

Mashrafe collects nomination form

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza yesterday collected a nomination form from the Awami League to contest the upcoming general election from his home district of Narail.

Mashrafe, arguably the most popular cricketer in the country, bought the form for Narail-2, a constituency where Sheikh Hafizur Rahman, district president of Workers Party of Bangladesh, is the current lawmaker.

Before collecting the form, Mashrafe sought blessings from Prime Minister and AL's President Sheikh Hasina.

He went to the Gono Bhaban around 11:30am, an official of the PM's press wing told The Daily Star.

Coming out of the PM's residence, Mashrafe went to the AL president's Dhanmondi office around 1:30pm and received the form from party General Secretary Obaidul Quader.

Later, Quader told reporters that although Mashrafe was involved in politics, it would not impact his cricket career.

On Saturday, an official of Quader's road transport and bridges ministry said national team cricketers -- Mashrafe and Shakib Al Hasan -- would buy AL nomination forms today to take part in the upcoming general election from Narail and

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



Bangladesh's most successful ODI captain Mashrafe Bin Mortaza collects a nomination form for the 11th general election from the Awami League president's Dhanmondi office.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

'Robber' killed in 'gunfight', another hurt

STAR REPORT

An alleged robber was killed in a "gunfight" with police near Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Sitakunda upazila of Chattogram yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Md Shamsuddin alias Kopa Shamsu, 36, resident of Mandaritola village of the upazila.

Delwar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Sitakunda Police Station, said a group of robbers was preparing for a robbery in Nonachara area of Mandaritola village.

Acting on a tip-off, police rushed to the spot. Sensing police presence, the group of robbers opened fire, which made the police retaliate with gunshot, he said.

Two robbers were left injured in the incident.

Both the injured were sent to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH).

Of the two, Shamsuddin succumbed to his injuries while another injured Md Mamun, 38, was admitted to CMCH.

Two policemen -- Sub-Inspector Amir Hamza and Assistant Sub-Inspector Rubel -- were injured in the incident.

OC Delwar said Shamsuddin was accused in 14 criminal cases filed over

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

Jatiya Party starts sale of nomination papers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Party yesterday started selling nomination forms for the upcoming 11th parliamentary election.

The form selling began around 11:00am at Emmanuelle's Convention Centre in Gulshan, Faysal Chishti, presidium member of the party, told The Daily Star.

JP Chairman HM Ershad was the first to buy the form to contest the polls in Dhaka-17, Rangpur-3 and Satkhira-4 constituencies, said Chishti, adding that party's Senior Co-Chairperson Raushan Ershad, also the wife of Ershad, collected the form for Mymensingh-4 constituency.

Besides, General Secretary of the party Ruhul Amin Howlader, presidium members Kazi Firoz Rashid, Moshir Rahman Ranga and Faysal Chishti, and Co-Chairman GM Quader, among others, bought nomination forms at the cost of Tk 20,000 each.

The form sales will continue at the party chief's Banani office till November 14 and interview of the nomination seekers will start on the same day, he added.

Apart from the JP, Awami League and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD-Inu) started selling their nomination forms.

The JSD started selling the forms on Saturday and will continue it till today. JSD is a component of the AL-led grand alliance.

The ruling AL started selling its nomination forms for the 11th

SEE PAGE 11 COL 4

High demand for Defer polls by a month

AL, BNP symbols

10 parties want to contest polls with boat, sheaf of paddy

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

At least 10 registered political parties have informed the Election Commission that they would contest the national election with electoral symbols of the Awami League and BNP.

In separate letters, the parties conveyed the information to the EC.

Seven of these parties are members of the BNP-led 20-party alliance who want to use symbol of BNP. On the other side, two belong to ruling AL-led 14-party alliance who want to use symbol of the AL, EC officials said.

Besides, a newly floated alliance Jatiya Oikyafront member, also a faction of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, expressed its desire to use BNP symbol in the polls scheduled to be held on December 23.

As many as 39 political parties are registered with the EC.

The BNP-led 20-party alliance would contest the 11th parliamentary election with BNP's symbol of "sheaf of paddy".

The alliance wrote to the EC yesterday confirming its decision to take part in the election and its symbol.

A delegation led by Bijon Kanti Sarker, an adviser to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, handed over the letter to the commission. Bijon said they handed over a list of eight registered parties who would use BNP symbol.

Apart from BNP, registered parties including Liberal Democratic Party,

Kalyan Party, Bangladesh Jatiya Party, Khelafat Majlish, Jatiya Ganatantrik Party, Bangladesh Muslim League and Jamiate Ullamae Islam Bangladesh would use BNP's symbol.

Meanwhile, AL Organising Secretary Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury Noufel said the registered parties of the 14-party alliance would contest the election as alliance partners.

He has not mentioned how many of the alliance members have agreed to it or which symbol they would use.

Workers Party of Bangladesh General Secretary Fazole Hossain Badshah told The Daily Star that they had informed the EC about using AL's electoral symbol "boat" under the alliance.

He added that other candidates of WPB would use their symbol of "hammer" while contesting the election separately.

Another Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal faction led by Hasanul Haque Inu informed the EC about a similar decision, said Shazzad Hossain, deputy office secretary of JSD.

Jatiya Oikyafront member and the JSD faction led by ASM Rob informed the EC about its decision to use BNP's symbol.

Bangladesh Krishok Sramik Party conveyed its desire to either use its own symbol or a symbol selected by the Jatiya Oikyafront.

The Gono Forum wants to use its own symbol "rising sun" for its

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

FROM PAGE 1
Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir sent a letter to the chief election commissioner with the demand for deferring the polls.

"The current schedule is not acceptable as it was announced hurriedly, ignoring opinion of the majority of political parties," wrote Fakhrul, also spokesperson of the Oikyafront comprising the BNP and several other opposition parties.

"It is in no way possible for all political parties to file nomination papers [to the returning officers] by completing all related work within such a short time," reads the letter.

According to the current schedule, the last date for filing nomination papers is November 19.

About the demand for deferral of the polls, Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda said, "We will talk about the overall situation tomorrow [today]."

The EC wants a free, fair and participatory election, he told reporters last evening.

Oikyafront insiders told this newspaper that if the EC does not defer the polls, the opposition combine may go on a march towards its office in protest.

Talking to reporters at the AL Dhanmondi office, party's General Secretary Obaidul Quader said his party has no objection if the EC defers the polls.

In another development, the BNP announced that it will start selling nomination forms today. Aspiring candidates can collect forms for Tk 25,000 each from the party's central office today and tomorrow.

Nomination seekers will have to submit their filled-out forms to the central office by November 15, said

party's Senior Joint Secretary General Rizvi Ahmed at a press conference.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who was presiding over a meeting of the AL Parliamentary Board, welcomed the two opposition combines' announcement of joining the polls.

Since the 1996 parliamentary election, each of the successive ECs took one month on average to announce the schedule after the start of the 90-day countdown to the national election.

But the current EC announced the schedule only a week after the 90-day countdown began on October 31.

As per the timeframe, the polls must be held on or by January 28.

According to the constitution, the next polls will be held within 90 days before the tenure of the current parliament expires.

If not dissolved earlier, the present parliament will automatically stand dissolved on January 29 on expiry of its five-year term.

In its written statement to the EC yesterday, the Oikyafront said, "Even in case of deferral of the polls by a month, it is possible to hold the election within the tenure of the current parliament."

Asked if the opposition combine changed its stance on dissolution of parliament before the polls, BNP Standing Committee Member Moudud Ahmed said the sentence "it is possible to hold the polls within the tenure of the current parliament" does not mean that the opposition alliance has changed its stance.

"Even if the election is deferred by a month, it is possible to hold it by January 28 with or without the dissolu-

tion of parliament," he told this newspaper yesterday.

Several senior leaders of the Oikyafront said they still want to hold further talks with the ruling AL over their demands, including the one on formation of an election-time government.

They said the PM is yet to make things clear about the mode of the polls-time government.

If the AL agrees to sit with them again, they would place an alternative proposal on the formation of the polls-time cabinet led by Hasina.

If Hasina agrees to the proposal, the Oikyafront may propose downsizing her cabinet to 20 or 22 and inducting two of its leaders into the polls-time government as technocrat ministers, according to two top leaders of the opposition combine.

The Oikyafront planned to place the proposal at the second round of parley with the AL-led alliance on November 7. But it could not do so as the PM did not open any discussion on the mode of polls-time government, said the alliance leaders.

They said that though the ruling AL-led alliance rejected their proposal for a non-partisan election-time government, it may not remain rigid this time to avoid holding another one-sided election like the one in 2014.

Talking to this newspaper in the last two days, several top leaders of the Oikyafront said they believe the ruling and the opposition combines will reach a consensus for the sake of holding a participatory election.

Sources in political and diplomatic circles say a discussion between the ruling alliance and opposition leaders has been going on behind the scene to resolve the contentious issues over the polls.

ROHINGYA REPATRIATION Dhaka to blame if return delayed

Says Myanmar govt

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's government yesterday insisted any delays to the repatriation of Rohingya refugees would be the fault of Bangladesh, just four days ahead of the controversial planned start date.

After repeated setbacks, both countries declared that the first of more than 2,200 Rohingyas would be repatriated on November 15, even though international NGOs and the United Nations have said conditions are not yet in place for a safe return.

More than 720,000 Rohingyas fled Myanmar's western Rakhine state in a military crackdown in August last year.

Survivors brought with them testimony of widespread murder, rape, torture and arson and are fearful of going back to Rakhine state without guarantees of safety, freedom of movement and citizenship.

Myanmar and Bangladesh signed the deal last November but the UN has repeatedly said that any repatriations must be "safe, dignified and voluntary".

"We are ready," declared Myanmar's social welfare minister Win Myat Aye to reporters in Yangon yesterday.

Provisions at a transit camp will include clothes and food rations and

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1

It's part of movement

FROM PAGE 1

election since there is no level playing field, the alliances said in separate press conferences.

The parties are concerned over the wholesale arrests of their leaders and activists despite the prime minister's assurances of no more arrests, they said.

If a free and fair election is not held and an "untoward situation" arises, the government and the Election Commission would be held responsible.

"It has been a very tough decision for the Jatiya Oikyafront to join the polls. Despite the extremely adverse situation, the Jatiya Oikyafront has decided to participate in the election as part of a movement for restoration of democracy in the country," BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, also spokesperson of Jatiya Oikyafront, told a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club.

Fakhrul read out a written statement on behalf of Dr Kamal Hossain.

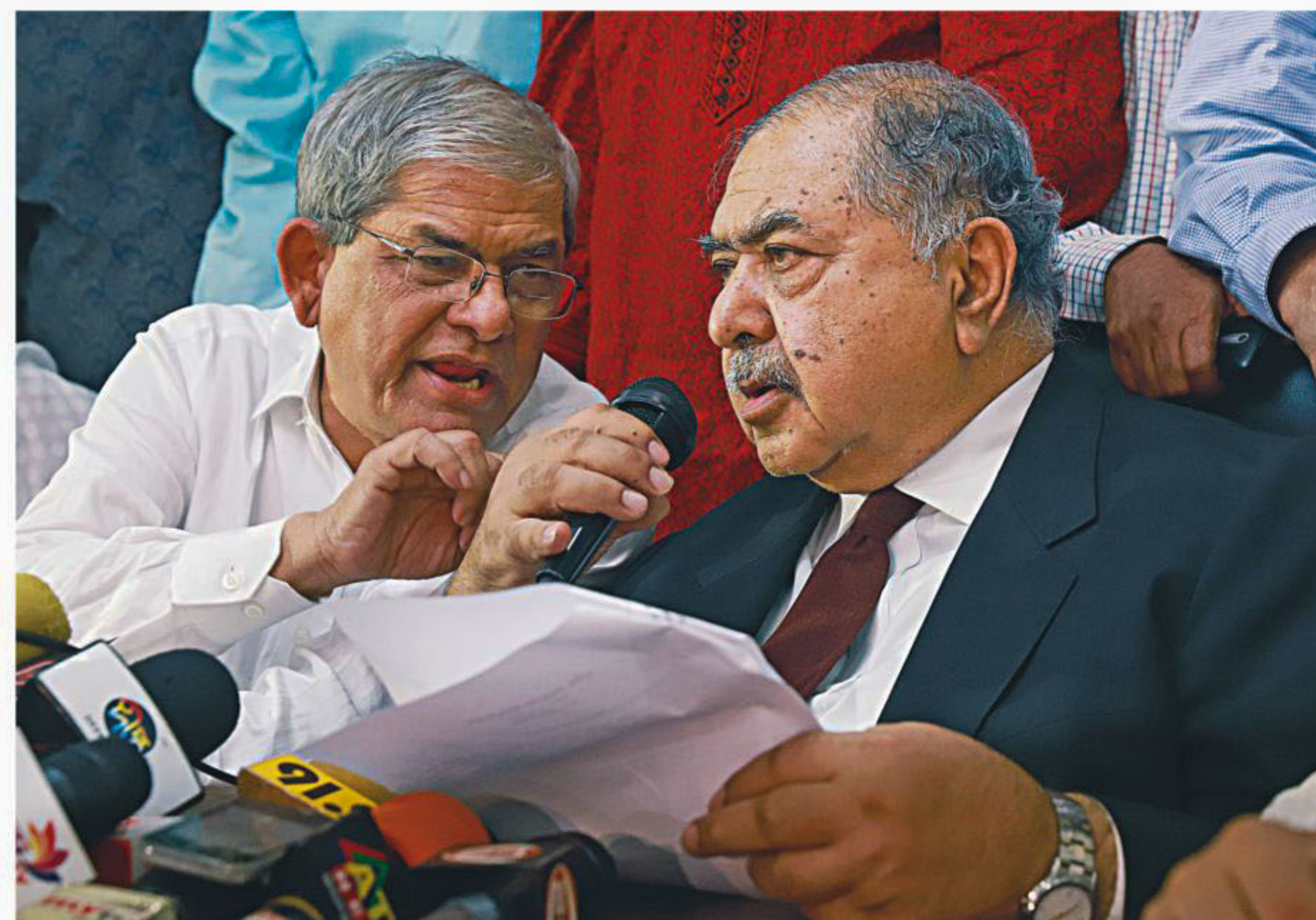
The Oikyafront, however, has not backed off from its seven-point demand, he said.

"We demand that the election be deferred by one month... scrap the current [polls] schedule, and announce a new one."

It is the responsibility of the government to hold a credible and inclusive election, he said.

Besides preparing for the election, Jatiya Oikyafront will also keep a sharp eye on the attitudes of the government and the Election Commission.

In 2008, the election schedule was deferred twice to ensure the participation of the BNP-led alliance.



BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, left, talks to Dr Kamal Hossain, a top leader of Jatiya Oikyafront, during a press conference at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday. The alliance announced that it would take part in the next general election.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Fakhrul said people's basic democratic rights were snatched away through the so-called election on January 5, 2014. The next election should be the election for restoring people's voting rights.

Referring to the dialogue between the Oikyafront and Awami League-led alliance, he said the ruling party did not make any gesture to resolve the crisis.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in

the talks assured the Oikyafront leaders that no case would be filed against opposition leaders and activists. But the promise had not been kept, he said.

Hundreds of leaders and activists

have been arrested after the PM's promise. It seems that the government is not willing at all to make compromises.

"We will continue the movement to... create a congenial atmosphere for a credible election."

About 15 minutes before the Oikyafront's announcement, BNP-led 20-party at another press conference at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office announced their decision.

LDP President Oli Ahmed at the press conference said they have decided to participate in the election for the sake of democracy.

"As we have confidence in people, the 20 parties unanimously decided to join the upcoming parliamentary election despite the extremely hostile situation," he said.

Oli also said they would reach a consensus with the Oikyafront.

He hoped that the arrests would stop and the detained leaders released.

The EC should dissolve the parliament to create a level playing field, he said.

He also urged the government to release BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia before the election.

People hope that the government officials will carry out their duties properly, he said.

He also asked why administration officials were given the charge of returning officers while there are experienced election officials for the jobs. "People have questions in their minds as to whether this will impact the election process. We are demanding a clear and satisfactory explanation from the election commission in this