

## PM to visit India in September

She'll join G20 Summit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will visit New Delhi to join the G20 Summit in September, Obaidul Quader, road transport and bridges minister, said yesterday.

Besides, an Awami League delegation will also visit India in July this year to attend an invitation of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), he added.

The minister made the comments while attending a programme of an India-funded project in the capital's Tejgaon.

Quader, also general secretary of the Awami League, mentioned the visits as he emphasised on further improvements of Indo Bangla ties.

Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma was present at the programme.

A 17-member delegation of the AL, led by the party's Presidium Member Faruk Khan, are now visiting China to attend an invitation of China Communist Party.

## BCL leader stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A leader of the Brahmanbaria district unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League was stabbed to death in the town yesterday.



Ikram Ahmed, 30, was the joint general secretary of the unit, said police.

The incident took place around 6:30pm at the Munsepara home of one Ridwan Ansari Rimu, a former leader of BCL and Dhaka (North) BCL unit.

Rimu's cousin Raihan stabbed Ikram on the left side of his chest with a knife, said Md Shakhwat Hossain, superintendent of police in Brahmanbaria.

According to police, Ikram died of his wound on the way to Brahmanbaria General Hospital.

## US visa curbs on those who will bar fair polls

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Restrictions under this new policy target individuals engaging in behavior that undermines the democratic election process, regardless of affiliation."

In an immediate reaction, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Md Shahriar Alam said the Bangladesh government "does not bother" about the US government's new visa policy, as the authorities are "committed" to holding a free and fair election.

"It's not a sanction. The BNP should be worried as violence before or during the election is another criterion that will trigger visa restrictions," he told UNB.

He said they will issue an official reaction today once they know the details of the new policy.

The US policy under Section 212(a)(3)(C) ("3C") of the Immigration and Nationality Act comes 18 months after Washington imposed sanctions on Rab and seven of its current and former officials for human rights violations.

The US has been critical of the last two national elections. In 2021, it did not invite Bangladesh to the democracy summit to promote the

Biden administration's foreign policy priorities, democracy and human rights.

In recent months, Peter Haas, the American ambassador to Bangladesh, has been calling for free and fair elections. On different occasions, he said his country does not support any particular political party, and what would be the make up of the polls time government is the internal affairs of Bangladesh.

Blinken said the US is committed to building a strong partnership with the Bangladesh government. "We welcome the prime minister's expressed commitment to holding free and fair elections."

Ali Riaz, distinguished professor of the department of politics and government at the Illinois State University, said the US move seems to have much greater implications than the targeted sanctions.

"Any individual in or outside the government, including the bureaucracy, judiciary, media, Election Commission, law enforcement can come under this policy and face punishment," he said over the phone early today.

## Nothing but AL's pride at stake

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ones from opposition parties made repeated allegations of facing obstructions created by the ruling party. They also slammed the EC for what they said was its failure in ensuring a congenial atmosphere that would encourage constituents to cast their votes.

AL mayor nominee Azmat Ullah Khan and independent Zaida Khatun, who is the mother of former mayor Zahangir Alam, are the most talked-about candidates.

In 2013, Azmat ran for mayor and was defeated by BNP's MA Mannan. In 2018, Zahangir Alam got AL's blessings and became mayor of the country's largest city corporation.

But he was expelled from the party in 2021 and suspended as mayor. AL gave Zahangir amnesty this year but he was expelled again after he tried to run as an independent against the party pick.

His mother Zaida is now the main

challenge facing Azmat.

Speaking at a press conference at his home yesterday, Zahangir said he would make complaints to government high-ups and "foreign friends" if the election turned out to be unfair.

"I will provide documents so that they [administration] do not cause any trouble," he said.

Mohammad Jalal Uddin, president of Gazipur Zila Nagorik Forum, said, "If Azmat fails this time, his career in the city corporation politics will come to an end. That's why he is so desperate. The matter is different for Zahangir. He has already lost his political identity. Now he is trying to regain it through his popularity."

Noted local government expert Tofail Ahmed has said since the irregularities in the local government elections will be patronised by law enforcers and administration officials, these elections will not give any indication of the national election's

outcome.

Gazipur City Corporation election is a continuation of the irregularities that started dominating Bangladesh politics in 2014, he added.

Azmat is confident that he will win because Gazipur is an AL stronghold. But Zahangir too is from AL and he has a large following among young voters.

Nearly half of the 12 lakh voters are garment factory workers. Their votes will be a deciding factor in the polls.

Returning Officer Faridul Islam yesterday said, "Senior officials of the commission and journalists will watch the voting on a big screen at the Election Commission building in Agargaon. If irregularities are seen, the Election Commission will take immediate steps."

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (Retd) Ahsan Habib Khan said, "We are keeping an eye on the election. All steps have been taken to make it free, fair and acceptable."



## BNP struggling

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said they tried for several weeks to convince the party leaders of the negative impact of their decision on the party's movement for a free and fair national election.

"Party high-ups have already announced that those who would go against its decision will be handed the highest punishment. We will wait till June 1. We believe that the party leaders will withdraw by then," he told The Daily Star.

Speaking to this correspondent wishing anonymity, a Sylhet BNP leader said the local party leaders managed to

refrain around 14 councillor hopefuls from taking part in the polls after holding several meetings with them. Among the 14 are former councillors Syed Misbah Uddin and Dinar Khan Hasu.

Syed Tawfiqul Hadi, a councillor hopeful, said, "People of my ward [ward 1] requested me to take part in the election. To respect their will, I have submitted my nomination form."

Rokhsana Begum Shahnaz said she was elected councillor thrice for a reserved seat for women, but she couldn't do anything for the people of her ward.

"This time around, I have decided to run for general councillor to do some good work for the people," she added.

Abdur Rakib Tuhin, councillor of ward 21, said he believed a candidate's personal image is more important than the party's image in the elections to local bodies. "I am not a leader but a supporter of the BNP. I believe my decision of taking part in the polls will not have any impact on the party."

Farhad Chowdhury Shamim, councillor of ward 6, said he would soon hold a press conference to explain his stance on taking part in the election.

## Amir-Ul-Islam brings it to SC's notice

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will look into the matter later on."

Amir-Ul-Islam, one of the framers of the constitution, read out the report that quoted Taposh as saying, "I wish I could resign and come back here [at the SCBA]. I know where to use the hammer. We had even taken down a chief justice."

Taposh then said, "The civil society members, who want to preach to us, we will bundle them in a sack and throw them into the dark water of the Buriganga."

He also said that when the Bangabandhu Awami Aijibhi Parishad was formed, it included non-prominent lawyers like himself while learned, renowned, and prominent lawyer leaders were excluded.

The chief justice then interrupted Amir-Ul, saying, "Let us see. Let us run the court proceedings."

Amir-Ul then asked whether the matter would be dealt with by the court.

"Let us read it. Will we not make a decision on what should be done?" the CJ replied.

A number of pro-BNP lawyers, including former SCBA presidents Zainul Abedin and AJ Mohammad Ali, former SCBA secretary and current BNP Joint Secretary General AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon, BNP Law Secretary Kaysar Kamal, former SCBA secretaries Bodruddoza Badal and Ruhul Quddus Kazal were with Amir-

Ul-Islam.

Attorney General AM Amin Uddin and SCBA President Md Momtaz Uddin Fakir were also present in the courtroom.

Amir-Ul later told reporters, "It is unfortunate. We are aggrieved. Not only the judiciary, the people of the whole country have been hurt by the comment [of Taposh]."

He said Mayor Taposh also slammed the civil society and senior lawyers and undermined the judiciary.

"From where did he get this right? His comments are very arrogant and tantamount to contempt of court."

Also at the May 21 event, Taposh said AY Masihuzzaman, convener of the election subcommittee for the SCBA polls last year, was a hypocrite.

"We considered Masihuzzaman a giant ... a man like an angel. Whatever he says happens. We had fair and lawful demands. Our [SCBA] secretary post candidate Abdur Nur Dulal had caught them stealing red-handed. Ballot papers disappeared. At least 3,100 votes had been cast. They said 2,600 votes had been cast, as 500 ballots disappeared. When we caught this and became firm and vocal, the cat came out of the bag. We had said the ballots cast will have to be recounted in public and then we will accept the election results..."

"They stopped vote counting and staged a drama for 41 days. Mashiuzzaman went away at the gesture

of the opposition secretary candidate. An election commissioner cannot leave [the polling centre] without completing the election activities. But he had done it in connivance with them ...

"A candidate for the SCBA president post got involved in the snatching of ballot papers, which is scandalous."

"He wears a cap on his head but he is a hypocrite, a ballot thief. The political party which they support stole democracy, constitution and votes. They had looted for nine years. We will not allow a repeat. These thieves will have no place on the Supreme Court premises...."

"There is no need [for them] to teach me. There is no need [for them] to teach Jononetra Sheikh Hasina. We have learned much since the Pakistan regime and [we have] brought independence for the Bangladeshi nation. Who will teach us? If anybody becomes 'civil', they will be considered our enemy."

Law Minister Anisul Huq, Fisheries and Livestock Minister SM Rezaul Karim, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism Mahbub Ali, and Attorney General AM Amin Uddin were among those who spoke at that event.

Asked, former law minister Shafique Ahmed told The Daily Star that people of that stature who make such comments about others should be careful as many look up to them.

Taposh could not be reached for his comments despite repeated attempts.

## Arrest warrant issued against BNP leader Chand

UNB, Dhaka

A Magura court yesterday issued an arrest warrant against Rajshahi BNP Convener Abu Sayeed Chand in a case filed over threatening to kill Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Magura Jubo League Convener Fazlur Rahman filed the case with the court of a magistrate under the Digital Security Act.

The court then issued the arrest warrant and directed police to record the complaint as first information report.

On Friday, Chand reportedly threatened the prime minister at a public rally. A footage of his statement went viral on social media, triggering protests by the Awami League.

## Two farmers killed, 13 hurt by lightning strike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

At least two farmers were killed and 13 others injured in a lightning strike in Pabna's Bhangura upazila on Tuesday evening.

The dead are Romij Ali, 35, and Shakil Ahmed, 34, of Chatmohar upazila.

According to locals, some farmers were working at a paddy field. They were hit by a lightning strike when they took shelter at a nearby house.

The duo succumbed to their injuries on the way to Bhangura Upazila Health Complex.

Rashidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Bhangura Police Station, said the bodies were handed over to the victims' family members.

The injured were receiving treatment at Bhangura Upazila Health Complex.

## Teacher killed in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

A teacher was killed in a road crash in Bogura Sadar upazila yesterday morning.

The dead is Hafizur Rahman, 55, lecturer of Department of Sociology at Ghoraghat Govt College in Dinajpur, said police.

The victim is waiting for a bus on Bogura-Rangpur highway in Jhongari area. A Bogura-bound bus run over him while overtaking another bus, said Afzal Hossain, assistant sub-inspector of Bogura Upashahor Police Outpost.

Hafizur died on the spot around 10:00am, he added.

The body was recovered and sent to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College and Hospital for autopsy, said Abdur Rauf, inspector (investigation) of Bogura Sadar Police Station.

Police seized the bus but its driver managed to flee the scene, he added.