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## POST OF PRESIDENT It's not office of profit: EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Commissioner Md Alamgir has said the post of president is not an office of profit and there is no obstacle for Md Shahabuddin to hold the post.

According to law, after the end of an individual's service as a commissioner of the Anti-Corruption Commission, the person will not be eligible to hold an office of profit in the service of the government.

After the announcement of Shahabuddin's nomination for president, questions arose as to whether the office of president is profitable.

When reporters asked him about this, Election Commissioner Alamgir yesterday said the EC made decisions knowing the law. "When Justice Shahabuddin became president [in 1996], a case was filed about it, because judges cannot hold any office of profit [after their service]."

The High Court then said there was no bar to Shahabuddin's presidency, he said. "We have before us a specific example of the High Court [verdict]

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Young dancers sway to the melodies of spring at the Sheikh Russel Park in Chattogram city's Pahartali area yesterday. Like every year, the Boshonto Utshab, or spring festival, was celebrated at the venue amid colours, music, dance and more from early morning till late afternoon.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## 'Did Modi pressure Hasina to accept Adani deal?'

Congress asks BJP govt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Indian National Congress yesterday asked the country's government if Prime Minister Narendra Modi had "put pressure on his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina to accept terms that were extremely favourable to Adani Power and unfavourable to Bangladesh" in the agreement for power purchase from a plant in Godda, Jharkhand.

In a campaign by Congress leader Jairam Ramesh "Hum Adani Ke Hai Kaun", the opposition party has raised questions on Modi's alleged "misuse" of foreign policy.

The three questions released yesterday by the party asked if Modi used his influence on Bangladesh.

The party said the Congress-led UPA government had signed an MoU in 2010 for the state-owned National Thermal Power Corporation to set up a 1,320MW power plant in Bagerhat.

Congress alleged that after assuming power, the BJP announced that Adani Power and Reliance Power (Ambani) would construct power plants to supply electricity to Bangladesh.

"Is it true that you put pressure on your counterpart PM Sheikh Hasina to accept terms that were extremely favourable to Adani Power and unfavourable to Bangladesh, and that the

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## US OFFICIAL'S VISIT Security co-op, Rohingya issue top on agenda

Indian foreign secy also  
in Dhaka to hold talks on  
energy, connectivity, defence

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The high-level US delegation, led by State Department Counselor Derek Chollet, arrived in Dhaka yesterday afternoon for a two-day visit as Washington seeks to advance the security partnership with Bangladesh and coordinate the response to the Rohingya crisis.

Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen received Chollet yesterday afternoon at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Chollet is leading a seven-member interagency delegation that includes Clinton White, counselor to the Administrator at the USAID; Elizabeth Horst, principal deputy assistant secretary of Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs of the US Department of State; Beth Van Schaack, ambassador at large for Global Criminal Justice; and three other members.

"In Bangladesh, the delegation will meet with senior Bangladeshi officials to discuss coordination and response to the Rohingya refugee crisis, strengthening cooperation in international forums, and advancing the security partnership between the United States and Bangladesh," the State Department said in a statement.

The US delegation will call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, and hold a separate meeting with Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen along with senior foreign ministry officials today.

"The purpose of the visit [of Chollet] is to strengthen bilateral relations and government-to-government ties

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## TURKEY-SYRIA EARTHQUAKE

# 7m children affected

Says UN, voices fear that 'many thousands' more died

AGENCIES

More than seven million children have been affected by the massive earthquake and a major aftershock that devastated Turkey and Syria last week, the United Nations said yesterday, voicing fear that "many thousands" more had died.

"In Turkey, the total number of children living in the 10 provinces hit by the two earthquakes was 4.6 million children. In Syria, 2.5 million children are affected," James Elder, spokesman for the UN children's agency Unicef, told reporters in Geneva.

"Unicef fears many thousands of children have been killed," Elder said, warning that "even without verified numbers, it is tragically clear that numbers will continue to grow."

He said he feared the final toll would be "mind-boggling." Given the catastrophic, and ever-increasing, death toll, he said it was obvious that "many, many children will have lost parents in these devastating earthquakes."

"It will be a terrifying figure," he warned.

Among the rubble, hundreds of thousands of homeless people face cold and hunger.

Families with children were "sleeping in the streets, malls, schools, mosques, bus stations and under bridges, staying with their children in open areas for fear of

going home," he said.

"Tens of thousands of families are exposed to the elements at a time of year when temperatures are biting cold, and snow and freezing rain are common," he said, pointing to reports of rising numbers of children suffering from hypothermia and respiratory infections, reports AFP.

**DEATH TOLL**  
**37,500**



Meanwhile, the total death toll following the earthquake passed 37,500 yesterday, as Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) announced 31,974 confirm deaths in Turkey alone.

In Syria, more than 5,814 have died, according to a Reuters tally

of reports from Syrian state media and a UN agency.

The World Health Organization said yesterday that massive earthquake constituted the "worst natural disaster" in 100 years in its Europe region.

"We are witnessing the worst natural disaster in the WHO European region for a century and we are still learning about its magnitude," Hans Kluge, WHO regional director for Europe, told a press conference.

The WHO's European region comprises 53 countries, including Turkey. Syria is a member of the WHO's neighbouring Eastern Mediterranean region.

The first UN team arrived in rebel-held northwestern Syria yesterday. As hopes fade of finding people alive under the debris, the focus has switched to providing food and shelter to the vast numbers of survivors.

But activists and emergency teams in Syria's northwest have decried the UN's slow response to the quake in rebel-held areas, contrasting it with the plane-loads of humanitarian aid that have been delivered to government-controlled airports.

"I don't want to sit here and give excuses, but I wanted to share that we are all collectively in the same place," Sanjana Quazi, who heads

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## Amazon's Zoox robotaxis take to California roads

AFP, New York

The Amazon subsidiary Zoox has said its self-driving vehicles with no manual controls took to California public roads over the weekend, calling it a major breakthrough for the robotaxi industry.

Use of the boxy electric vehicles is to be limited to full time employees who will be able to use the service only to travel the short distance between two Zoox headquarters buildings about a mile apart in Foster City, near San Francisco, during regular office hours, the company said in a blog post on Monday.

"This is an amazing milestone for Zoox and the autonomous vehicle industry as a whole," said chief executive Aicha Evans.

The service was tested during the weekend and will be made available to Zoox employees beginning in the next few months, according to the company.

"Getting to be the world's first passenger in a robotaxi with no manual controls on open public road...was one of the highlights of my life," Zoox co-founder and chief technology officer Jesse Levinson said in the post.

"I can't wait for everyone to experience that magic."

Zoox robotaxis have no steering wheels or pedals for human drivers.

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## MISCONDUCT WITH JUDGE 'A dark spot' in the country's legal history

HC slams B'baria Bar Association  
for courtroom incident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brahmanbaria District Bar Association has made "a dark spot" in the country's legal history as they scandalised the entire lawyers' community by using force, the High Court said yesterday.

"If this situation continues, they [lawyers] will have to face consequences," warned the HC bench of Justice JBM Hassan and Justice Razik-Al-Jalil, blasting the president and two other lawyers of the association for misbehaving with the judge of Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Tribunal-1 and creating chaos in the courtroom on January 2.

"Be it the president or a member of a bar, no one is above the law. We will take action if the [Bangladesh] Bar Council, the licensing authority of the country's lawyers, doesn't do anything to this effect. We learnt from the media what happened at the Brahmanbaria court.

"You are boycotting court, you do it. But the litigants are being disturbed and threatened."

The HC too can examine whether the lawyers are eligible to practice law, said the bench.

The court was holding a hearing on a contempt of court rule against Brahmanbaria District Bar Association

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Rescuers work to extract the bodies of a father and a son from under the rubble in the aftermath of a deadly earthquake in Hatay, Turkey yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## CAMPUS SHOOTING Three dead, 5 hurt in US

AFP, Washington

Three people were killed and five others wounded Monday when a gunman opened fire on a university campus in the United States, before fleeing the scene, local police said.

The suspect opened fire inside a building at Michigan State University shortly after 8:00 pm local time, said Chris Rozman, interim deputy chief of campus police.

The gunman then moved on foot to a nearby building where more shots were fired.

"There are three confirmed fatalities," Michigan State University police said in a statement on Twitter. "This is in addition to the five victims who have been transported to the hospital."

Some of the wounded had suffered life-threatening injuries, Rozman told reporters.

Police released a photo of the suspect, a short Black man, wearing red shoes, a denim jacket and a baseball cap.

"We currently have hundreds of police officers and law enforcement officials -- state, local and federal --

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