insistence of the others present.

## Khaleda

FROM PAGE 20

Chairperson Khaleda Zia's meetings with Indian leaders during her upcoming visit to New Delhi.

BNP Vice-Chairman Shahidullah Chowdhury said this to journalists after Indian High Commissioner Pankaj Saran called on the opposition leader at her Gulshan office last night.

Reaz Rahman, BNP chairperson's adviser and former state minister for foreign affairs, was present at the 40-minute meeting that started around 8:00pm.

Khaleda, who will leave for India on October 28, is scheduled to meet, among others, the Indian president, prime minister, chief of Indian National Congress and top leaders of the Indian opposition party.

"Our relations with India are important, and there are some unresolved issues between the two countries, which will be discussed during the visit," Shamsher told reporters.

He added that Indo-Bangla relations would take on a new dimension after the meetings between Khaleda and Indian leaders.

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The co-financiers -- the Asian Development Bank, the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Islamic Development Bank --

also halted release of their finds following the WB decision.

In September, the WB re-engaged in the project after the government agreed to meet the bank's conditions, including sending the suspected government officials on leave till the investigation was completed and giving a WB panel access to the ACC.

Accordingly, the WB formed a three-member external panel headed by Luis Moreno Ocampo, former chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. The panel made its first three-day visit to Dhaka from October 14-16.

"They [the panel] left on October 16 after a very positive meeting. They also agreed to work with the ACC," Goldstein said yesterday.

"When the panel receives the answers the mission will be in a position to write its first report."

He said the bank encouraged the ACC to move ahead with the investigation as fast as possible for the WB to move forward to implement the project.

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