



Environment and Forest Minister Anwar Hossain Manju with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the climate change summit in Paris yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

AL irked as EC won't lift bar

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campaign for mayoral aspirants in the December 30 municipal polls.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, several AL and JP leaders described the commission's decision as unfair, discriminatory, and against the spirit of the election.

However, BNP leaders welcomed it, though it criticised the EC for not entertaining its demand for deferring the vote. The BNP submitted a proposal to the CEC in this regard on Sunday.

An EC meeting yesterday decided that any change to the code of conduct after the announcement of polls schedule would create controversy.

Two election commissioners who opposed the change argued that if MPs were allowed to join the campaign trail, the polls might be influenced. And if that happens, people's confidence in the EC will erode, said meeting sources.

"It will not be proper to bring any change in the electoral code of conduct now," Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad told reporters after the meeting.

Talking about the BNP demand, the CEC said they must hold the polls by December.

It is not possible to hold polls in January and February when the EC will update the voter list. Also, there will be public examinations at the time, he added.

The decision over the AL and the JP demand means more than 41 central leaders of the AL in the election areas, who are also MPs, cannot take part in campaign. Moreover, party presidents and secretaries of most district units are

barred from campaigning as they are MPs too. Only 25 central leaders, who are not lawmakers, can campaign for party-nominated mayoral candidates.

"The code of conduct keeping lawmakers out of electioneering would destroy the spirit of the first ever partisan local government polls," said Suranjit Sengupta, a member of the AL advisory council.

"Lawmakers have no executive power, so keeping them out of the election will set a bad precedence," said Suranjit, also chief of the parliamentary standing committee on the law ministry.

He, however, said the EC being a constitutional body could make any decision it thought fit and that they "hailed" it.

By rejecting both the AL and the BNP demands, the EC "perhaps made both sides unhappy," he added.

Abdul Matin Khasru, AL's law affairs secretary, said the EC's decision was unfair.

"All central leaders of the BNP were ministers and MPs in the past and they are getting the opportunity to campaign, but we are not. The decision will not ensure level-playing field and it is a discrimination against the Awami League," said Matin, also a former law minister.

Faruk Khan, also an AL lawmaker, said he did not understand why the EC made the decision. "MPs have no executive power and since it is a partisan election, they must have the right to electioneering."

AL lawmakers Abdur Razzak and Abdur Rahman made similar comments, while the party's publicity secre-

tary Hasan Mahmud described the EC decision as "ridiculous and peculiar".

Asked, Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu, secretary general of JP, said preventing MPs from electioneering was a clear case of discrimination and it denied them their constitutional and democratic rights.

"The neutrality of the Election Commission will be questioned," he added.

But Osman Faruk, an adviser to the BNP chief, hailed the commission for not allowing MPs in electioneering. "We hope this decision stands."

Other BNP leaders, however, criticised the EC for not deferring the polls date.

According to Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, a BNP standing committee member, the EC's rejection of their demand would create "confusion" over its sincerity in holding the polls in a neutral and impartial manner.

"The rejection means it did not exercise its power impartially to consider the BNP's demand," he said.

But he added the BNP would not boycott the election.

Meanwhile, the AL's nomination board has finalised almost all party-backed mayoral candidates for the 236 municipalities that go to polls on December 30.

A 6:00pm to 11:30pm meeting of the board, held at the Gono Bhaban with party chief Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair, completed the process.

Hasina is likely to attest the party-designated candidates at the Gono Bhaban this evening, said AL leader Faruk Khan.

Pakistan denies committing

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continues to interfere in our internal matters, it would be challenging for us to take the relationship with Pakistan forward."

"We will discuss the issue at the ministry tomorrow [today]," he told The Daily Star last night.

Pakistan's foreign ministry on November 22 made a statement, voicing "deep concern and anguish" over the capital punishments of Jamaat leader Mojaheed and BNP leader Salauddin.

It prompted Bangladesh to summon the Pakistan envoy in Dhaka for lodging a formal protest. Terming Islamabad's statement a brazen interference in Bangladesh's internal affairs, Dhaka said it expected the Pakistani authorities to act responsibly and refrain from making such "un-called-for statements".

Yesterday, the Pakistan foreign ministry in a release said the acting high commissioner of Bangladesh was summoned to the ministry by the director general (South Asia & Saarc) and was informed that the Pakistan government rejected "the baseless and unfounded assertions of the Bangladesh government conveyed vide its note of 23 November 2015".

"Pakistan also rejected insinuation of complicity in committing crimes or war atrocities. Nothing could be further from the truth," added the statement.

Shahriar Alam questioned, "If it was not Pakistan, then who had committed the crimes during the nine-month war?"

"Pakistan is now trying to ignore an established truth after 44 years. In the agreement of 1974, Pakistan felt sorry to a certain extent for committing the crimes. Why are they making a contradictory statement now?"

Tureen Afroz, a prosecutor of the International Crimes Tribunal, said even the Hamoodur Rahman Commission, which was formed by Pakistan, found involvement of its army in war crimes.

The staff study of the International Commission of Jurist in June 1972 had also found Pakistan army's involvement in war crimes, said Tureen. "If Pakistan had not committed war crimes, then why did it negotiate the repatriation of 195 prisoners of war?" she asked.

The lawyer termed Pakistan's latest claim a blatant lie.

Pakistan in the statement yesterday said, "It is regrettable that attempts have been made by the Government of Bangladesh to malign Pakistan, despite our ardent desire to develop brotherly relations with Bangladesh. Pakistan believes that the peoples of both countries not only want to maintain but also further strengthen the

bonds of friendship and brotherhood. However, sadly, the Government of Bangladesh does not seem to respect these sentiments."

State Minister Shahriar Alam said Bangladesh, India and Pakistan had a plan to march forward. "To make this happen, Saarc was formed. But if Pakistan goes on with interfering in our internal matters, it would be difficult for us to take the relationship with Pakistan forward."

He hoped that Pakistan would not interfere in Bangladesh's internal affairs, especially in war crimes trial, in future.

Pakistan's press release also read, "As regards the Bangladesh Government's contention that Pakistan presents a misleading interpretation of the Agreement of 1974, it needs to be emphasized that, as part of the Agreement, the Government of Bangladesh had decided not to proceed with the trials as an act of clemency."

In this regard, Shahriar Alam said Pakistan was interpreting the 1974 deal "wrongly and intentionally".

Under the deal signed on April 9, 1974, Bangladesh had agreed not to proceed with the trial of 195 prisoners of war repatriated to Pakistan "...having regard to the appeal of the Prime Minister of Pakistan to the people of Bangladesh to forgive and forget the mistakes of the past."

Tureen Afroz said the 1974 agreement talked about the trial procedure of 195 prisoners of war. Besides, Bangladesh is now trying its own people who had sided with the Pakistani army and committed crimes along with them.

"Bangladesh has absolute territorial and universal jurisdiction to try them," she insisted.

Veteran war crimes researcher Shahriar Kabir on November 22 told The Daily Star that the tripartite agreement was "invalid".

As per the Vienna Convention, to which Bangladesh is a signatory, there are some crimes that cannot be forgiven by any government, and genocide is one of them, he added.

Shaheed Jaya Shyamoli Nasrin Chowdhury said "falsehood is ingrained in Pakistanis."

"The Pakistan army and their local collaborators had committed genocide. We witnessed those crimes. This has been proved to be true. But Pakistan is now resorting to falsehood," added the widow of Shaheed Alim Chowdhury.

In its 2013 judgment in the case against Abdul Quader Mollah, the International Crimes Tribunal-2 said: "Amnesty shown to 195 listed war criminals are opposed to peremptory norms of international law. It is to be noted that any agreement and treaty

amongst states in derogation of this principle stands void as per the provisions of international treaty law convention [Article 53 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of the Treaties, 1969]."

"Despite the immunity given to 195 listed war criminals belonging to the Pakistan armed forces on the strength of 'tripartite agreement', the Act of 1973 [International Crimes (Tribunals) Act-1973] still provides jurisdiction to bring them to the process of justice," said the tribunal.

About three million Bangalees were killed and a quarter million women raped by Pakistan army and their local collaborations. Besides, about 10 million people had to take refuge in India during the 1971 war.

EX-DIPLOMATS IRKED
Former ambassador Ashfaqur Rahman said if Pakistan really wanted to develop relations with Bangladesh, it should immediately initiate the trial of 195 Pakistani prisoners.

"They [Pakistan] should understand that Bangladesh is trying its own citizens. Pakistan has no right to say anything about the war crimes trial and the punishments awarded by the apex court of Bangladesh," he noted.

Another former Bangladeshi diplomat, who served as Bangladesh high commissioner in Islamabad, told this newspaper that the government should take the summons of Bangladesh's envoy very seriously as Islamabad was "not maintaining diplomatic norms" and nakedly interfering in Bangladesh's domestic affairs repeatedly.

Former ambassador M Humayun Kabir said, "Pakistan should look at the mirror and understand their own behaviour during the Liberation War. It is high time that they apologise for their heinous crimes committed against the unarmed Bangladeshi civilians."

The Pakistan National Assembly in December 2013 had adopted a resolution expressing concern over the execution of Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah.

Three top leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami and a BNP leader have been executed so far since the formation of the International Crimes Tribunal in March 2010.

Abdur Quader Mollah, Muhammad Kamaruzzaman and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed were leaders of Islami Chhatra Sangha, the then student wing of Jamaat, while Salauddin Quader Chowdhury was son of Fazlul Quader Chowdhury, chief of Convention Muslim League.

Both Jamaat and Muslim League stood against the Liberation War, through which Bangladesh parted from Pakistan.

Leaders pledge climate rescue

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will suffer worsening droughts, floods, storms and rising seas, threatening millions with hunger, disease and migration. Low-lying island nations would face oblivion.

Yesterday's event was the largest single-day gathering of heads of state or government in history, the United Nations said, highlighting widespread global commitment to the climate fight.

Many leaders also vowed to forge an ambitious deal in honour of the 130 people killed in the November 13 attacks in Paris, claimed by the Islamic State group.

The leaders began their talks with a minute of silence to remember the dead.

BOLD PROMISES
US President Barack Obama, who flew to Paris on the eve of the conference to pay homage to the victims, made a speech pledging American commitment and urging others to do the same.

"The United States of America not only recognises our role in creating this problem but embraces its responsibility to do something about it," Obama said, as he warned "the hour" of being too late was near.

Obama had earlier met with Chinese President Xi Jinping, bringing together the leaders of the two biggest carbon emitters, to highlight a partnership on climate they began to forge last year.

In his speech, Xi reasserted China's pledge for its carbon emissions to peak by 2030.

But he also insisted rich nations shoulder comparatively more of the responsibility in curbing global warming.

"Addressing climate change should not deny the legitimate needs of developing countries to reduce poverty and improve their people's living standards," Xi said.

He demanded rich nations honour their commitment, dating back to 2009, to mobilise \$100 billion a year by to tackle climate change in poorer countries.

The United Nations has hosted annual conferences to address global warming since 1995, but its efforts have stumbled on divisions between rich and poor.

Many poor nations insist rich coun-

tries bear the most responsibility for tackling the problem because they have burnt the most fossil fuels since the Industrial Revolution on their way to prosperity.

But the United States and other developed nations argue more must be done by China, India and other emerging giants, which are voraciously burning coal to power their fast-growing economies.

CLIMATE JUSTICE
Underscoring the difficulties ahead in Paris, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi reiterated his nation's determination to burn increasing amounts of coal and for developed countries to cut back more sharply.

"Justice demands that, with what little carbon we can still safely burn, developing countries are allowed to grow," Modi wrote in a column published in the Financial Times yesterday.

"The lifestyles of a few must not crowd out opportunities for the many still on the first steps of the development ladder."

In his speech to the summit, Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe lashed out at "miserly" developed nations that wanted to "burden us with cleaning up the mess they themselves have created".

Bolivia's leftwing president, Evo Morales, blasted capitalist greed for setting the planet on a path to doom.

"If we continue on the path trod by capitalism we are condemned to disappear," he warned.

Stumbling blocks in Paris include providing finance for climate-vulnerable and poor countries, and transferring renewable technologies to developing nations.

Scrutiny of commitments to curb greenhouse gases and the legal status of the accord are other expected negotiating battlegrounds.

Still, important progress has been made in the run-up to Paris, including a roster of voluntary pledges by 183 nations to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, and other pro-climate measures.

UN climate chief Christiana Figueres said these provide the architecture for more ambitious efforts that could eventually reach the goal of limiting warming to less than two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees

Fahrenheit) from pre-Industrial Revolution levels.

NO PLANET B
To press world leaders into forging an agreement, more than half a million people participated in climate protests around the world over the weekend.

French authorities had banned protests in Paris due to security fears following the terror attacks.

But thousands of people in Paris gathered to create a two-kilometre (1.2-mile) human chain.

Their stand was disrupted, however, when anti-capitalist militants infiltrated the protests, leading to clashes with riot police which saw hundreds of arrests.

3 remanded over Hoshi killing

STAR REPORT

A Rangpur court yesterday granted a 10-day remand for the three people arrested for their alleged involvement in Japanese national Kunio Hoshi killing.

In another development, two people yesterday gave their judicial statements as witnesses before a Dhaka court in Italian aid worker Cesare Tavella murder case.

Tavella was shot dead by three assailants in the capital's Gulshan diplomatic zone on September 28, while Hoshi was killed in a similar fashion at Alutari village in Rangpur's

Kaunia upazila on October 3.

In the Hoshi murder case, police produced Rajib Hossain Sumon, Nawshad Hossain Rubel and Kajol Chandra Barman before a Rangpur court and sought a 10-day remand for each, reports our Rangpur correspondent.

Shafiqul Alam, senior judicial magistrate, granted the remand plea. The three were arrested by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) from Chapainawabganj on November 13.

ABM Zahidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Kaunia Police Station and also the investigation officer of the case, told The Daily Star that they sought the

remand as police needed to interrogate them about the murder of Hoshi.

Meanwhile, the same court yesterday rejected bail petitions of two other suspects in the case -- Humayun Kabir Hira and Rashed-un-Nabi Khan Biplob, who were arrested following the murder -- and sent them to jail.

The court also fixed December 15 for the next hearing on the case.

In the Tavella murder case, Abul Kalam, who owns a shop of used cell phones, and Tisha, a friend of one of the arrestees in the case, gave their depositions before a Dhaka court as

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