



WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

LIFE style

9TH FLORENCE BIENNALE

Bangladeshi experimental painter bags award in the global art event

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PUNK PAIR 'PARDONED'

Alyokhina, one of the freed Pussy Riot girls, calls it Putin's PR stunt

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SHARP RISE IN WEALTH OF MPs, MINISTERS

AL blushes, asks EC to hold back info

SHAKHAWAT LITON and PANKAJ KARMAKAR

Embarrassed by the revelations that many Awami League leaders have amassed huge wealth in the last five years, the ruling party is now pressing the Election Commission to stop making public the wealth statements of the candidates.

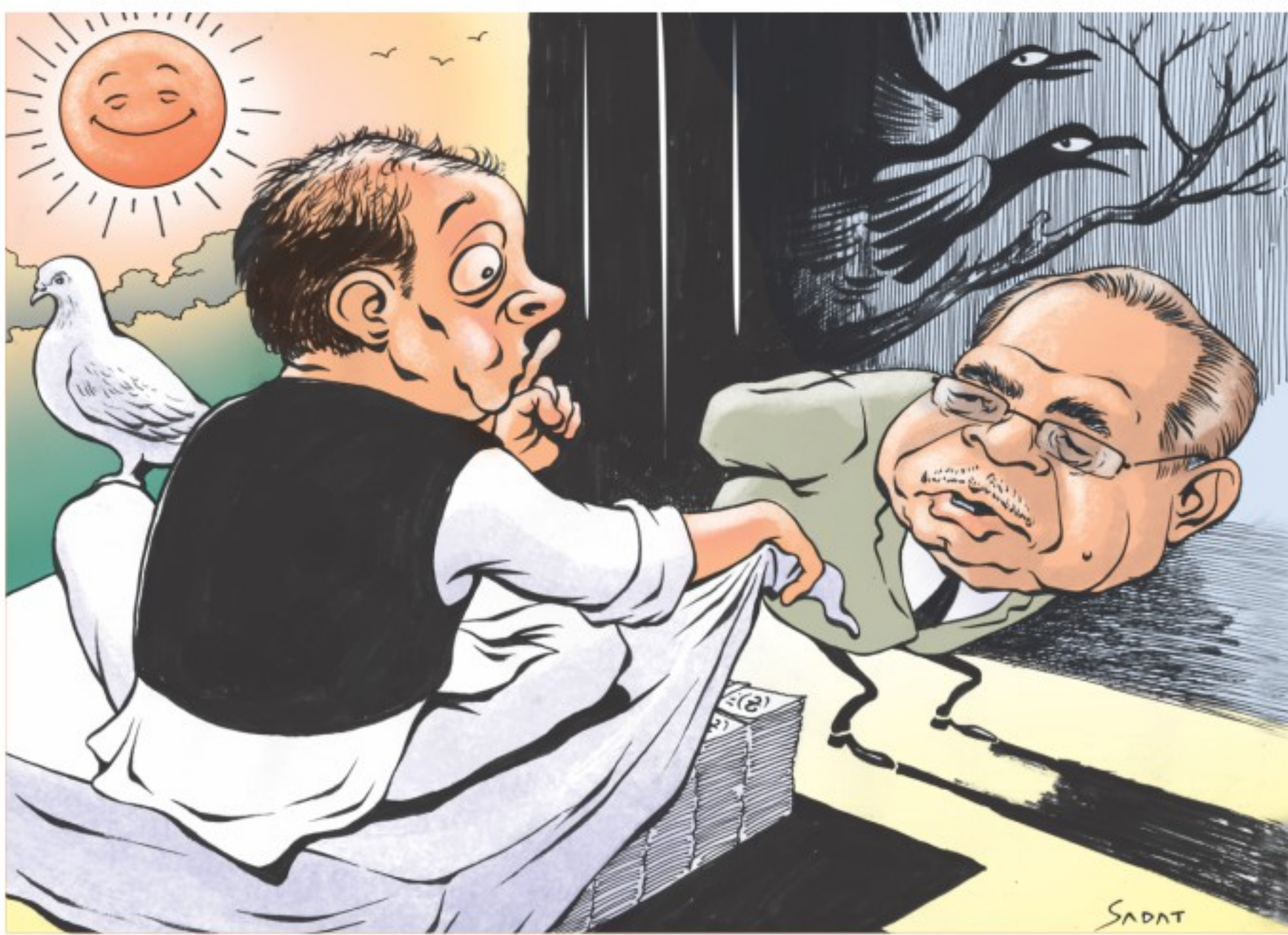
An AL delegation led by former home minister Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir met the chief election commissioner on Sunday and asked him if the EC had the authority to publish the statements, submitted by the candidates along

with their nomination papers.

Alamgir is also the convener of a subcommittee of the AL's election steering committee, which maintains liaison with the commission. He was accompanied by the other members of the committee.

As per a Supreme Court verdict in 2007, the EC is bound to collect eight particulars about the candidates, including their wealth statements, and make those public so that voters could know about their prospective representatives.

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NEWS ANALYSIS

8 info voters' right to know

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The ruling Awami League on Sunday asked the Election Commission to stop the publication of wealth statements submitted by candidates at the January 5 elections. A delegation of the party met the EC and made the surprising demand. This demand runs counter to a landmark Supreme Court verdict empowering voters with the right to know about candidates before they choose them as their representatives to govern the country on their behalf.

Neither the partisan governments nor the EC had contributed to providing voters with the right to be informed

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POLITICS OF FORTUNE

Fazle Noor Taposh

29 times richer

Taposh, wife had **Tk 2.43cr** assets in 2008, now have at least **Tk 70.15cr**

HASAN JAHIID TUSHER

Awami League law-maker barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh and his wife have made at least Tk67.72 crore in last five years, a 29-fold increase, according to his affidavit submitted to the Election Commission.

In 2008, they had a total wealth worth about Tk2.43 crore. Now they

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Shamsul Haque Tuku

6 times richer

Tuku, wife now have **Tk 4.35cr** assets (6 flats and houses, **Tk 1.85cr** DPS, FDR)

AHMED HUMAYN KABIR TOPU, from Pabna

State Minister for Home Shamsul Haque Tuku is one of the fortune makers of the present cabinet whose wealth swelled to about six times that in 2008.

Back then, Tuku, elected from Pabna-1 constituency, and his wife only had Tk 75.50 lakh in wealth

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Qamrul Islam

8 times richer

Value of Qamrul's assets rose to **Tk 1.34cr** from only **Tk 16.67 lakh**

HASAN JAHIID TUSHER

State minister for law Qamrul Islam's assets grew by eight times since the 2008 elections but his wife, who used to earn Tk 10,000 a month, appears to be penniless now.

According to Qamrul's wealth statement submitted to the Election Commission, his wife Toyeba Islam

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Too embarrassing ACC retracts Says process for probe on for AL grassroots

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Many grassroots leaders of the ruling Awami League are embarrassed and shocked at the sharp rise in the wealth of some party lawmakers and former ministers over the last five years.

They said the alleged corruption by a section of AL leaders had tainted the party's image, and organisational action should be taken against those who had amassed wealth by illegal means.

The Daily Star yesterday talked to more than two dozen grassroots leaders, mostly presidents and general secretaries of AL district and upazila units.

Different newspapers have been running reports on the steep increase in the wealth of the AL leaders on the basis of their wealth statements submitted to the Election Commission with applications for candidacy in the January 5 polls.

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ACC retracts Says process for probe on

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has started the process of investigating how some Awami League polls candidates have amassed huge wealth in the last five years, ACC Chairman Mohammad Badiuzzaman said yesterday.

Badiuzzaman said this amid widespread criticism about a remark by ACC Commissioner Shahabuddin that the commission would not launch an inquiry now, as it might hamper the upcoming elections.

"At this moment ACC does not want to create any disorder centring the issue. Let everything be held smoothly, and then we will see," Shahabuddin had said on Thursday.

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Trucks burn in Shajahanpur upazila of Bogra yesterday, as local 18-party activists led by Jamaat-e-Islami leaders go on the rampage.

PHOTO: STAR

BLOCKADE ENDS TODAY Vandalism of vehicles on

STAR REPORT

Blockaders attacked vehicles, blasted crude bombs and clashed with law enforcers in several districts yesterday, the third day of the 83-hour blockade enforced by the 18-party opposition alliance.

The roads, rail and waterways blockade, the fifth since November 26, will end at 5:00pm today.

Yesterday, dozens of vehicles were vandalised and torched in Bogra, Noakhali, Mymensingh and Gazipur.

However, a good number of vehicles plied Dhaka-Mymensingh highway under police protection. The army was seen providing security for smooth vehicular movement on Dhaka-Mawa and Dhaka-Chittagong highways.

The scenario in Dhaka was totally different than any other days of blockade.

Literally confined to homes during long blockades, people have become desperate to get their daily jobs done. Defying the blockade, they hit the streets in hundreds.

The flow of vehicles on the capital's thoroughfares was almost normal while a usual scenario of traffic congestion was seen at many points.

However, blockaders exploded four crude bombs in front of judge's court and

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US too won't send polls observers

EC now counts on locals

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Following in the footsteps of the EU and the Commonwealth, the US has decided not to send observers for the January 5 election, citing the absence of an atmosphere for free and fair polls.

Dhaka's diplomatic circles consider the latest US stance as the last nail in the coffin of a flawed election that sees a majority of candidates elected unopposed amid a boycott by the opposition.

"The United States notes with disappointment, however, that the major political parties have not yet reached consensus on a way to achieve such elections, since more than half of the parliamentary seats are uncontested for the January 5 polls," said State Department Spokesperson Jen Psaki early yesterday.

"In this context, the US will not deploy observers for these elections. We remain prepared to reengage our observation efforts at a later time in a more conducive environment."

Later in the day, Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad said local teams would monitor the 10th parliamentary election if foreign organisations did not send theirs.

"Every organisation has its own policy and procedure regarding a deployment of observers. It is their own decision whether they will send observers or not. If anyone does not come, others will come. Moreover, local organisations will observe the election," he told reporters at the EC Secretariat.

Asked whether the observer issue would raise questions about the credibility of the polls, the CEC did not give any direct answer. Instead, he told newsmen that they would see conditions for themselves and point out to the people of the country if any anomalies were found.

Replying to a question, he said the international community's refusal to

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