



## Shahabuddin next president

No contestant against AL's surprise pick

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and RASHIDUL HASAN

Md Shahabuddin, a retired district judge and a former commissioner of Anti-Corruption Commission, is set to become the next president unopposed, putting an end to weeks of intense speculation over the post of the head of the state.

The ruling Awami League yesterday submitted the papers nominating Shahabuddin, also a freedom fighter and a member of AL Advisory Council.

As no other political parties with representation in parliament fielded any candidate, the Election Commission will announce Shahabuddin as the president-elect after scrutinising the nomination papers today.

The development came as a surprise as his name did not surface until the filing of the nomination. Even many top leaders and the rank and file of the party seemed to have been caught off-guard after his name was announced.

"Nobody knew who will be the president even 10 minutes before [the nomination submission]. There were many speculations and even my name was also discussed," said AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader while speaking at a programme yesterday afternoon.

"Bangabandhu's daughter gave us a real surprise."

An AL delegation, led by Obaidul Quader, submitted the nomination papers to the Election Commission.

Quader, also the road transport

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



### AL allies welcome the nomination

BNP terms entire process illegal

RASHIDUL HASAN and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Leaders of the ruling Awami League and its alliance have expressed satisfaction over the nomination of Md Shahabuddin as the next president of the country while the BNP termed the election process "illegal".

Welcoming AL President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's decision, they said the premier once again proved her wisdom and farsightedness by nominating Shahabuddin, a member of AL Advisory Council.

AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif said the nomination was perfect and time-befitting. They said he is versatile.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



**CTG-COX'S BAZAR RAIL LINK**  
PROJECT TAKEN IN JULY 2010  
Cost: Tk 18,034cr

**KHULNA-MONGLA RAIL LINK**  
PROJECT TAKEN IN DEC 2010  
Cost: Tk 4,260.88cr

**AKHAURA-LAKSAM DOUBLE LINE**  
PROJECT TAKEN IN JULY 2014  
Cost: Tk 6,504.54cr

**PADMA BRIDGE RAIL LINK**  
PROJECT TAKEN IN JAN 2016  
Cost: Tk 39,246.98cr

### 4 KEY RAILWAY LINES

## Opening likely before polls

BR to run trains from Dhaka to Cox's Bazar, Mongla this year

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Bangladesh Railway is going to open four major railway lines before the next general election.

Chattogram-Cox's Bazar rail line, Khulna-Mongla rail line, Dhaka-Bhanga section of the Padma Bridge Rail Link, and Akhaura-Laksam double line are supposed to significantly improve communications.

The four projects, being implemented with foreign loans, are two to 10 years behind the initial schedule. The cost of three projects escalated by 13 percent to 873 percent.

Even though the lines will be opened before the polls, there could be some work pending, like automatic signalling system. Dedicated manpower for smooth rail operation on the three new lines



Cox's Bazar railway station

could also be a problem as proposals for recruitment are awaiting approval.

For decades, BR has been in a serious manpower crisis.

Officials of the projects want the recruitment process completed before opening of the new lines as they fear it could hamper train operations on other lines.

Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan has directed the project authorities to have the lines inaugurated before the election, BR sources said.

The next parliamentary election is likely to be held either in late December or early January next year.

"Opening the lines will significantly improve railway operations," BR Director General Quamrul Ahsan told The Daily Star yesterday.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

## BNP to march in cities Feb 18

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP will organise road marches in all divisional cities on February 18 to press home its 10 demands that include holding the next national election under a non-partisan caretaker government.

BNP Standing Committee member Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain made the announcement before the party's road march in the capital's Shyamoli yesterday.

Meanwhile, addressing a rally in the capital's Khilgaon area, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader said the AL will continue to organise programmes and remain on the streets until the national election, likely to be held early next year.

The BNP again urged its archival not to hold "counter-programmes" during BNP events.

At the AL rally in Khilgaon, Quader said, "We have chalked out our course

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Today, we are pleased to present to our readers the second segment of our 5 part special supplement series. The segment titled "The Changing Middle-Class Story" explores the various challenges and opportunities we face every day, from price hikes to healthcare. This edition presents stories and cases that are relevant to us all, and provide inspiration and guidelines on how to navigate as a citizen in the context of society's many realities. **Collect your copy today, FREE OF CHARGE!**

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### EKUSHEY PADAK 19 people, 2 organisations chosen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bidyando Foundation, a non-profit organisation working for social welfare, will be awarded the Ekushey Padak this year alongside the National Museum and 19 individuals.

The government in a notification yesterday announced the names of 19 eminent citizens and two institutions that will be getting this year's Ekushey Padak for their contributions to various fields.

For years, Bidyando Foundation has been working restlessly for the underprivileged and socially ignored groups across the country. It has been helping people in need with different materials.

Soon after the announcement, Kishore Kumar Das, founder of Bidyando Foundation, said, "It is the achievement of the people who give their money to the people in distress. The beauty is that the government has acknowledged their contribution."

"It's not the achievement of mine. It is the achievement of

SEE PAGE 7 COL 7

### Turkey, Syria quake death toll nears 30,000

UN says the world has so far failed the people of Syria

STORY ON PAGE 2

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