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## NATIONAL POLLS

# AL to run with 14-party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Like the previous two elections, the ruling Awami League will contest the national election next year under the 14-party alliance.

"The 14-party unity will remain intact and the members will contest the election under the alliance," Amir Hossain Amu, coordinator and spokesperson of the alliance, told journalists after the meeting of the combine at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

Amu, also a member of AL's advisory council, said they did not discuss seat sharing at yesterday's meeting; it will be discussed when the election schedule will be announced.

The meeting of the alliance took place after around three years.

Meeting sources said Workers Party of Bangladesh President Rashed Khan Menon, Tariqat Federation Chairman Syed Nazibul Bashar Maizbandari and some other alliance leaders asked Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina about the future of the alliance and the next parliamentary election.

They also requested the PM to settle the issue before the election, the sources said, adding that the premier in reply said the unity of the alliance will remain intact.

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**US SANCTIONS ON RAB**  
**Relations won't be affected says US Embassy official**

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Sanctions on Rapid Action Battalion and its top officials do not mean that the US does not want to build on its relationship with Bangladesh, which is based on shared values of human rights, democracy, security and development, said an embassy official.

There is a feeling that the sanctions have clouded the overall relationship, said Sean J McIntosh, US Embassy Public Affairs counsellor, at a discussion yesterday.

"We are so able to move forward on our mutual values of interests. I think we will do that," he said at the discussion jointly organised by the Central Foundation for International and Strategic Studies (Cfiss) and Dhaka Tribune.

US President Biden has made it very clear that the issue of human rights is at the centre of his foreign policy and imposing sanctions against Rab and seven of its current and former officials on December 10 last year for gross human rights violation was meant to promote accountability and to make the message loud and clear, McIntosh said.

About US not inviting Bangladesh for its Democracy Summit last year, he said that there were some arguments over it.

"From this moment, there will be an opportunity for Bangladesh to demonstrate improving democracy and

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Illuminated by bright spotlights, workers in high visibility vests and hard hats stand in stark contrast to the surrounding darkness as they install tracks on the viaduct of the metro rail project at the capital's Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue. The photo was taken around 7:30pm yesterday, and they usually work deep into the night to ensure timely completion of the project.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## MASTERMINDS OF HUSSAINI DALAN BLASTS

# IO's negligence kept them beyond law

## Two sentenced to different jail terms

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

The masterminds behind the 2015 Hussaini Dalan blasts had remained beyond the law due to the investigator's utter negligence, said a Dhaka court.

Judge Md Majibur Rahman of the Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal of Dhaka yesterday rebuked Investigation Officer Mohammad Shafi Uddin Sheikh while delivering a verdict on eight members of banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh over the blasts.

The tribunal sentenced Mohammad Arman to 10 years in prison and Kabir Hossain to seven years after the charges against them were proven.

They were also fined Tk 10,000 each, in default on which they will have to serve six months more in jail.

The tribunal acquitted six other accused -- Abu Sayeed, Rubel Islam, Chan Miah, Omar Faruk, Ahsan Ullah Mahmud and Shahjalal Miah -- as the prosecution failed to produce any evidence to prove the charges against them.

On October 24, 2015, two people were killed

and 115 others injured in multiple bomb explosions at the Shia Muslim community's headquarters -- Hussaini Dalan -- in the old part of Dhaka city.

In the verdict yesterday, Judge Majibur Rahman observed that the IO made serious mistakes during investigation and utterly neglected his responsibilities.

The IO did not explain in his report how Chan Miah, Omar Faruk, Ahsan Ullah Mahmud and Shahjalal Miah had links to the blasts, he said.

"Only to increase the number of the accused, the investigator included their names in the charge sheet, for which they endured physical, financial and mental sufferings," the judge observed.

The investigator did not press any charges against two -- Albani and Noman -- even though they masterminded the attack, he added.

According to the judgement, the IO stated in the charge sheet that Hiron, Albani and Alauddin were killed in gunfights, which is why he did not press charges against them. He did not mention how he came to know the trio were killed.

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# BNP to skip talks with EC

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

BNP, if invited, will not join the ongoing dialogue on finalising the roadmap for the next general election as top party leaders believe the incumbent Election Commission cannot hold a free and fair election without a polls-time neutral government.

The leaders said they don't have trust in the newly formed EC because it "represents a particular party rather than the people of the country".

The party had put forward a 20 point proposal to the immediate past EC during talks, but none of those were implemented as the commission served the purposes of the government, the leaders alleged.

"It is an Election Commission of Awami League. It does not represent the people of the country. So, why should we join the talks despite knowing that the commission will serve the purpose of a particular party?" BNP standing committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury said.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, he said their main demand is holding the national election under a non-partisan interim government and the EC issue will not be an issue if the demand is met.

The EC plans to hold talks with representatives from different sections of society, including politicians, election experts, political scientists, academics, and journalists.

## TALKS WITH EC ON NEXT POLLS

# 40 invited to Mar 22 meet

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission is going to hold the second round of dialogue with 40 eminent citizens on March 22.

The commission is holding the talks with representatives from different sections of society to seek advice on how the polls, including the 12th Jatiya Sangsad election, can be held in a free and fair manner.

According to EC officials, the dialogue is aimed at preparing the commission's roadmap for the next general election, due late next year.

The EC on Sunday held the first round of discussion with academics. It plans to sit with civil society members, election experts, media personalities and politicians, among others.

The commission has sent invitation letters to eight former advisers to caretaker governments -- economist Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, former bureaucrats Abdul Muyeed Chowdhury and Hafizuddin Khan, noted entrepreneur Rokia Afzal Rahman, economist AB Mirza Md Azizul Islam, rights activists Sultana Kamal and Rasheda K Choudhury and economist Hossain Zillur Rahman.

The names of Gonoshasthaya Kendra trustee Jafirullah Chowdhury, three distinguished fellows of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Prof

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The section of Mirpur Road near the capital's Manik Mia Avenue is gridlocked on both sides. With all schools, colleges and offices now open after closures over the last two years due to the pandemic, the capital seems back to its pre-Covid bustle.



Azizur Raman  
(1939-2022)

## The bell tolls for him

SHARMIN JOYA

Azizur Rahman, the director of iconic film "Chhutir Ghonta", passed away in a hospital in Canada's Toronto on Monday.

He was 82.

According to his family, Azizur had been suffering from respiratory problems and old age complications and was on oxygen support for the last one year.

He lived with his two children in Canada for almost a decade.

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