



**Palestinian youths throw stones towards Israeli soldiers during clashes in the West Bank city of Ramallah following an Israeli raid yesterday, a day after a drive-by shooting attack left many Israelis injured. Six people were hospitalised after the attack near the Ofra settlement north of Jerusalem.**

PHOTO: AFP

# HC decides on her petitions today

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Khaleda's lawyer AJ Mohammad Ali told the HC that the EC was not performing independently and the returning officers were being directed by the government.

Therefore, all the orders issued by the EC on the three appeals of Khaleda were the same though the nomination papers were submitted in three districts, he said.

The lawyer added that if the EC were independent, its decisions would have been different, as it happened to the nomination papers submitted by ruling Awami League-led alliance candidates - Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir, Pankaj Debnath and Nazmul Huda.

He argued that article 66(2) (d) of the constitution stipulates that if someone is convicted and sentenced to more than two years' imprisonment for moral turpitude, he or she may not be eligible to contest the election.

Since the appeals (against the convictions of Khaleda in two cases) are pending, the convictions do not reach the finality, he said.

Mohammad Ali cited the Supreme Court's earlier decision mentioned in 48 Dhaka Law Reports and said if someone was guilty or convicted, he or she could participate in polls.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam opposed the writ petitions saying that Khaleda Zia cannot be allowed to contest the election as per article 66(2)(d) of the constitution as she has been convicted and sentenced to 10 years and seven years' imprisonment in two separate corruption cases.

Article 66 (2)(d) stipulates, "A person shall be disqualified for election as, or for being, a member of parliament who has been, on conviction for a criminal offence involving moral turpitude, sentenced to imprisonment for a term of not less than two years, unless a period of five years has elapsed since his release."

The attorney general said the HC has recently observed that a convicted person sentenced to more than two years in jail cannot contest the election in five years after his or her serving the sentence, even if an appeal against the conviction is pending.

The Appellate Division of the SC has not interfered in the HC observation, he argued.

Khaleda, a former prime minister, on December 9 filed three separate writ petitions also seeking HC directives on the EC to accept the nomination papers so that she can run from Bogura-6, 7 and Feni-1.

In the petitions, she also prayed to the HC to issue a rule asking the EC why its decisions on her nomination papers should not be declared illegal, Barrister Kayser Kamal, a lawyer for Khaleda, told The Daily Star.

He said the EC rejected Khaleda's appeals on the grounds of violating the electoral code of conduct.

But the question of Khaleda's violating the code does not arise as she has been in jail since February, Kayser pointed out.

On December 8, the EC rejected her all three appeals against cancellation of her nomination papers by returning officers (ROs).

Khaleda landed in jail on February 8 after a special court in Dhaka sentenced her to five years' imprisonment in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case. The HC later extended her jail term to 10 years.

On October 29, Khaleda was convicted and sentenced to seven years' rigorous imprisonment by the same court in the Zia Charitable Trust graft case.

**HC DIRECTIVE**  
The HC yesterday cleared the way for four candidates. It directed the EC to accept their nomination papers and allow them to contest the polls.

The EC recently upheld the ROs' cancellation of their nomination papers on different grounds.

Of the four, two are from the BNP, two are independent candidates.

The BNP contenders are Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku and Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dulu and the independents are Ashrafal Alam alias Hero Alam and Rintoo Anwar.

Meanwhile, the HC yesterday turned down the writ petition of BNP's Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan seeking legality of his

candidacy in Khagrachhari constituency. The bench of Justice Sheikh Hassan Arif and Justice Razik-Al Jalil passed the order.

Deputy Attorney General Moklesur Rahman told The Daily Star that Wadud's writ petition was rejected as he was convicted and sentenced to jail in a corruption case.

He said Wadud cannot take part in the December 30 election following the order.

Mokhlesur said the HC bench accepted the writ petitions of Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku and Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dulu as their convictions and jail sentences have earlier been suspended by another HC bench.

Also yesterday, the HC bench of Justice Tariq ul Hakim and Justice Md Shohrwardi fixed today for passing order on a writ petition filed by Jatiya Party chairman's Special Assistant Ruhul Amin Hawlader challenging the EC's rejection of the appeal against cancellation of his nomination papers for Patuakhali-1, Deputy Attorney General Amatul Karim Swapna told this correspondent.

Eirini-Maria Gounari, a legal expert from European Union, visited the court during the HC hearing on Khaleda's writ petitions yesterday.

The judges of the HC bench asked her to be seated in the courtroom and allowed her to see the court proceedings.

## Stalkers stab

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said Dr Badrul Alam, medical officer of the hospital.

Nanda claimed her daughter, a student of Jafarganj High School and a candidate for upcoming SSC exams, had been facing harassment by a group of local youths led by one Ashikuzzaman for the last couple of months.

Around 4:30pm, the miscreants launched an attack on her with sharp weapons and stabbed her indiscriminately while she was returning home from private tuition classes, said Nanda, adding that he would file a case against the perpetrators.

Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Shivalaya Police Station, said he would take legal action once a complaint is filed in this connection.

## EU urges govt

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The call was made in a joint statement signed by the officials of the European Union, United Kingdom, Spain, Sweden, France, Germany, Netherlands, Denmark, Norway and Switzerland yesterday.

The statement urged all the stakeholders to ensure a genuine, credible, inclusive and transparent electoral process in Bangladesh.

The EU and the other countries welcomed the commitments of Bangladesh government and the EC in this respect, it read.

The statement also urged all the political parties of Bangladesh to meet their democratic responsibilities and refrain from violence and called upon the law enforcers to strictly adhere to the rule of law.

Media and civil society scrutiny is particularly important for ensuring transparency throughout the election process, it said.

"Participatory elections constitute an important step in the ongoing process of national development for all Bangladeshi citizens," the statement added.

EU ambassador Rensje Teerink, British High Commissioner Alison Blake, Spanish Ambassador D Alvaro de Salas Gimenez de Azcarate, Swedish Ambassador Charlotta Schlyter, French Ambassador Marie-Annick Bourdin, German Ambassador Peter Fahrenholtz, Dutch Ambassador Harry Verweij, Danish Ambassador Winnie Estrup Petersen, Norwegian Ambassador Sidsel Bleken and Swiss Ambassador Rene Holenstein were the signatories to the statement.

## BTRC blocks

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of IIG operators.

Officials at the BTRC could not give the reasons for blocking the news sites. Talking to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, a top executive of an IIG operator said they have already taken actions to block the 54 sites.

The IIGs control the supply of internet bandwidth in the country. If they block any site, it cannot be accessed from anywhere in Bangladesh.

The Election Commission has decided to monitor the social media platforms, especially Facebook, to prevent spread of propaganda ahead of the December 30 national election. The EC has also asked the BTRC to take necessary measures in this regard, said a senior official of the telecom regulator.

"We are now more actively monitoring the media and social media platforms," the official added.

On Saturday, the BTRC had asked the IIG owners to comply with its directives without wasting any time. The telecom regulator also warned them of taking tough actions if there was any reluctance to implement its directives, said the owner of an IIG operator.

Earlier in 2016, around 35 news sites were blocked following directives of the government and some law enforcement agencies "for the sake of law and order".

### THE BLOCKED SITES

- The 54 sites blocked last night are bdpolitico.com, pagenews24.com, reportbd24.com, rarenews24.com, bnnews24.com, prothombangladesh.net, dailyamardesh.xyz, dnn.news, rzniti24.com, rbn24.co.uk, sangbad247.com, deshbhabona.com, amardesh247.com, analysisbd.com, awaazbd.com, badrul.org, bnponlineing.com, en.bnponlineing.com, bnponlineing.com, bnponlineing.com, banglamail71.info, atv24bd.com, banglatus.com, bbarianews24.com, sheershanews24.com, shibir.org.bd, news21-bd.com, 1newsbd.net, newsbd71.com, justnewsbd.com, expressnewsbd.com, dailybdtimes.com, myensinghnews24.com, muldharbd.com, cnnbd24.com, dailymirror24.com, deshnetricyberforum.com, alapon.live, diganta.net, moralnews24.com, potryka.com, dawahilallah.com, alehsar2.wordpress.com, aljamaah1.wordpress.com, bangladarsulquran.wordpress.com, millateibrahimbdb.wordpress.com, myquranstudyoneyahaday.com, shuhadarkafela.wordpress.com, defenseupdatebangladesh.wordpress.com, defdbd.com and bangladeshdefence.blogspot.com.

## Maintain peace

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THE CODE

Candidates or their supporters must inform local law enforcers 24 hours before holding a rally; processions and showdowns using any vehicle or water transport or helicopters are not allowed; using mosques, temples or any place of worship for electioneering is also prohibited.

Violators can be punished with jail sentence of at least six months and a fine of Tk 50,000. Gross irregularities may even lead to cancellation of candidacy.

### CAMPAIGN STARTS

After receiving their symbols, candidates across the country started putting up posters, banners, and other campaign materials, reports our correspondents in Khulna, Chittagong, Pabna, Kurigram, Feni, Barishal, Munshiganj, Narayanganj and Natore.

However, BNP candidates in some areas showed a lack of enthusiasm in launching their campaign.

"BNP and Oikyafront candidates will set up campaign offices in a day or two and launch campaign in full-swing," said Johurul Islam, office secretary of Pabna BNP.

Imran H Sarker, spokesperson of a faction of Gonojagoran Mancha, is contesting in Kurigram-4 as an independent with the symbol of car.

"I am contesting the election for development of the area and fight poverty," Imran told reporters after receiving his symbol.

BNP candidates in some districts kept alleging that officials were biased towards the ruling party.

"We want them transferred... for the sake of ensuring free and fair polls," said Mojibor Rahman Sarowar, BNP nominee in Barishal-5.

## Tigers seek

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Number three batsman Imrul Kayes, however, will feel the pressure today as after piling on a mountain of runs in the preceding series against Zimbabwe, he has failed to get going in the Tests against West Indies and the first ODI.

West Indies, meanwhile, will be hoping that they can bat more successfully against a skillful Bangladesh attack that tied them down on a slow Mirpur wicket.

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## New threat to crops

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weather conditions. It was first found in South Africa in 2016 and later it spread to 43 other African countries.

Food and Agriculture Organization in a statement on June 27 this year said fall armyworm could leave 300 million people hungry in sub-Saharan Africa, having already infested maize and sorghum fields across 44 countries in an area of more than 22 million square kilometres.

In May, the caterpillar was found in the Indian state of Karnataka. Five months later, it was seen in Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal, according to the Indian media.

Alam said a moth of a fall armyworm can travel as far as 100 kilometres in just one night, and the female lays hundreds of eggs at once.

"We have a concern over fall armyworm, but we are not panicked because we have the experience of controlling almost similar types of pests, including common armyworm," he said.

Farmers in Bangladesh already have the knowledge of controlling common armyworms using sex pheromone traps, Alam added.

In such traps, a capsule containing female sex hormone of insects is hung in a plastic bottle with one inch of soap-water and two holes in the middle of the bottle. Set up in crop fields, the bottle attracts male insects that drown in soap water.

Besides, there are insects that can kill the fall armyworm. Also, natural controls of several caterpillar pests can be used to check fall armyworm, said Alam.

Following the discovery of fall armyworm, the government has formed a national taskforce of officials, researchers and agriculture extension officials under the leadership of the agriculture ministry. It has been already working on how to best control the insect, he added.

"We already have factsheets about fall armyworms and distributed those among the agriculture extension personnel up to the union level.

"Massive monitoring of the pest is going on across the country," Alam said.

Malvika Chaudhary, coordinator of Plantwise (Asia), a project of CABI, said fall armyworm is a big concern in South and Southeast Asia, which is suitable for the growth of the pest because of its warm and humid weather conditions.

Fall armyworm can damage 30 to 60

percent of crops as was evident in Latin America, she told The Daily Star. "We prefer biological way of controlling the fall armyworm."

Use of chemicals in controlling the pest raises the risks of food contamination and pesticide resistance.

The CABI is currently working in 10 districts to train the field level officials on identifying the pest.

Nasreen Sultana, senior program specialist (horticulture) of SAC, said they were planning to take up a regional programme on control of fall armyworm.

India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are among the South Asian countries that face higher risks of fall armyworm outbreak as they have long summer season.

"We need to control the pest before there is an outbreak," she said.

## From mechanic

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managed to flee.

During interrogation, Liton told detectives that he was not good in studies and started working in his brother's motor mechanic shop in Dholaipar when he was 12.

In 2002, he met suspected criminal Shahidul Islam, who was killed a few years ago in a "gunfight", and stepped into the world of crime.

"Liton learnt the techniques of making bombs when he was a member of Shahid's gang," said one of the interrogators.

After Shahid's death in 2012, Liton became a mercenary and worked for Jamaat-Shibir and robbers, he said.

He reportedly took part in the country-wide violence in 2013-2014.

In the remand prayer, police mentioned that Liton vandalised vehicles in the capital's Mirpur on August 2. His intention was to turn the demonstration into a subversive act.

Police said Liton named Rubel, Milton and Robin as his gang members.

"We have details of Liton's associates and explosives suppliers. We are conducting drives to arrest them," Sahadat said.

Liton lives on the top floor of a six-storey building on Lalmohan Saha Street in the capital. His four brothers and two sisters also live in the building.

His elder brother Tara Miah told The Daily Star that he used to keep bad company but had changed in recent years.

## May postpones

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ruled that Britain could unilaterally withdraw its decision to leave the bloc on March 29.

### MORE TALKS?

May's government called that ruling meaningless because Britain has no intention to halt Brexit. But critics of her plans said it opens options, including delaying the exit for more talks, or calling it off if voters change their minds.

After repeated warnings that the December 11 vote in parliament would humiliate her government as opponents and supporters of Brexit joined in opposition to her deal, May convened a conference call with senior ministers yesterday.

She was due to give a statement to parliament at 1530 GMT yesterday on "Exiting the EU." Afterwards, the leader of the House of Commons, Andrea Leadsom, who organises business in parliament on the government's behalf, was due to speak.

If May stays in power, she could seek to get a better deal from the EU at a summit on December 13-14, in the hope of putting it before parliament at a later date.

## 10 injured

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Contacted, Tarikur Rahman Jewel, general secretary of Cumilla Sadar AL, refuted the allegation. He alleged that Hazi Yeasin was trying to create anarchy over the issue.

Abu Salam Mia, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said, "No complaint was filed. We are alert to maintain law and order"

### FARIDGANJ CLASH

For electioneering, BNP candidate for Chandpur-4 MA Hannan, along with his supporters, brought out a procession in Faridganj around 4:30pm.

When the procession reached Madhyabazar area, witnesses say, some unidentified men threw brickbats targeting Faridganj Police Station. In response, law enforcers charged batons on them, triggering the clash that left at least 20 injured.

Later, Hannan held a press conference at Faridganj Press Club and alleged that police attacked their peaceful procession without any provocation.

Harunur Rashid, officer-in-charge of the police station, denied the allegation. He said the participants of the procession threw brickbats at law enforcers without any reason.

Police held two persons from the spot and a case was being filed in connection to the clash.

## 2,000 BNP men

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general secretary of Jashore BNP, confirmed the incident.

Despite repeated attempts, The Daily Star could not reach Wakkas over phone for comments.

Meanwhile in Moulvibazar, law enforcers yesterday arrested 19 BNP and Jamat men as they were accused in different cases over sabotage.

## Stay the course

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in the party was "next to the chairman". Talking to reporters at the party chief's Banani office yesterday, Mashhur Rahman Ranga, who replaced Hawlader as the secretary general, said JP leaders and activists were not happy as the party got only 29 seats from its electoral partner AL.

He, however, said his party accepted the decision in the "interest of the grand alliance".

In 100 out of the 145 seats, AL candidates will face contenders from the JP as well as from the alliances of the BNP, including the 20-party and the Jatiya Oikyafront.

The AL has fielded candidates in 258 out of the 300 constituencies and left 42 seats for its partners in the grand alliance comprised of JP and 14 other parties.

JP leaders said they got only 29 seats although they bargained for over 40 throughout last week.

Besides, two of the 29 seats will "remain open" since the grand alliance has nominated AL and Workers Party candidates in those constituencies.

So the JP has actually been given 27 seats as it will have the AL as its challenger in Kurigram-1 and Workers Party in Barishal-3, added the leaders.

JP and Workers Party have incumbent lawmakers in Kurigram-1 and Barishal-3 respectively.

Talking to reporters yesterday, Ranga claimed that the participation of JP leaders in elections in those 145 constituencies would not harm the grand alliance.

Besides, the "open seats" would create enthusiasm among the JP leaders and activists, he added.

One of the JP leaders, going to contest from one of those seats, visited Ershad at the CMH earlier in the day. Talking to The Daily Star later, the

leader said the JP boss asked him not to quit the election race in any circumstances as "he has high chances of winning".

"Take the election very seriously and don't leave the election battle. My blessings are with you," the leader quoted Ershad as telling him.

Several other JP leaders also talked about the instruction.

They said Ershad would start electioneering in full swing after his return from Singapore. They however could not say when he would come back.

### ERSHAD FLIES TO SINGAPORE

A plane carrying Ershad left the Dhaka airport around 10:45pm, Maj (ret'd) Khaled Akhtar, personal assistant to the JP chief, told The Daily Star.

JP Presidium Member and lawmaker Ziauddin Ahmed, who failed to get party nomination for Chattogram-9, was accompanying him, he said.

On December 6, appearing in public for the first time since November 20, Ershad claimed that he was not being allowed to go abroad for treatment despite his illness.

Ershad, known as an unpredictable politician, however, did not name anyone in this regard.

When the January 5, 2014 election was in the offing, the JP chief became the centre piece of a long-drawn drama for his flip-flops over joining the polls. Announcing that the JP would not participate in the election, he had asked his party candidates to withdraw their nomination papers.

However, a section of JP leaders decided to join the polls. Ershad was elected a lawmaker as he "could not" withdraw his candidature from Rangpur-3.

Later, he was appointed a special envoy to the prime minister with the status of a minister. He is still holding the post.