

# Rahul Gandhi

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 nominations close, no one else has yet come forward publicly as a candidate. Congress has not said officially what will happen if there are no other candidates, but yesterday it appeared to be gearing up for a coronation. "Compassion, humility & determination are just a few qualities that make Rahul Gandhi an ideal #CongressPresident and leader," read a tweet from the party's official handle. Manmohan Singh, who headed the last Congress government, predicted Rahul would "carry on the great traditions of the Congress party". One party source said on condition of anonymity that Rahul may be named president by the end of the day. Rahul, whose father, grandmother and great-grandfather all served as prime minister, was elected vice-president of the Congress party in 2013 and has long been his mother's presumed successor. But he was strongly criticised for a lacklustre campaign for the 2014 general election, in which Congress recorded its worst-ever showing and lost power to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party.

Since the national election defeat, the party has lost polls in many states to the BJP, exposing him to further criticism and doubts about his ability as a leader. But few inside the party have been willing publicly to criticise the family that has been at its helm for generations. Congress has ruled India for most of the time since independence in 1947 and has almost always been led by the Nehru-Gandhi clan, beginning with the first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Rahul has led campaigning for upcoming elections in Gujarat state, with Sonia Gandhi taking a back seat in recent months.

# Recover fifty

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 (Rajuk), director general of Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) and the deputy commissioner of Dhaka have been asked to act. Besides, the HC issued a rule asking the respondents to explain why their failure to protect the canals from encroachment, pollution, and obstruction of the canals' natural water flow should not be declared illegal. Secretaries to the ministries of land, environment and forests, housing and public works and water resources, chairman of the National River Protection Commission, mayors of the two city corporations, director general of the environment department, managing director of Dhaka Wasa, chairman of Rajuk, director general of WAPDA and the DC of Dhaka have been made respondents. The bench of Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury and Justice JBM Hassan came up with the order and rule following a writ petition filed as a public interest litigation by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association seeking necessary directives to protect the canals. Of the 50 canals, 24 are in Dhaka South City Corporation area and the rest are in Dhaka North City Corporation area, said Sayeed Ahmed Kabir, a lawyer for Bela. He also added that 26 canals of the 50 would be recoverable according to reports published in different newspapers, including The Daily Star and the Prothom Alo, this year and last year. Advocate Minhazul Haque Chowdhury argued for Bela, while Deputy Attorney General Motaher Hossain represented the government yesterday.

# Take action

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 its probe found the teachers serving the same institutions for years and suggested that they should be transferred. The commission requested the cabinet division to take action against the teachers in government institutions under Government Servants (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1985, for 'misconduct'. It recommended action against those in MPO-enlisted institutions under a "2012 policy to stop teachers from involving with coaching business", Pranab said. "Taking departmental action against the teachers, who have been earning illegally, can be considered," the letter read. Due to such businesses, students are passing exams studying less and having little grasps on the textbooks. The ACC in a probe, in November, found 522 teachers of government schools in the capital bribing education directorate officers to stay in the city. To continue their coaching business, the teachers of 24 government schools evaded transfer orders for 10 to 33 years by bribing officials at the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education.



Indian Congress Party leader Rahul Gandhi, left, walks with party leader Motilal Vora as he arrives at the All India Congress Committee office in New Delhi to file nomination papers for the post of party president yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

# Govt to re-launch

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 the number of seats at the call centre to 100. The ICT division will now act as its strategic partner. The service will replace the existing short code "100" emergency service used by the police. Police have already formed a separate technical team to handle the service, along with forming a special quick response unit to rush to the spot if it is within the city as soon as it receives the call, said officials related with the process. If the call location is outside the city or far from the response team, it will be referred to its respective service points for ambulances, fire service or to other police stations, said a top official of the law enforcement agency. "We have requested the home ministry to run the service as callers seek a huge number of security related services," said Zunaid Ahmed Palak, state minister for ICT. Palak said the 999 service has already gained huge popularity and people are getting support from the centre. A good number of problems are solved through the process every day, he said. The law enforcement agency has already taken ownership of the service, said a top official of the helpline. "We have handed over the helpline's short code 999 and are transferring other technologies to police," said the official. Police have appointed 500 people and trained more than a hundred personnel to run the centre. Caller can make toll-free calls for emergency services like they did previously, said Sahely Ferdous, assistant inspector general of police headquarter.

Police will take legal action if anybody makes prank calls, according to officials. For security reasons, every incoming call will be recorded and if anyone files any false complaint to harass someone then legal action will be taken against him or her, they said. Executives of the call centre, who were employed at the previous centre in the Hi-Tech Park, said they have some case studies that may help police understand how the 999 service can aid the citizens. On March 12 this year, Jamal Uddin Jomadder, a resident of Kakrail in the city, noticed a gas leak in a nearby house. Without wasting anytime, he called the number. Sometime later, officials from Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company reached the spot and fixed the problem. "It seems that a simple phone call saved us from a big disaster," said Jomadder, an e-commerce entrepreneur. Short code emergency services are available in more than 125 countries, according to the International Telecommunication Union website. Palak said, "We have developed this service to serve citizens and reduce their hassle." He said of the total number of calls, a good number were prank calls, but they also brought some value for the project. "We need to work closely to reduce the huge number of prank calls. Police should undertake a project to deal with [such] calls," Palak added. Prime Minister's ICT Affairs Adviser Sajeeb Wazed Joy will officially inaugurate the service, according to sources.

# Egypt's presidential hopeful to reconsider election bid

AFP, Cairo  
 Former Egyptian premier and presidential hopeful Ahmed Shafiq said he was reconsidering his intention to run in the 2018 presidential elections, after relatives said his whereabouts were unknown for around 24 hours. Shafiq had not been seen since an airport official said he landed in Cairo on Saturday evening after aides claimed the Emirati authorities deported him. The former army general was forced to leave the Gulf country, where he had been living in exile since 2012, after he announced his intention to run in next year's election, lawyer Dina Adly had said in a statement on her Facebook page earlier Sunday. "I said my intention was based on the information and the general idea I had about the current situation," Shafiq told talk show host Wael El Ebrashy by phone in his first comments since Saturday evening's reported deportation. But following his return to Egypt, he needs to "look into the situation and check it thoroughly, now I will go out and see the situation on the ground", he told Ebrashy from a Cairo hotel. "Now I think there is a chance that compels me to verify accurately what exactly is needed," Shafiq said Sunday. Shafiq, appointed premier by Hosni Mubarak shortly before his overthrow in 2011, is seen as a main challenger for Sisi, who is expected to dominate the 2018 vote despite not yet officially announcing his candidacy. Shafiq had announced his intention to run in the elections in a video sent by an aide on Wednesday, where he stated the country may need "new blood" to face its current "many problems in all aspects of life". Shafiq said he was received well by officials in Cairo and was then taken to a hotel. "I was surprised truthfully when I was in the car that I was being driven to one of the most distinguished hotels in the area where I live," he said. "Here I am talking to you and not kidnapped or anything," he told Ebrashy by phone, insisting he was planning to stay at a hotel anyway as his home needed maintenance. A relative of Shafiq said on Sunday he spoke to his daughter for "a minute", the first time he has called either of his two daughters since leaving the UAE.

Asked, he said the alliance was formed for "establishing democracy and ensuring people's welfare". These components had held several meetings in the past. Representatives from Gono Forum also attended the last one. However, the party has not joined the alliance. Meanwhile, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir last night called Badruddoza and Manna over the phone and congratulated them.

# 4 parties form Juktofront

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 Manna, convener of Nagorik Oikya, told The Daily Star last night. Top leaders of the combine met at the house of JSD President ASM Abdur Rob in the capital's Uttara last night. Manna said they were planning some programmes under the banner of the new alliance. He also said the combine leaders would place wreaths at the Martyred Intellectuals' Graveyard at Mirpur on December 14.

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# ACC quizzes ex-chairman

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 ACC sources. Talking to reporters later, Bacchu said, "I have answered the ACC queries about the allegations which are being probed. I'll further assist the commission, if necessary." About his alleged involvement in the loan scams, he said the allegations were yet to be proved to be true. ACC directors AKM Zayed Hossain Khan and Syed Iqbal Hossain, who are supervising the investigation, declined to make any comment on the interrogation as the matter was still under investigation. The ACC has so far grilled 10 people, including nine former directors of the state-run bank, on the loan scam. Seeking anonymity, an ACC investigator said all the ex-directors made almost similar statements before the investigators. They blamed then managing director Fakhrul Islam for the irregularities. "The former MD placed [loan] documents in the board meetings. We only signed those documents," said the ACC official, quoting the former directors as saying. Fakrul, accused in several scam cases, is now on the run. Asked if they could avoid shouldering their responsibilities in the loan scam being part of the bank's top decision-making body, neither Bacchu nor the former bank directors could answer "properly", said the official. The ACC was collecting more evidence and it would summon the former chairman and directors again, if necessary, he added. According to a Bangladesh Bank enquiry, about Tk 4,500 crore was

siphoned out of BASIC Bank between 2010 and 2013 when Bacchu chaired its board. On July 14, 2014, the central bank sent a report on the scam to the ACC, detailing how people embezzled money from the bank through shell companies and dubious accounts. The BB found that Bacchu illegally influenced all the activities of the bank, leaving the once-sound institution in a grave state. The report, which contained the findings of an observer deployed at the BASIC Bank, outlined how the former chairman abused his power to play an active role in the loan scam. The BB first inspected the bank's Gulshan, Shantinagar and Dilkusha branches in 2012 and found evidence of serious anomalies in approving loans. In 2015, the ACC had filed the 56 cases over the embezzlement of Tk 2,036 crore from BASIC Bank. The investigation into the siphoning off rest of the money was underway. However, Bacchu was not made accused in any of the cases. On November 23 this year, the ACC summoned the former chairman and the 10 ex-directors for interrogation. Earlier on August 18, a three-member Supreme Court bench while holding hearing in two loan scam cases expressed discontent at the ACC for not naming Bacchu and the bank's ex-board members. "We don't want the Anti-Corruption Commission to maintain any 'pick and choose' policy in implicating accused in such cases, as nobody is above the law. All the allegations must be investigated with importance," said the court.

# Khaleda

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 issued an arrest warrant for the former prime minister after cancelling her ad-interim bail as she failed to appear before it on time. The ad-interim bail was granted on October 19 as she had surrendered before the same court and sought bail. The Anti-Corruption Commission on August 8, 2011 filed the Zia Charitable Trust graft case with Tejgaon police accusing four people, including Khaleda, of raising funds for the trust from unknown sources through abuse of power. The ACC filed Zia Orphanage Trust graft case on July 3, 2008 with Ramna police accusing Khaleda, her elder son Tarique Rahman and four others of misappropriating over Tk 2.1 crore that was received as grants for orphans via a foreign bank.

# Bollywood icon

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 production of "Shakuntala", a classic Hindu love story, at the age of six. His Bollywood career also began in childhood and he grew into a matinee idol, appearing in more than 150 films and winning over fans with his charm and suave good looks. He debuted as a leading man in "Dharmputra" in 1961, and his most memorable roles were in such films as "Jab Jab Phool Khile" (Whenever The Flowers Bloom, 1965), "Kabhi Kabhie" (Sometimes, 1976), and "Kalyug" (Age of Downfall, 1981). Shashi's eldest brother Raj Kapoor, who died in 1988, was also a famous Hindi cinema actor. Randhir is Raj's son.

# Mobile court

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 The argument started over why one of them did not let the other pass through the narrow entrance of the school first. They engaged in a scuffle at some point in the course of the incident. A mobile court conducted by Laxmipur sadar Executive Magistrate Nuruzzaman at deputy commissioner's office later sentenced Salahuddin and police sent him to jail. Physicians, upset over the verdict, met the Deputy Commissioner Homaira Begum later in the morning. The DC assured them of legal assistance. Administration officials did not comment on the incident. Ashfaqur Rahman, president of Bangladesh Medical Association in the district, said they would appeal against the verdict.

# Swiss village to pay people

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 It means that, for those who are eligible, moving to the village of Albinen in the Valais region will mean a payout of CHF25,000 (£15,000) per adult and CHF10,000 (£7,500) per child. The village currently has 240 inhabitants; the new scheme was proposed in response to a group of young residents' request that something be done to bolster Albinen's decreasing population. A dedicated fund of CHF100,000 (£75,000) per year will be allotted to the project. But getting the settlement grant isn't as straightforward as packing your bags and showing up in Switzerland. To be eligible, new residents must be under 45 years old, sign up to live in Albinen for a minimum of 10 years, buy or build a property there with a minimum value of CHF200,000 (£150,000), and

be a Swiss citizen or have a valid Swiss C permit. Their house there must be a primary residence, rather than a second home. The local newsletter called the move "an investment in the village's future". However, Albinen authorities are keen to stress that the scheme is not aimed at everyone after some media coverage suggested that anyone would be eligible, reports the Local. A statement released by authorities said that the news "caused a worldwide sensation" and was responsible for "misleading thousands". Of the many expressions of interest Albinen has received since the story initially broke, "one in a hundred" could realistically be considered due to the strict stipulations, the statement said. Authorities say they expect that "at most five to 10 young families" will end up taking part in the scheme.

# Britain, EU fail to reach

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 recently that yesterday was the "absolute deadline" for an improved offer from London. Irish broadcaster RTE said Britain was ready to keep the EU customs and single market rules for Northern Ireland in order to meet Dublin's insistence that Brexit should not bring back a "hard border" and threaten a peace process that ended decades of sectarian tensions. Dublin's demands on the status of the border with British-ruled Northern Ireland have been the key stumbling block recently, with fears that the talks could even collapse amid tensions between the two neighbours. But an angry reaction from the Northern Irish unionists who prop up May's minority Conservative government meant there was still no deal three hours later, and the meeting was put on hold while May made calls to try to win them over. "We will not accept any form of regulatory divergence which separates Northern Ireland economically or politically from the rest of the United Kingdom," Democratic Unionist Party leader Arlene Foster said in a statement. In a sign of the tensions within the United Kingdom caused by Brexit, the leaders of Scotland and Wales together

with the mayor of London all called for similar deals to the one being considered for Northern Ireland. May, Brexit minister David Davis and the prime minister's Brexit adviser Olly Robbins attended the "working lunch" with Juncker, the EU Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier and Juncker's chief of staff Martin Selmayr. 'Kwaussie' named Australian word of the year AFP, Sydney Inspired by a dual citizenship crisis plaguing politics in Australia, the term "Kwaussie" -- a mix of Kiwi and Aussie -- was yesterday picked as word of the year. It had been used sparingly in the past to describe a dual citizen of Australia and New Zealand, but took on a new lease of life when Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce found out he also had Kiwi citizenship in August. He was the highest profile scalp of a constitutional provision barring dual citizens from serving in federal parliament, with eight lawmakers forced to resign so far.

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