

Hasina, Ershad may talk

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named, said the ruling party almost finalised MP candidates in many constituencies, though it was yet to formally discuss the matter with the JP and partners of the AL-led 14-party alliance.
An AL presidium member said the seat-sharing issue would be settled by Monday.
"We hope to make the list of the parliamentary aspirants of the Awami League-led grand alliance public by Sunday or Monday," the leader, also a member of the Awami League Parliamentary Board, told The Daily Star yesterday.
Initially, the JP had demanded 100 out of the 300 parliamentary seats for the December 30 national election. That demand, however, was rejected by the AL high-ups.
Later, the party tried to persuade the AL to give it at least 50 seats. The ruling party offered it maximum 35, causing discontent among top Jatiya Party leaders, including Ershad, several JP leaders told The Daily Star.

JP presidium member SM Foyzal Chisty said the way AL leaders were behaving with them over the issue made them upset.
"We had discussions with Awami League leaders several times in recent days. However, the meetings yielded no results," another JP presidium member said.
"We hope the seat-sharing issue would be resolved tomorrow [today] as the prime minister has agreed to sit with our chairman," the leader said, wishing not to be named.
JP insiders said party high-ups were unhappy as the AL did not step in to settle the issue as the last date for filing nomination papers would end on November 28.
Contacted, Rashed Khan Menon, president of Workers Party of Bangladesh, a component in the AL-led 14-party alliance, said, "The deadline for submitting nomination papers ends in five days. But we are yet to be informed how many seats we will get to contest the polls".

JSD General Secretary Shirin Akhtar said it would be difficult for them to complete relevant procedures if the AL delayed informing them about the issue.
Menon said they already had several "informal" meetings with AL leaders Obaidul Quader and Mohammed Nasim. However, they did not reach any final decision.
"We are waiting for a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina so that we get a conclusive decision in this regard," he said.
Menon, whose party currently has six MPs, added that they demanded 10 seats.
A top leader of the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, another partner in the 14-party alliance, said they too had "informal" discussions with AL leaders. "The leaders could not tell us how many seats will be given to us as the prime minister is dealing with the matter".

BNP nomination

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yesterday, said morgue sources.
Meanwhile, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi Ahmed last night alleged that Abu, a four-time chairman of Majidpur Union Parishad in Keshabpur upazila, was killed after "law enforcers picked him up" in the capital.
The BNP leader also alleged that plainclothes policemen picked up Md Azim, former president of Dhaka Medical College Hospital unit BNP, yesterday noon and his family members were clueless about his whereabouts.
Abu was on the list of the five BNP nomination seekers that the party gave to the Election Commission on Wednesday saying they were detained by law enforcers.
Talking to journalists in Jashore, Ashikuzzaman said his uncle came to the capital last week to collect a BNP nomination form for contesting the upcoming national polls from Jashore-6 constituency.
He was "abducted" from the capital's Bijoynagar area around 8:30pm on Sunday, Ashikuzzaman said.
As per the "abductors' demand", Abu's relatives gave them Tk 1.7 lakh but yet they killed him, he mentioned.
Abdus Samad, president of Keshabpur municipality unit BNP in Jashore, said Abu left for the capital on November 12 and was staying at room 413 of the Metropolitan Hotel in Paltan area.
As a BNP ticket aspirant, he was supposed to be interviewed by the party's top leaders on Monday, he said.
Samad, also former mayor of Keshabpur municipality, said Saiful Islam, a UP member, came to the capital with Abu and was staying at the same hotel. But Saiful could not find Abu at the hotel after returning from outside around 8:30pm on Sunday.
Ashikuzzaman said he got several missed calls from his maternal uncle's mobile phone around 9:30pm on Sunday. He later called back but no one answered.
Later, someone from an unknown number called him and demanded Tk 1.5 lakh in ransom and gave him several bKash numbers, he said adding that they could not send the abductors the money as it was midnight.
On Monday, the abductors called him from a mobile phone number and they paid Tk 1.5 lakh. But the abductors sought Tk 50,000 more the following day, and later settled for Tk 20,000, he said.
Abu's nephew said they paid Tk 20,000 to the kidnappers, who did not receive their calls afterwards. Later, the abductors' phone number was found switched off.
Anjumana Ara, younger sister of Abu, claimed that they had informed law enforcement agencies, including Rab, in the capital about her brother going missing.
Abdul Mannan, manager at the Metropolitan Hotel, told this newspaper last night that Abu along with several others were staying at the hotel.
The hotel's CCTV footage showed that Abu left the hotel around 7:30pm on Sunday with two bags, he said.
Shahabgh police took the CCTV footage and some other materials from the hotel, he added.
Abul Hasan, officer-in-charge of Shahabgh Police Station, told this newspaper early yesterday that one of Abu's nephews came to the station on Tuesday and informed about his uncle going missing.
"I sent policemen to the hotel and collected the CCTV footage, which shows he was leaving the hotel with bags. As he was seen leaving the hotel, his nephew did not file any general diary," he said.
The police official also said that an unnatural death case was filed with South Keraniganj Police Station and that they would investigate the case.

5 killed in 'gunfights'

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2:30am on Wednesday.
They are Nozir Ahmed Prakash alias Nozir "Dakat", 38, of Sabrang in the upazila; and Abdul Amin, 35, Nayapara of the same upazila. They were accused in several drug and robbery cases, police said.
Pradipt Kumar Das, OC of Teknaf Police Station, said they arrested Nozir in Sabrang area on Tuesday night.
After gleaning information from Nozir, police brought him to Hariakhali to recover drugs. His associates, who were waiting there, fired bullets on them, forcing the policemen to retaliate, the OC claimed.
After the "gun battle" was over, police found Nozir and Amin bullet-hit.
They were taken to Teknaf Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared them dead, said the OC.
Police claimed to have recovered four locally-made firearms, 21 bullets, and 10,150 yaba pills from the scene.
In another "gunfight" with Rab in Sylhet, a "yaba trader", Shahidul Islam alias Shahid Miah, 40, of Telibazar Ahamedpur village in South Surma upazila, was killed at Moglabazar around 3:30am on Wednesday.
The incident happened when Rab men raided the spot on information that some drug traders were holding a secret

meeting there, said Main Uddin Chowdhury, assistant director of Rab-9.
Shahid was declared dead after being taken to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital.
His name is on the list of yaba traders prepared by the home ministry and he was accused in eight drug cases, said Main, who is also an additional superintendent of police.
In Munshiganj, an alleged drug trader died in a "shootout" with the elite force in Tongbari upazila on the same day.
The victim, Abul Hossain Sheikh, 49, of the upazila, stood accused in 18 drug cases, said Maj Ashik Billal, deputy commander of Rab-11.
He added that a Rab patrol team raided Deulbari village to detain Abul and his cohorts who were holding a secret meeting beside Tongbari main road around 1:00am.
The "gunfight" took place when the gang opened fire on the Rab team.
Some 437 people fell victim to extrajudicial killings by law enforcers across the country till October this year, according to rights body Ain o Salish Kendra.
Our correspondents in Mymensingh, Cox's Bazar, Sylhet, and Munshiganj contributed to this report.

Feroz's polls bid uncertain

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The counsel, however, said Feroz would be able to contest the election if the Supreme Court stays the HC order.
Mainul pointed out that bank loans of a company cannot be rescheduled more than thrice, according to the BB circular issued in 2012.
But Sonali Bank rescheduled Feroz's loans for the ninth time on August 19 this year, which, according to the lawyer, is a violation of the banking rules.
And the BB approved the state-run bank's decision on September 20 this year, Mainul added.
Yesterday, the HC also issued a rule, asking the Sonali Bank and the BB authorities concerned to explain why their failure to discharge their duties in accordance with the law over rescheduling of the bank loans should not be declared illegal.
The jute mill was set up in 1985 with loans from Bangladesh Shilpa Bank (BSP).
Sonali first provided credit facility to Feroz's firm in 1989 with an initial amount of Tk 1.20 crore. The lender later increased the credit support signifi-

cantly without verifying its repayment and business capacity.
Sonali rescheduled the firm's loans for the first time in 1998.
In November 2013, the state-run lender rescheduled the loans for the eighth time and also waived interest amounting to Tk 13 crore.
Following the waiver, the company's total loan stood at Tk 20.40 crore. Sonali asked it to repay the amount within the next two years.
The rescheduling of the loans enabled Feroz to take part in the 10th parliamentary polls in 2014 but he later became a

defaulter again for non-payment of loans in due time.
Talking to this newspaper, a BB official said that in recent times, the central bank on many occasions rescheduled the non-performing loans (NPLs) of some wilful defaulters going against its own circular.
This is very harmful when it comes to implementation of the banking rules, mentioned the official seeking anonymity.
Some well-known defaulters abused the facility and took fresh loans from other lenders by providing them with clearance reports from the BB's credit information bureau, the official mentioned.
In many cases, both fresh and past loans became defaulted and consequently pushed up the volume of NPLs in the banking sector.
Feroz also took the same rescheduling facility, which left an adverse impact on the banking sector, the banker pointed out.
The BB should strictly follow its circular for the sake of restoring corporate governance in the banking sector, added the official.



Flocks of monochrome

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the bird is known as Recurvirostra avosetta. In Bangla, however, the bird has an array of names -- *Khoyaj, Pakra Ultothuti or Hatuhanga*.
SM Iqbal, local bird expert and associate professor of Zoology of Tangail's Govt MM Al College, said, "The Pied Avocet is a migratory bird in Bangladesh, but their populations are abundant throughout the year in Africa and some parts of Western Europe."
An elegant and striking bird, the Avocet gets its name from the black colour on its head, which resembles the cap once worn by advocates.
The rest of its plumage is primarily white, with a black band on each wing, black wing tips and a black striped pattern on its back. One of the most distinctive features of the avocet is its long, slender, upturned bill. The bill is black and is longer in the male than the female. Their long legs are conspicuously blue-grey in both sexes and dangle well beyond the tail when in flight. When taking rest, the Pied Avocet needs to fold their legs in.
Wildlife expert Monirul H Khan of

Jahangirnagar University said, "These birds visit Bangladesh just one or two months before winter and live here for around three months. They leave after the season passes. They are actually found less in river areas, and more in around coastal areas.
"The Pied Avocet feeds mainly on aquatic invertebrates such as insects, larvae, and worms. At least 20-40 birds form a flock and move together."
The Pied Avocet is threatened in some parts of Europe due to pollution in the wetlands caused by insecticides, lead and mercury, and human disturbances. However, since the species is not threatened globally, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has listed the bird in the "least concern" category.
In Bangladesh's char areas, some people hunt these birds due to which their numbers have begun decreasing around the Padma during winter.
"Awareness must be spread among the people and we will also have to implement the wildlife act properly to be able to protect our special winter visitor," SM Iqbal said.

Good news

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any foreign worker is permanently disabled, he will not get monthly allowance, but lump sum and be repatriated home."
According to Kulasegaran's statement, Malaysian cabinet decided to include foreign workers in Socso in line with the Equality of Treatment (Accident Compensation) Convention, 1925, under the International Labour Organisation.
The move is significant for Bangladesh as nearly a million Bangladeshi migrants work there.
Foreign workers so far have not been covered by Employees' Social Security Act 1969 of the country.
Only the Malaysian employees are currently covered by the social security plan of Socso while foreign workers are covered by a Workmen's Compensation Scheme.
"Under Workmen's Compensation Scheme, the foreign workers are compensated only if they face workplace accidents, not for sickness that does not require hospitalisation or accidents outside the workplace," Adrian said.
It has been a discriminatory policy, he said, adding that now workers -- foreign or Malaysian -- would be treated equally.
Mohammad Harun Al Rashid, a Bangladeshi migrant rights activist in Malaysia, lauded the decision.
He has seen many Bangladeshi workers get sick or injured outside their workplaces. They also had to count big amounts for healthcare, he said.
"In many cases, they didn't have enough money to see the doctor. In such cases, they just suffered and returned home," he told The Daily Star.
It will be a great relief for the foreign workers who face illnesses or accidents in Malaysia, Harun said.
In his statement, Kulasegaran said employers who hire foreign workers with valid documents must register their employees with Socso and contribute to the Employment Injury Scheme under the Employees' Social Security Act 1969 (Act 4).
"Employers can go to any of Socso's 54 offices in the country, including in Sabah and Sarawak, to register their foreign workers," he added.
On November 19, the minister urged the employers to register their illegal foreign workers with Socso.
The recent development is of importance as a landslide in Bukit Kukus of Penang on October 19 claimed eight lives, including five Bangladeshis.
"Many of those who died in the landslide did not have insurance coverage, so employers have to obtain approval and ensure all foreign workers are covered under the Social Security Organisation," Kulasegaran told reporters in the Parliament lobby.

The taste of freedom

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warmth.
"It was in Keraniganj that they [the sparrows] told me, 'It is only in jail that you find out who your real friends are.'"
Shahidul, also the founder of Drik Gallery and Pathshala South Asian Media Institute, was picked up on August 5 from his Dhanmondi home following an interview with Al Jazeera about student demonstrations for safe roads. He was arrested on the charges of "spreading propaganda and false information against the government".
After his release on the night of November 20, he thanked all those who advocated for his freedom.
"For all of you who stood by me through these difficult 107 days, a salute of solidarity and a huge hug of friendship. A just and peaceful world remains attainable. Democracy continues to be worth fighting for."
Together, we are a formidable force and we shall certainly overcome," he wrote.
He also thanked the "brilliant and tenacious" legal team and the "wonderful group of passionate, obstinate, creative, and freedom-loving people" all over Bangladesh and across the globe.
"Never appreciated the meaning of the word 'Freedom' to such an extent," he said.

Shahidul's wife Rahnuma Ahmed said the original plan was to admit Shahidul to hospital after he walked out of jail, but that was not possible as he was allowed to leave around 8:20pm and it had gotten too late. He was taken to his residence and was admitted to a private hospital in the city the next morning.
A video clip of Shahidul feeding his pet fish at his home was uploaded on the FreeShahidul Facebook page on November 21.
As he fed his old friends, he fondly remembered the new ones he had made while in Keraniganj jail. "My sparrows must be flying around looking for food. I fed them bread in the morning and rice in the afternoon."
Referring to his sparrow friends, he murmured, "No, I didn't name them because their number was increasing. Before they were small in number... now their numbers are increasing along with their strengths."
Speaking to The Daily Star over phone, Rahnuma yesterday said doctors were conducting a full medical checkup on Shahidul and that it would take a couple of days for them to detail the condition of his health.
"He [Shahidul] looked fine and mentally strong. All he wants is to get back to work," she said.

EC agreed to stop voting

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meeting with senior police officials at the capital's Nirbachan Bhaban yesterday, said meeting sources. The meeting was organised to discuss security during the upcoming national election.
Mahbub, who was supervising the polls in Barishal, said the election was the worst among the five city corporation polls held earlier this year, according to the sources.
The voting started well at 8:00am but the situation began deteriorating as the day progressed. Different allegations of polls irregularities surfaced.
"By 11:00am, it appeared to me that the voting cannot go on this way. I informed the honourable CEC [chief election commissioner] and other honourable commissioners that it needs to stop completely," one of the meeting participants quoted the commissioner as saying.
"At one stage, all commissioners agreed to stop the election. But we refrained from doing that..." the participant quoted him.
In his speech, Mahbub also said five out of the six candidates withdrew from the election. The lone candidate was elected in an almost uncontested manner.
Candidates of the BNP and four other parties boycotted the polls, raising allegations of anomalies. The ruling Awami League candidate became the mayor.
The polls to Khulna, Gazipur, Barishal, Rajshahi and Sylhet city corporations were held between May and July. BNP candidates won only in Sylhet while the AL candidates came out victorious in the rest.
Mahbub also talked about the probe committee formed to investigate the

alleged anomalies.
At one point, he cited a part of the returning officer's testimony before the committee, sources said.
"In some cases, the candidates belonging to the opposition camp were harassed unnecessarily. On the other hand, police were seen playing an inactive role when ruling party candidates violated the electoral code of conduct," another meeting participant quoted Mahbub as saying.
"Besides, there were allegations of police interference in electioneering of opposition candidates."
Mahbub also cited a few other paragraphs of the 71-page probe report, which had an attachment of 5,000 pages, on the alleged anomalies of the BCC polls.
"The law and order was not largely normal during the Barishal City Corporation polls and the acting police commissioner was not sincere in this regard."
"Despite the Election Commission's instruction, the police authorities did not appoint any policeman for the security of the commission's observers and assistant returning officers. The law and order situation was volatile in electoral areas and polling stations in many cases. The members of law enforcement agencies did not follow instructions of returning officers and assistant returning officers. In some cases, there was a huge presence of outsiders in and outside the polling centres," the source quoted him as saying.
The election commissioner also questioned the role of police in the Gazipur City Corporation held on June 26.

They fill

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with the components of the Jatiya Oikyafront and 20-party alliance about seat-sharing.
BNP leaders said the alliance members had provided a list of hopefuls and the parties were discussing finalising the candidates.
Khandakar Delwar Hossain, who was secretary general of the party, died in 2011. He was elected from Manikganj-1 several times. His son Abdul Hamid Dablu has been interviewed by the BNP's nomination committee.
Dablu is likely to be nominated, insiders said.
Tariqul Islam, who was a standing committee member, died about a month ago. He was elected several times from Jessore-3. He was a key BNP leader in the southern region of the country.
His son Anindya Islam Anik, assistant organising secretary of Khulna division BNP, is likely to be nominated in the constituency.
BNP leader ASM Hannan Shah died in 2016. The former standing committee member's son Shah Reazul Hannan is likely to get the party ticket for Gazipur-4.
ATM Shamsul Islam, who was a minister and a top leader, died early this year. His son Saiful Islam is likely to contest in Munshiganj-3.
Late industrialist Harun-ur-Rashid Khan Monno's daughter Afroza Khan

Rita is likely to get party blessings in Manikganj-3.
Salauddin Quader Chowdhury was hanged for war crimes in 1971. He was elected several times from Chattogram-7. His wife and son collected nomination forms but none of them appeared for the interview.
Meanwhile, families of late BNP leaders MK Anwar and Khandakar Mahbubuddin Ahmed have not shown any interest in contesting polls.
KM Hemayet Ullah Awrangajeb died in a road crash in 2013. His wife Tahmin Awrangajeb wished to contest in Shariatpur-3.
Late deputy speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddique contested in Naogaon-3.
Former organising secretary Ilias Ali went missing in 2012. He was elected from Sylhet-2. His wife Tahsina Rushdir Luna has been interviewed.
Apart from the aforesaid, several new faces may appear in Chattogram-4 previously won by Syed Wahidul Alam, Natore-1 by Fazlur Rahman Patal, Chandpur-2 by Nurul Huda, and Dhaka-15 by Hamidullah Khan.
Several former lawmakers may not run due to illness. Among them are AKM Mosharraf Hossain of Mymensingh-4, Kabir Hossain of Rajshahi-3, Abdul Mannan of Gazipur-3, Ziaur Rahman Khan of Dhaka-20, Ukil Abdus Sattar of Brahmanbaria-2 and Hasanuddin Sarkar of Gazipur-2.

More than 230
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surrounding areas and many other parts of the district. The military captured the entire district after ferocious battles which ended almost 10 years ago.
After years of international pressure, the government earlier this year set up an independent body, the Office of the Missing Persons (OMP), to investigate the disappearances. The OMP has provided partial funding for the excavation in Mannar.

Charges

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the same court directed the police to arrest Mainul as Milimaya, a local human rights activist, filed a defamation case against him. He was arrested the same night.
On October 16, Mainul called journalist Masuda Bhatti a person of loose moral during a live talk show at a private television channel.
Mainul is now kept at Rangpur jail.
Police brought Mainul to Rangpur by road from Dhaka, where he was arrested, on November 3.
He was produced before the court next day but his bail prayer was rejected due to the plaintiff's absence.

Silent plane

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Institute of Technology managed to unlock a process known as electroaerodynamics, previously never seen as a plausible way to power an aircraft.
They were able to fly the new plane, with a wingspan of five metres (16 feet), a distance of 55 metres at a speed of 4.8 metres-per-second.
That's hardly supersonic, but the implications of this unprecedented mode of flight could be stratospheric.
"The future of flight shouldn't be things like propellers and turbines," said Steven Barrett, who designed the prototype.
"It should be more like what you see in Star Trek with a kind of blue glow and something that silently glides through the air."
At first glance, the plane itself doesn't look light years away from other renewable aircraft, such as the Solar Impact II craft that in 2015-16 used energy from the Sun to fly around the world.
Unlike Solar Impact, Barrett's plane doesn't have any propellers or solar panels -- or any moveable parts whatsoever.
Instead of engines, it is powered by a system comprising two main sections.
At the front of the plane sit a series of parallel electrodes made up of lightweight wires that produce an enormous voltage --

+20,000v -- supercharging the air around it and splitting away negatively charged nitrogen molecules known as ions.
At the plane's rear are rows of aerofoils set to -20,000v. The ions automatically move from a positive to negative charge, dragging with them air particles that create the so-called "ionic wind" to provide the aircraft with lift.
The technology to create ionic wind has been around since the 1960s, but it was previously thought nowhere near efficient enough to prove useful to aeronautics.
The team not only showed that it was possible for ion-driven craft to fly but also -- due to the relative lack of drag created by the electrodes -- predicted that efficiency would increase in lockstep with speed, potentially opening the way for bigger, faster planes in future.
"It's clearly very early days; but the team at MIT have done something we never previously knew was possible, in using accelerated ionised gas to propel an aircraft," said Guy Grattan, aerospace engineer and visiting professor at Cranfield University, who was not involved in the study.