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## AL needs to take permission for Dec 10 rally

Says EC; EU expert team meets election officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League will require permission from the returning officer to hold their December 10 rally to mark Human Rights Day, said Election Commission Additional Secretary Ashok Kumar Debnath yesterday.

"If you hold any political rally anywhere, you have to get permission, and it has to be taken from the returning officer," Debnath said.

Dhaka city (south) unit AL announced on Saturday that it would organise a rally at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque, demanding a speedy trial of those behind arson and petrol bomb attacks.

Meanwhile, AL has already sent a letter to the returning officer yesterday seeking permission for the rally, said a press release sent by its office secretary Riaz Uddin Riaz.

Ashok said, "If there is a violation of the code of conduct, the commission will look into the matter."

He made the remarks while talking to reporters following a meeting with four election experts from the EU at the EC office.

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No decision on AL independents yet: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League has not taken any decision to expel party members who are running in the upcoming 12th national election as independent candidates, said party General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday.

"Did we say from the party's end that we would expel those who would contest the election as independent candidates? No such decision has been taken yet," said Quader while briefing reporters at the AL president's political office in Dhanmondi.

Quader, also road transport and bridges minister, said many BNP leaders are taking part in the election because they don't want to support BNP's negative politics.

Leaders of the 14-party alliance who are capable

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## SEAT-SHARING WITH AL

# Uncertainty looms over Jatiya Party

**RASHIDUL HASAN**  
In the last few elections, AL didn't nominate anyone from certain constituencies to facilitate easy victories for top JP leaders. However, the ruling party aspirants are on the field this time in almost every constituency.



top-ranked leaders becomes increasingly challenging. "We are yet to figure out the strategy of Awami League. Our top leaders are anxious about securing victory, as all of them will have to go head-to-head with their nominees," said a JP leader seeking anonymity.

While JP leaders publicly say that they welcome a competitive election, behind the scenes, they are trying to reach an understanding with AL to secure victories for their key figures.

Speculation even circulates within JP circles that the party might withdraw from the election race if ensuring victory for its

their security deposits.

The JP higher-ups are now thinking of ways to avoid similar humiliations in national polls.

While direct negotiations between JP and AL have not started, a source within JP claims ongoing talks are being facilitated by a government agency. The expectation is that AL will leave enough seats for JP to make them the opposition on paper, as seen in the previous parliaments.

JP is aiming for approximately 40 to 50 seats, added the source.

Contacted, JP co-chairman Ruhul Amin Hawlader, who's running in Patuakhali-1 against AL candidate Afzal Hossain, said, "Positive developments can occur at any time for the greater good. We are hopeful of reaching an understanding with the ruling party in this election, similar to the cooperation seen in the past three elections."

Another co-chairman, seeking anonymity, said except for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, no one

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**GRAMEEN KALYAN**  
SC orders status quo on ex-workers profit share demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday issued status quo on the demand by 106 former workers of Grameen Kalyan seeking a part of net profit of the company and the HC verdict on it till February 5 next year.

An order of status quo has been issued on the "subject matter" and it will continue till February 5, said Justice M Enayetur Rahim, chamber judge of the Appellate Division of the SC.

The former employees are demanding share of the profit which the company earned from 2006 to 2013.

The HC on November 30 scrapped the Labour Appellate Tribunal's verdict that justified the demand of 106 former workers, saying that the tribunal has no jurisdiction to give an interpretation on whether

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## Did foreign ministry violate polls code?

It recently publicised Momen's electioneering

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Questions are being raised whether the foreign ministry violated the electoral code of conduct as it publicised Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen's electioneering activities recently.

On November 29, the ministry's Public Relations Office issued a press release on Momen's nomination paper submission as the Awami League candidate for Sylhet-1.

On December 1, it issued another statement on Momen's attending an event of the Manipuri community in Sylhet.

On December 2, the ministry's PRO issued yet another statement about Momen attending a meeting with Sylhet city mayor and councillors, where they shared views on election campaigns and drawing voters to polls.

The statements were issued as per the ministry's decision. One can interpret it in different ways," said Mohammad Rafiqul Alam, the ministry's alternative spokesperson.

Asked if the ministry has the EC's permission in this regard, he said it was public information and he was unsure if seeking the permission was required.

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## Resolve crisis thru dialogue

52 cultural activists urge political parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a joint statement, 52 cultural activists have expressed deep concern over the incidents of arson attacks on trains, buses, trucks, and other transports, and sporadic crude bomb explosions in the name of political programmes.

The statement, signed by Akham Ullah, general secretary of Sammilita Sangskritik Jote, was sent to the media yesterday.

**Politics is for the welfare of the country and its people. Dialogue is the only democratic and peaceful way to resolve any political crisis.**

"Politics is for the welfare of the country and its people. Dialogue is the only democratic and peaceful way to resolve any political crisis."

They called upon all to remain united and raise awareness to face all anti-national conspiracies ahead of the upcoming national polls.

Signatories include Bangla Academy president and author Selina Hossain, member of Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendra Ashrafull Alam, dance artiste Laila Hasan, Prof Anupam Sen, Prof Nisar Hossain, filmmaker Nasiruddin Yousuf, actors Syed Hasan Imam, Sara Zaker, and Shimul Yusuf, and Jote president Ghulam Quddus.



Two women bargaining over a T-shirt at one of the many hawker stalls right outside New Market, a spot that has become a shopping paradise for middle and low-income families for its prices. Meanwhile, shopkeepers inside sit idly outside their stores as they wait for customers. The photos were taken yesterday noon.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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