



PARLIAMENTARY POLLS

AL wants EC to fund campaign

Drafts proposals for changes in laws allowing EC to print posters, organise projection meetings for candidates

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

The ruling Awami League is drafting a set of proposals seeking some radical reforms in the electoral laws in efforts to cap campaign spending in parliamentary polls, sources have said.

According to the draft, the Election Commission will essentially run the entire election campaign on behalf of the candidates.

If passed in parliament where the AL has absolute majority, the commission will print posters and leaflets, hang the posters as well as set up stages and hire mikes for holding of rallies by the candidates, among other things, in all the 300 constituencies.

This means, candidates will have little role in running their campaigns, other than going from door to door.

The money will come from the EC's fund, meaning from the taxpayers' pockets.

There won't be any separate posters for candidates. Instead, each of the posters will bear the names, photos and party symbols of all the contesting candidates in the respective seats. The names will be printed in

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Policemen deployed outside BNP's Naya Paltan central office around 10:15am yesterday ahead of the party's press briefing inside the building. Failing to get permission for a rally in the capital yesterday, the BNP at the briefing announced it will hold demonstrations across the country today.

PHOTO: STAR

BNP denied rally permission, calls for protest today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Having failed to get permission for holding a rally in the city, the BNP yesterday announced that it will stage nationwide protests today against the denial of permission by police and attacks on party men on January 5.

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Rizvi Ahmed made the announcement at a press conference at the party's Nayapaltan central office.

Earlier on December 28, the party sought permission from the Dhaka Metropolitan Police to hold the rally at Suhrawardy Udyan on January 7 marking the "democracy killing day" on January 5, the third anniversary of the parliamentary polls in 2014. Major opposition parties, including the BNP, had boycotted the polls.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir on Friday urged the government to allow the party to hold the rally either at Suhrawardy Udyan or in front of its office, but there was no response from the DMP.

A large contingent of police with armored vehicles, water cannons and a prison van was deployed in front of the BNP

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Changing of the guard at Islami Bank

STAR REPORT

Several little-known local companies have bought the bulk of the local shares in the Islami Bank Limited over the last one and a half years, leading to the latest reshuffle at its top level, say officials of the bank.

Changes have been made to the posts of the bank's chairman, managing director, heads of various committees and chief of the Islami Bank Foundation in line with a decision at the bank's board meeting on Thursday.

Until November last year, six companies, set up a couple of years back, had 12.06 percent local stakes in the bank, while only 3.18 percent shares were held

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POST-MARZAN 'NEO JMB' Hunt on for those next in line

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and RAFIUL ISLAM

After the killing of "Neo JMB" leader Nurul Islam Marzan in a "gunfight" with police, investigators say the group has plunged into a leadership crisis but a few militants with potential to lead the outfit are yet to be hunted down.

Marzan, who allegedly organised the Gulshan café attack, was next in the rank to Tamim Ahmed Chowdhury, the top "Neo JMB" coordinator killed in a police raid in August in Narayanganj.

Police claim they have made a major headway in the café siege investigation and majority of militants behind it either got killed or arrested.

Since the terror incident, which left 20

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FIRST HALF OF FISCAL 2016-17 Economy resilient, but challenges stay

Observes CPD, advises govt to discipline banking sector, improve public spending

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The economy showed signs of resilience in the first half of fiscal 2016-17 in the face of global and domestic challenges, but the government needs to discipline the banking sector and improve the quality of public spending, according to the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

The think-tank yesterday released a report on the status of the economy, in which it said the economy enjoyed comfortable macroeconomic environment riding on robust GDP growth and rebounded investment, low inflationary pressure, declining interest rates, rising foreign currency reserve, manageable fiscal deficit and positive outcome in the stock market.

"At the moment, Bangladesh is successfully completing the fiscal year," said CPD distinguished fellow Debapriya Bhattacharya at the report

MORE ON B1

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TOP QUOTE

"Communalism, superstition, terrorism and militancy are still hindering the country's democratic march. Democratic values and non-communal spirit have to be promoted to be free from those."

PRESIDENT ABDUL HAMID AT A PROGRAMME IN THE CAPITAL.



Protesters hold placards with slogans in different languages during a procession at Shahbagh yesterday. Sarbapran Sangskritik Shakti, a cultural organisation, brought out the procession demanding cancellation of the Rampal power plant project near the Sundarbans. More on Page 3.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

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Ansar members' prompt response saves the day

Fire disaster averted at BSMMU

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Ansar members kept a fire under control until the fire-fighters came and doused the flames at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University yesterday.

Their smart response prevented the fire from spreading and what could have been a major disaster.

The fire began at about 11:05am in the BSMMU's compressor room in the basement of a hospital building.

The hospital's Ansar men, also trained in fire fighting, were the first responders. They used over 50 fire-extinguishing cylinders breaking the windows of the room and through the basement.

Later, firemen of three fire engines extinguished the blaze around 11:30am, giving a sigh of relief to the panicked patients and visitors.

"We saw smoke coming out of the basement. Immediately, we gathered the fire extinguishers from different places at the hospital and started spraying to stop the fire from spreading ...," said an Ansar member preferring anonymity.

Over 250 Ansar members work at the BSMMU in shifts, most of whom have fire-fighting training.

Khandaker Abdul Jalil, senior station officer of Fire Service Headquarters, told The Daily Star, "When we reached the spot, we found them trying to douse the fire. They made our job easy by keeping the fire under control."

In many cases in the past, he added, fires spread due to the lack of or poor first response. "It will be helpful for us if every institution and organisation had such trained people for immediately responding to fires."

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