

## JS ELECTIONS EC dialogue with parties from Nov 26

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission has decided to begin on November 26 four-day electoral talks with political parties.

Accordingly, the EC Secretariat sent invitations to registered political parties yesterday, said officials of the secretariat.

The talks will be held at 11:00am in the National Economic Council's conference room. Each of the political parties has been requested to send a three-member delegation including the party president and the general secretary.

On November 26, the EC will sit with Islamic Front Bangladesh, Islami Andolon Bangladesh, Islami Oikya Jote, Oikya boddha Nagorik Andolon, Krishak Sramik Janata League, Khelafat Majlish, Ganotantri Party, Gonofront and Gonoforum.

On November 28, the commission will sit with Jamiyate Ulamaye Islam Bangladesh, Zaker Party, Jatiya Ganotantri Party, Jatiya Party, Bangladesh Jatiya Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, National People's Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) and National People's Party.

On November 29, the EC will talk with Progatishil Ganotantrik Dal, Bangladesh Awami League, Bangladesh Islami Front, Bangladesh Kalyan Party, Bangladesh Khelafat Andolon, and Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish.

On December 2, the EC will meet BNP, Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, Tarikat Federation, Bangladesh National Awami Party, Bangladesh Muslim League, Workers' Party of Bangladesh, Communist Party of Bangladesh, Biplobi Workers' Party, Bangladesh National Awami Party (NAP), Samyabadi Dal, Bikalpadhara Bangladesh and Liberal Democratic Party.

## Khulna hosts

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likely to remain unchanged from the eleven that lost the first Test by 77 runs.

It was announced at the end of the first Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur that the 14-man squad would remain unchanged for the second Test which begins today at 9:30am.

Although the team is likely to be unchanged, there is still a chance that opener Junaed Siddiqui, who was unconvinced against West Indies pace attack while scoring 7 and 20, might make way for Nazimuddin.

Bangladesh earlier got a scare on Monday when it seemed that star opener Tamim Iqbal would miss the second Test with an elbow injury, but fortunately for the Tigers the left-hander passed a fitness Test on Tuesday and was cleared to play.

In the first Test, the home side put up a spirited fight but ended up losing late on the last day when their second innings folded 78 runs short of the winning target, 245. Even in defeat there were plenty of positives -- Bangladesh recording their highest total of 556 in the first innings, debutant off-spinner taking nine wickets in the match including six for 74 in the West Indian second innings and Naeem Islam's patient, maiden Test century to name a few. Although they fell again at the last hurdle, the first Test performance has raised hopes that Bangladesh may come out of Khulna's inaugural Test with a creditable draw, if not a win.

## Govt ready

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the Speedy Trial Act.

"We hope, after the completion of the trial, the troublemakers will stop," Alamgir told journalists after visiting Ansar and VDP Academy in Gazipur. He also alleged that the fundamentalists, including Jamaat and Shibir, were involved in the Ramu violence.

Welcoming US President Barack Obama's speech on Rohingya, the home minister said, "We have to admit that Rohingyas are the citizens of Myanmar and they should hence be called as Myanmarese Rohingyas."

## Irked govt to complain

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and labelled MPs as corrupt. We will draw the TI headquarters' attention to the weaknesses in the TIB survey."

The TIB report, released on October 14, said 97 per cent of the 149 sitting MPs who were surveyed had been involved in "negative activities" that included being linked to or being supportive of criminal activities, misusing public funds and influencing government decisions.

On Monday, Speaker Abdul Hamid and some ruling alliance MPs in parliament launched a blistering attack on TIB. A few of them demanded action, including a ban on its activities, against the corruption watchdog.

However, two eminent citizens observed yesterday that it would be inappropriate to ban the activities of an organisation just because members of parliament had raised questions about its research.

Referring to Monday's discussion, Inu said the House would make a decision to protect the lawmakers' dignity.

He told the House that his ministry had requested TIB to respond to its questions, 31 in all, in order to check the survey's authenticity. TIB later sent its reply to the ministry.

"The information ministry has reviewed the reply. TIB did not follow proper procedures for a social science survey. The method TIB used for the survey is sub-standard, flawed and weak. "So, it's not possible for the government to take any administrative action on the basis of the survey's findings."

He said TIB had released the survey at a time when the government took a tough stance against corruption.

"We had thought that the survey would be helpful in fighting corruption. But we were very disappointed after

receiving copies of the survey. It is very weak."

He said there were 320 registered newspapers in the country, but TIB had collected information from only five newspapers for its survey.

The information ministry yesterday gave MPs copies of the ministry's 31 questions and TIB's responses to them.

Meanwhile, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said if TIB officials were summoned to parliament, they would oblige.

"According to the country's constitution, we have the right to criticise," Iftekhar told journalists at the Cirdap auditorium in the capital.

"There is a phrase, 'Shooting the messenger'. Natural disasters cannot be avoided by destroying weather forecast equipment. Similarly, corruption will not end in Bangladesh if TIB stops functioning."

"If TIB is to be banned, it should be done through a democratic process. Our goal is to have a democratic and accountable government," he said.

Akbar Ali Khan, former adviser to a caretaker government, said it was quite natural that there would be differences of opinion or debate over a research-based report. But it would be improper to ban an organisation's activities only because MPs had raised questions about its research.

None would be able to do research freely if a single report led to the banning of an organisation, he said.

"Everyone should be allowed to express his views."

If the MPs had doubts about TIB's research, they could commission other organisations to find out the flaws in the TIB's research and show them to TIB, if there were any.

"The problem is we don't have a comprehensive code of conduct for MPs.

Parliament should formulate it, defining what they should do or should not do. Otherwise, such debates will continue."

Legal expert Shahdeen Malik said the lawmakers' intolerance could have been the main reason behind the respondents' negative perceptions about them in the survey.

"Banning TIB will not turn Bangladesh into a corruption-free country. Similarly, a prohibition on TIB's activities will not remove the negative perception about lawmakers," he said.

## Stop import

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on Monday also praying to the court to order the government to set up adequate testing kits at all the ports and markets across the country to ensure that only the food items which are not adulterated are imported and sold.

After holding a hearing on the petition yesterday, the HC bench of Justice Mirza Hussain Haider and Justice Kazi Md Ejarul Haque Akondo fixed today for passing an order on it.

During the hearing, petitioner's counsel AM Aminuddin told the court that chemical treated fruits, fish, milk and other food items are harmful for human body, but are flooding the markets across the country.

Citing reported incidents of 13 children who had died after eating chemically treated litchis in Dinajpur early this year, the counsel said the authorities concerned had failed to discharge their constitutional duties to prevent the use of poisonous chemicals within food items and ensure the victims' right to life.

Aminuddin also prayed to the court to ask the authorities to create mass awareness through media campaigns about the hazardous effects of eating foods treated with poisonous chemicals.

## Azmi defends father's role

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Abdullahil Aman Azmi also said those who had belief in undivided Pakistan were referred as 'patriots' by his father in 1971.

Azmi was giving deposition as the first defence witness for his father at the International Crimes Tribunal-1.

He claimed Ghulam Azam in no way praised Pakistani army or its auxiliary forces for their activities against humanity.

The prosecution on February 22 while reading out charges said supporting the atrocities, Ghulam Azam had repeatedly praised the Pakistani army and its auxiliary forces for protecting Pakistani ideologies and holding back the "miscreants and insurgents devastating the country".

Ghulam Azam, considered by many as the symbol of war crimes during the Liberation War of Bangladesh, was indicted on five charges of crimes against humanity on May 13. Azmi, who has given about 13-hour-long deposition in five sessions, also said his father had never given any speech against innocent and unarmed people and there was no such evidence.

He also claimed his father was a believer of 'communal harmony'.

He [Ghulam Azam] did not show hatred to or never gave any statement against any community irrespective of religion, caste or group, the defence witness said, adding, "Rather there is no evidence that Ghulam Azam gave any statement against non-Muslims in Bangladesh after the Liberation War."

According to the prosecution's formal charge, Ghulam Azam took part in a rally organised by Rajshahi's Peace Committee at Rajshahi Municipal Hall on July 16, 1971 where he said there was no document that Hindus are friends of Muslims.

"They [Hindus] have

always treated Muslims as their enemy," he was quoted as saying.

Ghulam Azam in another rally on August 7, 1971 in Kushtia said Sheikh Mujib and Awami League made ally with India and conspired with the people of East Pakistan.

These were published at Jamaat's mouthpiece Sangram and the prosecution submitted the clippings of the news.

The defence witness said Ghulam Azam did not term any particular group as 'miscreants', 'terrorists' or 'rebels' rather indicated those who did destructive work and disrupted peace among people.

On the contrary, according to the formal charge, Ghulam Azam and his party men and anti-liberation elements used to call the freedom fighters "miscreants", "Indian agents", "malaun" [an offensive word used against the Hindus], and "infiltrators".

Azmi claimed after Pakistani army's massacre on mass people on March 25, 1971, it became a challenge for Ghulam Azam and his party to fix their position.

"Ghulam Azam and his party thought that the injustice and repression on the people of East Pakistan after 1947 could be solved in a democratic way within undivided Pakistan," said Azmi claiming their decision was totally political.

He then gave three explanations for such stance of Ghulam Azam and his party Jamaat-e-Islami.

In his first explanation the defence witness said India's leaders had opposed the birth of Pakistan as the land of Muslims before 1947 following which they thought India's prime intention was to weaken arch rival Pakistan.

Azmi said their second thought was the then East Pakistan, encompassed by India in east, west and north,

might be used by India as its colony to retain its hegemony.

India could paralyse Bangladesh's economy which was the third reason for their stance, he added.

Azmi said Ghulam Azam neither formed nor was involved in forming East Pakistan Retrieval Committee. "Those who bring this allegation could not produce any evidence in the last 40 years in this regard," he said, adding, such allegation is brought to put him in a difficult political situation.

The witness claimed the charges brought against his father are fabricated, baseless, imaginary, false and purposive. These allegations are brought after 40 years of independence only to gain political advantage, Azmi added.

Azmi finished giving deposition on charges yesterday and is set to give deposition today on different defence documents.

**SAYEDEE'S CASE**

Defence counsel Mizanul Islam yesterday continued placing argument in the war crimes case against Jamaat leader Delawar Hossain Sayedee for the third day at the same tribunal.

In his argument, Mizanul said the prosecution could not produce any document that the last name of Sayedee or his father was 'Sikdar' though they have been addressing his client as 'Sikdar'.

Proceeding of the case was adjourned until today.

## 11 exotic birds

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Only six guards were on duty in the 186-acre area of the zoo with more than 100 cages.

The curator filed a GD with Shah Ali Police Station on Monday and a case yesterday, said a sub-inspector at Shah Ali Police Station.

In 2008, six birds were stolen in a similar way.

## 67 Jamaat

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enforcers and setting fire to a police van that day.

Among the arrestees were Jamaat district Ameer Maulana Mainuddin, its Finance Secretary Jubaid and Rupganj upazila unit Shibir President Mohammad Ali.

Narayanganj police yesterday closed Sub-Inspector Noor Mohammad of the same police station for negligence of duty during Monday's violence, said Sheikh Nazmul Alam, district superintendent of police.

Shibir activists vandalised at least five vehicles that day, leaving 10 people injured.

In Chittagong city, a court sent 13 Shibir activists to jail in connection with vandalism across the port city on Sunday.

Chittagong Metropolitan Magistrate Md Hasanul Islam passed the order yesterday when the arrestees were produced before the court, said court sources.

In Gaibandha, Police arrested Jamaat's District Organizing Secretary Nazrul Islam Lebu, also Jamaat-nominated candidate for Gaibandha-3 in the last three elections, yesterday morning at his Palashbari residence on charges of obstructing the work of the police.

In Rajshahi, law enforcers along with the Rajshahi University authorities raided the university's Shaheed Shamsuzzoha Hall yesterday evening and arrested masters student Anwar Hossain of the Arabic department.

The hall's Provost Dr Mostafa Sharif Anwar said they called the police after getting information about Shibir men planning to gather in the hall for a secret meeting.

Officer-in-Charge Sanaul Haque of Motihar Police Station said they arrested Anwar, suspecting that he was a Shibir activist. Police made the arrest after conducting an hour-long raid in the hall.

## Bus Rapid Transit

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under the project which would operate on the route.

The project, alongside the works of Metro Rail, was supposed to start by this time as per the Strategic Transport Plans (STP), which designed for 20 years had been approved in 2008. The plans were to be implemented in four phases.

However, experts say the bus service would serve almost 92 percent commuters of the city, except for those having cars.

Yesterday's Ecne meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair approved eight projects involving Tk 3,020 crore.

Under the BRT project, three development agencies, including the Asian Development Bank, will provide a loan of Tk 1,651 crore.

The project proposal said, a loan negotiation has been completed and an agreement would be signed after the Ecne approved the project.

According to the project proposal submitted in 2005 under the STP, a study had been conducted with assistance from the World Bank. In the study, six corridors had been identified in Dhaka to ease the traffic congestion in the capital.

The study recommended establishing mass rapid transit or metro rail in three corridors and BRT in the other three.

A planning ministry official said a proposal for setting up the metro rail at a cost of around Tk 21,000 crore would soon be placed in an Ecne meeting. Japan will finance about 75 percent of the project cost.

The Ecne meeting yesterday rejected a proposal for constructing a link road from Mirpur Darussalam to Kochukhet at a cost of Tk 485 crore. According to the proposal, Tk 80 crore was assigned to construct the road while the rest of the money for compensating for the structures to be removed from the site.

The PM had objected to the proposal saying it needed further scrutiny, said the official.

The Ecne yesterday

## 1,214 more teachers on MPO list

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday announced the inclusion of 1,214 teachers of schools and madrasas on the MPO list.

The announcement came following a weeklong agitation, including hunger strike and sit-in, by some 1,441 teachers under the banner of MPO-deprived Teachers Forum at the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) and Jatiya Press Club.

Enlistment of the teachers on the MPO (Monthly Pay Order) list means that from now on the newly enlisted teachers will receive a portion of their salaries from the government.

Emerging from a meeting with a delegation of the protesting teachers at the DSHE yesterday, the education minister said 1,214 teachers had been left out of the list as they lacked the required educational qualifications at the time of joining their jobs. They, however, attained the qualifications later.

"From this month they will receive their salaries under the MPO scale," added Nahid.

The remaining left out teachers will also be included on the MPO list upon attainment of the required qualifications.

Of the newly enlisted 1,214 teachers, 889 are from schools and madrasas, while the remaining teach in technical schools.

## It's all lies

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propaganda by vested quarters," Khaleda, also leader of the opposition, said while speaking at a meeting and award giving ceremony at city's Institute of Engineers.

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, student body associated with BNP, organised the programme marking the 48th birth anniversary of Tarique Rahman, also senior vice-chairman of the main opposition.

The BNP and its various associate and like-minded bodies organised a series of programmes including cutting cakes, fireworks, blood donation camps, photo exhibition, painting competition and cultural programmes on the occasion in Dhaka and elsewhere in the country.

Speaking at the Institute of Engineers, the BNP chief said her ailing son was being treated in the UK and would return in the right time after his complete recovery.

"He is well a bit but not completely. Our main target is that he returns home after making a complete recovery."

She added in a firm voice: "He must return to the country in the right time and will work for the welfare and prosperity of the country and people."

Pointing to different cases filed against Tarique including the one for money laundering, Khaleda said: His ideas and ways of thoughts regarding serving BNP and the country are totally different.

"The overall situation of the country and BNP would have benefitted from his ideas and thoughts if those were materialised. But his enemy realised it and that's why they did not let him move forward."

Khaleda added: "That's why various vested quarters including Moen U Ahmed and Fakhruddin Ahmed [former army chief and past caretaker government chief adviser respectively] hatched conspiracy and launched propaganda against him to destroy him."

"They [Moeen and Fakhruddin] tortured him so severely [during the past caretaker rule] that he had to go abroad for treatment."

On the Awami League's theme of "Digital Bangladesh", the BNP chief claimed it was her son Tarique who thought and started working to that end long before the AL.