



WITH TODAY'S ISSUE

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TRUMP SLAMS US SPY AGENCIES

He refutes claim that Russia has compromising info on him

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TIGERS START KIWI TEST

First Bangladesh-New Zealand Test starts in Wellington today

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Polls-time govt should do only routine work

AL proposes during talks with president, speaks for an all-powerful Election Commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a major political development, the Awami League yesterday tabled a proposal for limiting the jurisdiction of the election-time government to carrying out only routine job as had been the legal provisions for the nonpartisan caretaker governments in the past.

As part of its 11-point proposal, the ruling party also recommended empowering the Election Commission with supervising authority over the administration, law enforcement agencies and all other departments engaged in the election process.

An AL delegation led by party chief and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina placed the proposals to President Abdul Hamid during talks, initiated by the president for the formation of the new EC.

The tenure of the current EC expires this month.

The AL described the proposals as "very important for holding a free, fair and neutral election".

Party General Secretary Obaidul Quader later briefed journalists at the party's

Dhanmondi office about the proposals.

Political analysts were quick to laud the proposals and said it was "a breakthrough" to the prevailing political deadlock.

Former Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret) M Sakhawat Hussein said the proposals, if implemented, would create a check and balance.

"Since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina placed the proposals herself, it indicates that she wants to do it. It is a positive move and it should be done," he told The Daily Star.

Eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik said, "It is a clear sign that the Awami League is willing to move away from the notion of a political government to a more neutral government during elections."

But BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said it would be difficult to keep the EC neutral without a nonpartisan government.

The big question is whether the AL really wants to implement the proposals properly and without any ill motives, he said. "In the past, the Awami League took absolute

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President Abdul Hamid and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina at the Bangabhaban yesterday during talks on the formation of the next Election Commission.

PHOTO: PID

MG!

"Dhaka city will be renamed Zia City if the BNP comes to power."

SHAMSUZZAMAN DUDU
BNP VICE CHAIRMAN
AT A DISCUSSION AT THE JATIYA PRESS CLUB

Dhaka to engage with Delhi to lift jute duty

REAZ AHMAD

With a fifth of the country's yearly jute exports at stake following India's imposition of anti-dumping duty on import of jute products from Bangladesh and Nepal, a national jute advisory committee meeting yesterday decided to engage immediately with India for lifting the duty.

The meeting, held at the textiles and jute ministry, also decided that the duty issuance would be discussed during prime minister's upcoming visit to India. A number of stakeholders, who participated in the meeting, held with Minister of Textiles and Jute Md Emaj Uddin Pramanique in the chair, told The Daily Star that Bangladesh would use "diplomatic and political" means first before going for any legal recourse involving the World Trade Organization (WTO).

JUTE EXPORT EARNINGS

In FY 2015-16 (in millions)

TOTAL INCOME	\$ 919.58
JUTE GOODS TO INDIA	\$ 144.64
RAW JUTE TO INDIA	\$ 96.68

Since the January 5 imposition of the anti-dumping duty ranging from \$6.30 to \$351.72 per tonne, jute products worth over \$12 million under shipment to India got stuck in the ports, market sources said.

Of the total \$919 million worth of jute and jute goods Bangladesh exported in the last financial year (2015-16), over \$260 million of the same were sent to India.

Of that total, \$96.68 million was raw jute, \$86.93 million jute yarn and twine and \$57.71 million jute sacks and bags.

Industry sources said the Indian move, came as part of its protection mechanism to cushion its local jute industry from regional competition, would have no implication on raw jute import from Bangladesh. But it already started to have a negative impact on

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Take back Rohingyas

PM asks Myanmar; visiting special envoy hands over Suu Kyi's letter to Hasina

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday renewed her call for Myanmar to take back its nationals from Bangladesh.

She made the call when visiting Myanmar State Minister for Foreign Affairs U Kyaw Tin met her at the Gono Bhaban in the evening, reports UNB.

The PM said the two countries can permanently resolve the refugee problem through discussions.

During the meeting, U Kyaw Tin handed over a letter of Myanmar's State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi to the PM.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim said the premier reiterated Bangladesh's "zero tolerance" policy against terrorism.

"Bangladesh doesn't allow any armed

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3 YEARS OF AL GOVT: LAW AND ORDER

Extra-judicial actions remain extra concerns

SHARIFUL ISLAM and AKRAM HOSEN

Extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances have repeatedly worsened the country's human rights situation in the first three years of this government's tenure.

The alarming spike in enforced or involuntary disappearances even prompted the UN in September to express concern and frustration for what it said "a very frightening trend".

The incidents of "crossfire" continued. The victims were criminals, terrorists and even activists and leaders of opposition political parties. It is alleged by victims' families that law enforcement agencies have done these in the name of maintaining law and order. Officials have also confirmed it requesting anonymity.

In addition, law and order situation worsened time and again with targeted killings, militant attacks, political violence and oppression on minority communities and some gruesome killings such as the seven murders in Narayanganj, college student Sohagi Jahan Tonu murder in Comilla, attack on Khadiza Begum Nargis in Sylhet and raping of a five-year-old girl in Dinajpur.

Apart from these incidents, the overall law and order was largely stable during this government's tenure.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

"According to documents prepared by human rights defenders, 287 people

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Islami Bank to hire people of all religions, more women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Islami Bank has brought major changes in its recruitment policy and decided to hire people from all religions based on merit and efficiency.

"Recruitment will be done through experienced, neutral and professional institutions on the basis of merit and qualification irrespective of religion, caste and creed," the bank said in a statement yesterday.

Children of freedom fighters will also be recruited, it said.

The bank will also increase job opportunities for females. Currently, it has only 510 female staff out of its 13,500 employees.

"More female employees will be recruited for women empowerment," the statement said.

The decisions were made in a meeting of the board of directors held on January 5. Arastoo Khan, the newly-elected chairman, and other directors of the bank were present, the statement said.

At the meeting, changes were made to the posts of the bank's chairman, managing director, heads of various committees and the chief of the Islami Bank Foundation.

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US President Barack Obama wipes away tears as he speaks during his farewell address in Chicago, Illinois, yesterday. Obama closes the book on his presidency with a speech that tried to lift supporters shaken by Donald Trump's shock election victory.

PHOTO: AFP

'Yes we did'

Obama says in emotive farewell address, warns against fascism, admits racism still a 'divisive force in our society'

AFP, Chicago

Barack Obama addressed America and the world for the last time as US president Tuesday, in a speech that was both a tearful goodbye and a call to arms.

Capping eight years in the White House, Obama returned to his adopted hometown of Chicago to recast his "yes we can" campaign credo as "yes we did."

Surveying the staging posts of his presidency -- from the Iran nuclear deal to reforming healthcare -- the speech sought to lift supporters shaken by Donald Trump's shock election.

Obama urged them to pick up the torch, fight for democracy and forge a new, fairer, "social compact."

"For all our outward differences, we are all in this together," he said, warning that naked partisanship, racism, and inequality all threaten democracy. "We rise or fall as one."

"All of us, regardless of party, should throw ourselves into the task of rebuilding our democratic institutions."

The incoming Republican president has smashed convention, vowed to efface Obama's legacy and hurled personal insults left and right, while in a virtually unprecedented move US intelligence has accused the Kremlin of seeking to tip the election in Trump's favour.

Democrats, cast into the political wilderness with the loss of the White House, the Senate and the House of Representatives plus a majority of statehouses, are struggling to regroup.

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