

Do your part to promote inclusive and credible polls

UN urges all stakeholders in Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The United Nations has reiterated its desire to see a “peaceful, inclusive, and credible” national election in Bangladesh.

“We continue to call on all stakeholders – the government and the political parties – to do whatever they can to promote a peaceful, inclusive, and credible election,” said UN Secretary General’s Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric at a regular press briefing on Monday.

The UN issued the statement at a time when there is a political impasse and the BNP and its allies are enforcing blockades demanding that the next polls be held under a non-partisan election-time government.

The Election Commission has announced that the next national polls will be held on January 7.

STATE SECRET CASE

Imran’s jail trial declared illegal

Says his lawyer

REUTERS, Islamabad

A Pakistani court yesterday declared the jail trial of former prime minister Imran Khan on charges of leaking state secrets illegal, his lawyer said.

A special court has been conducting the trial in jail citing security concerns since Khan was indicted on the charges last month.

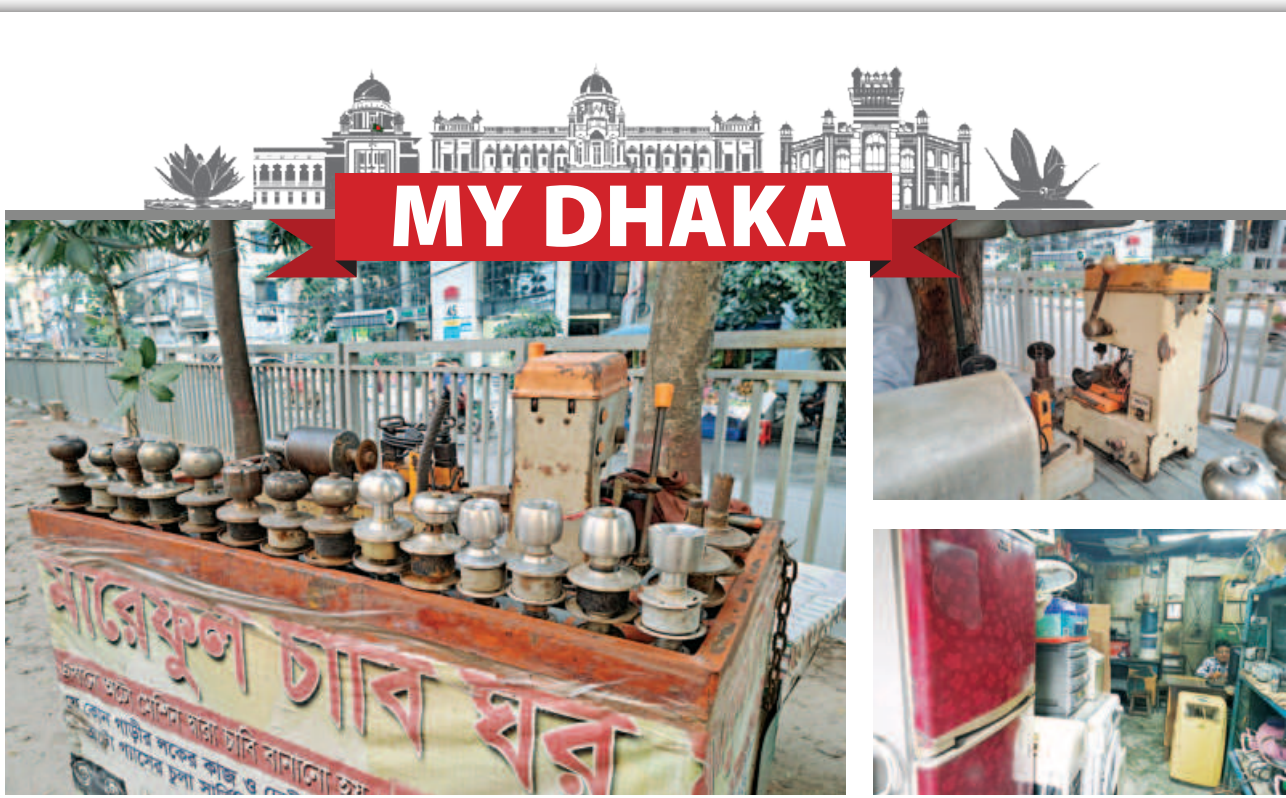
“Islamabad High Court has declared illegal the notification for jail trial,” said Naem Panjutha, the lawyer, in a post on social media platform X.

It was not clear whether the declaration meant the trial would be abandoned, or whether it would start from scratch in an open court. A court order is expected to clarify that.

Khan’s legal team had challenged the law ministry notification that ordered the jail trial.

The charges against Khan relate to a classified cable sent to Islamabad by Pakistan’s ambassador in the United States last year, which Khan is accused of making public.

Former cricket star Khan, 70, who was forced from office in 2022 after losing a no-confidence vote in parliament, has had dozens of legal cases filed against him.



Neighbourhood HANDYMEN the fixer you need

RBR

They are the most underrated professionals in the city. Although we need them ever so frequently, we never appreciate the skills of the handymen until we get trapped in unforeseen situations.

The other day a gusty, cyclonic wind slammed my bedroom door with such a bang that the lock broke from the inside. And there was nothing we could do to unlock it. In fact, the keys were inside the room. We tried the screwdriver act; even used the garden forks and rakes. Obviously, nothing worked! Finally, we called the locksmith, who sits by the footpath with his rusted tools.

Like a magician, he opened the door within minutes and fixed the lock – all for a very bare minimum fee.

When your kitchen water pipes are clogged, the area’s plumber is the only rescue. You can have a modern kitchen with plumbing snakes and hydro-jets but only his method of working with a common plunger and a regular steel wire, hooked at one end, shows results.

In my opinion, the plumber in your vicinity is the most important of all

such handymen.

The other day I tried to be up-to-date and placed a request for a plumber in an online help site. I felt I needed a specialist because the geyser was overflowing for some odd reason. The smart technician came with impeccable manners, and calling me “Ma’am” a hundred times assured he sorted the problem. I was happy at how convenient it became to avail maintenance workers. I tipped him heavily in my euphoria; only to be sorry a week later.

His shabby job burnt the wires and I was close to a serious fire hazard. I had to call my area plumber who repaired it with utmost sincerity. I felt bad for trying to replace him with a learned repair technician; he is a regular handy worker at my place. He might not have diploma degrees but he gets the job done like a pro – from repairing a broken or disconnected lift chain in the flush tank to kitchen disasters.

In any running household, you are always in need of such persons who are skilled at a wide range of repairs. The refrigerator is another piece of equipment around the house that

needs constant fixing. If you request a technician from the showroom service centre, you are in for days of doom.

First, they record your request and give you a token for registering your complaint. When your serial comes, an engineer is sent to assess the damage and repair needed, then the technician arrives to fix it. These bureaucratic formalities can take days or even get ignored at times. In the meantime, you are stuck with rotten fish and vegetables. Thus, I always rely on the handy persons from the shack down the lane who repair old fridges and AC. Let’s not forget the “parar” electrician either; whenever a circuit is down, he is the one I call, or in need of a power drill machine or fix a faulty electric line.

These are big issues that need at least semi-professionals but I am even indebted to people who do insignificant chores for you. These men have etched their places behind the city shadows and are barely recognised. They earn meagre amounts but truly they are as good as any professionals demanding hefty fees.

I always rely on these clever handymen of Dhaka and have most of their cell numbers on my speed dial. They are my saviours on any given day. I just call them, even from work, and my emergency at home is tackled!



Rebels to trouble AL big shots

FROM PAGE 1

committee member Manjurul Haque Lablu, among others, want to run in this constituency with the party ticket.

AL Praesidium Member Shahjahan Khan, MP from Madaripur-2, might have to face competition from party joint general secretary and former MP of Madaripur-3 AFM Bahauddin Nasim and former Chhatra League general secretary Golam Rabbani.

Veteran AL leaders Amir Hossain Amu, MP from Jhalakathi-2, and Tofail Ahmed, MP of Bhola-1, might have to face party rebels this time.

AL Joint General Secretary Mahbulul Hanif, MP from Kushtia-3, might have to deal with veteran jurist Barrister Amir-ul Islam while AL Joint General Secretary Dipu Moni, MP from Chandpur-3, could be facing AL Organising Secretary Sujit Roy Nandi, Chandpur AL President Nasir Uddin Ahmed, and Chandpur General Secretary Abu Nayeem Patowary.

AL Publicity Affair Secretary Abdus Sobhan Golap, MP from Madaripur-3, might have to deal with AFM Bahauddin Nasim, AL central committee member Anowar Hossen, Kalkini upazila Chairman Mir Golam Faruk, and Syed Abul Hasan, younger brother of late communications minister Syed Abul Hossen.

AL Cultural Affair Secretary Ashim Kumar Ukil, MP of Netrokona-3, might have to take on as many as 11 rebels, including Atpara upazila AL President and upazila Chairman Khairul Islam, former MP Ifthaker Uddin.

Former Rajshahi University Chhatra League president Ibrahim Hossain wants to run from Pabna-1 of which Deputy Speaker Shamsul Haque Tuku is the MP.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul

Momen, MP from Sylhet-1, might have to deal with Sylhet city AL General Secretary Jakir Hossain.

Law Minister Anisul Huq, MP from Brahmanbaria-4, could be facing as many as six party colleagues, including former MP from the constituency Shah Alam.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, MP from Cumilla-10, might have to race against Editor of Bangladesh Pratidin Naem Nizam.

AL central committee member Azizus Samad Don, Sunamganj AL Vice President Khairul Kabir Rumel and AL UK General Secretary Syed Sajidur Rahman want the party ticket for Sunamganj-3 of which Planning Minister MA Mannan is the MP.

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi, MP from Rangpur-4, might have to deal with five party rebels, including Kaunia Upazila Chairman Anwarul Islam.

State Minister for Water Resources Zaheed Farooque, MP from Barishal-5, might have to take on party praesidium member Jahangir Kabir Nanak.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam, MP from Rajshahi-6, might have to fend off three AL colleagues.

Jaya Sen Gupta, widow of AL veteran Suranjit Sengupta, MP from Sunamganj-2, could be facing Shalla upazila chairman and upazila AL General Secretary Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mahmud.

Deputy Minister for Water Resources AKM Enamul Haque Shamim, MP from Shariatpur-2, could have to deal with Jubo League praesidium member Khaled Showkot Ali and war crimes tribunal prosecutor and former joint general secretary of district AL Sultan Mahmud Simon.

Former captain of the Tigers

and AL Youth and Sports Affairs Secretary Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, MP from Narail-2, could be dealing with 21 party rebels, including district AL General Secretary Nizam Uddin Khan, Vice President SM Asifur Rahman Bappi, and Joint General Secretary Rashedul Bashir Dollar.

However, some top leaders would not have to face any competition from within the party as only one form was bought in those constituencies.

AL President Sheikh Hasina, MP of Gopalganj-3, party General Secretary Obaidul Quader, MP of Noakhali-5, praesidium member Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, MP of Gopalganj-2, Joint General Secretary Hasan Mahmud, MP of Chattogram-7, central committee member Abul Hasanat Abdullah, MP of Barishal-1, Railway Minister Nurul Islam Sujan, MP of Panchagarh-2, and State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, MP of Dinajpur-2 will face no party rebels.

Hasina also bought a nomination form for Rangpur-6. She, in the last two elections, ran from Rangpur-6. Later, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury won from this constituency. Shirin and local AL leader Sirajul Islam also collected party forms for Rangpur-6.

The AL Nomination Board will sit at the Dhaka district office in Tejgaon tomorrow to decide who gets to run with the AL electoral symbol in the 300 constituencies.

The meeting may continue for a few days. On the first day, it will pick party nominees for constituencies in Rajshahi, Rangpur, and Khulna divisions.

After finalising the party nominees, the AL will sit with its partners in the 14-party alliance to negotiate seat sharing.

December 17 is the deadline for withdrawing candidature.

Of masks, helmets and baffled cops

FROM PAGE 1

In Naogaon, five incidents were recorded in Atrai, Raninagar, and Sadar upazilas.

On the night of November 18, masked men in three motorcycles stopped an auto-rickshaw at Yad Ali intersection in Naogaon town and stabbed Kamal Ahmed, a local leader of an opposition party. He died soon afterwards.

His son Rasel Imam Nabab filed a murder case accusing unidentified attackers.

Faisal Bin Ahsan, officer-in-charge of Naogaon Sadar Police Station, said police had collected CCTV footage from the area and got “important information”, adding that at least six individuals were involved.

On September 24, Jubo Dal convening committee member Anwar Hossain of Raninagar upazila of the district was abducted, tortured, and then dropped off at a secluded place.

Three others were tortured in a similar manner in Naogaon. But none of them filed complaints.

The victims include Zahidur Rahman, a Jubo Dal leader and union parishad chairman, and Abu Raihan, a

local BNP leader. They are residents of Raninagar.

Raihan was tortured and stabbed in his right arm on the night of October 23.

“I don’t want to file any case as I think it will only put me in danger,” he said.

In Natore, 10 such incidents have been reported. Seven of the victims filed cases. Nine of the incidents occurred in Naldanga upazila.

On October 16, Nasir Uddin, who locals say is a Jamaat patron, was assaulted by helmet-wearing men in Naldanga. He said police refused to record his complaint.

On the night of October 21, Abu Raihan, leader of a BNP-affiliated body, was abducted from Chhatni area. He was stabbed and left in Rajshahi’s Putia.

He said he identified one of the attackers, but the police still had not caught anyone.

On October 26, Fazlur Rahman, general secretary of Natore Sadar Jamaat, was stabbed by helmet-wearing men.

His brother Ashraful Islam said the police took no action even though his brother identified one of his attackers.

Abul Kalam, OC of Naldanga Police Station, refuted the allegations. “We recorded the cases of those who came to us. We’re also trying our best to find the suspects.”

In Pabna, local Jamaat leader Dulal Khan was attacked early Monday.

IN CHATTOGRAM

Masked men hurled crude bombs and threw chunks of bricks at the homes and a business of three BNP leaders over the last 20 days.

Family members said they were living in fear.

Local Jubo Dal President Mohammed Alamgir’s home was attacked on Saturday night; BNP leader and ward councillor Shamsul Alam Azad’s home was attacked on November 13; and central BNP joint Secretary General Aslam Chowdhury’s CNG filling station was vandalised recently.

Contacted, Nayhanul Bari, additional superintendent of police in Sitakunda, said he was aware of the incidents, “But no one lodged any complaint.”

(Bulbul Ahmed from Natore and FM Mizanur Rahman from Chattogram contributed to this report.)

2011 ASSAULT ON COPS

Charges framed against 149 Jamaat-Shibir men

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday framed charges against 149 leaders and activists of Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Chhatra Shibir, in a case filed over assaulting policemen and preventing them from performing their duties in front of Kakrail Super Market in September 2011.

Jamaat Amir Ameer Shafiqur Rahman, its assistant secretary general Rafiqul Islam and Jamaat leader and convicted war criminal ATM Azharul Islam are among the accused in the case.

The magistrate then fixed December 6 for starting the case trial.

According to the case statement, a group of leaders and activists from Jamaat and Shibir brought out a procession in front of Kakrail Super Market at around 4:30pm on September 19, 2011. They vandalised vehicles, assaulted policemen, and prevented law enforcers from discharging their duties.

Following the incident, police filed a case against Shafiqur Rahman, Azharul Islam, Rafiqul Islam, and 127 others with Ramna Police Station in this regard.

After an investigation, police on August 22, 2019, submitted a charge sheet against Shafiqur Rahman and 148 others for their alleged involvement in committing such offences.

BNP chief’s advisers arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab arrested BNP chairperson advisers Habibur Rahman Habib and Ataur Rahman Dhali in the capital yesterday.

Habibur was arrested in the Mirpur DOHS for not appearing in court despite directions of the High Court in connection with a contempt of court rule against him, said Shihab Karim, media officer of Rab-2.

And Ataur was arrested in a case filed with Mohammadpur Police Station over vandalism and arson attacks on vehicles, he added.

HC stays suspension of Dinajpur mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday stayed for a month the government’s suspension of Dinajpur municipality Mayor Syed Jahangir Alam, who served time in jail following an order from the Appellate Division for committing contempt of court.

The HC also issued a rule asking the government to explain why the suspension of Jahangir from the post of Dinajpur municipality mayor should not be declared illegal.

The bench of Justice Mustafa Zaman Islam and Justice Md Atabullah issued the order and rule following a writ petition filed by Jahangir challenging the suspension order.

Jahangir’s lawyer Md Ruhul Quddus Kazal told The Daily Star that there was no legal bar for his client to discharge his duty as Dinajpur municipality mayor following the HC order.

The court set December 3 for hearing the rule, Assistant Attorney General Md Selim Azad told The Daily Star.

The HC has stayed the suspension order on the ground that the government cannot suspend an elected representative from his post on any technical ground.

FROM PAGE 1

The JP leaders also violated the code of conduct while collecting nomination forms from the JP chairman’s Banani office.

They too went in large groups, carrying festoons and placards with the party’s electoral symbol.

Besides, Mirpur-10, Moddho Badda, Gulistan, Sadarghat and New Market areas are littered with billboards and posters of AL leaders.

During a press briefing yesterday, Ashok Kumar Debnath, additional secretary at the Election Commission, refused to comment on the matter when he was asked about the allegations.

However, two election commissioners said taking out processions and blocking roads “are not violations of the electoral code of conduct” because the individuals

involved are not candidates yet. They added that these events are just “political programmes”.

About this comment, Brig Gen (retd) Sakhawat Hussain, a former election commissioner, said, “This may be their interpretation [of the code of conduct].”

“The activities of the aspirants of these parties are clear violations of the electoral code which is applicable to all parties and candidates.

“If the EC does not intervene now, I can’t be sure of what the future holds.”

The electoral code of conduct bars parties and candidates from pasting posters or leaflets at utility poles, walls and other structures.

Motorcades are also banned once the election schedule is announced.

The code adds that no one is allowed to wear shirts, fatuas and

jackets that have the electoral symbol on it.

While announcing the election schedule on November 15, Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal said candidates will be able to start campaigning from December 18 to 8:00am on January 5. The national election will be held on January 7.

The EC decided to have an electoral enquiry committee in every constituency to ensure proper enforcement of the code and prevent irregularities.

During the 2018 national elections, the Election Commission formed 122 such committees, with 244 judicial officers for each. However, the polls were marred with irregularities.

This year, it is to have 300 committees with one judicial officer in each, said EC sources.