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## New Election Commission takes shape

Ex-secy AMM Nasir Uddin made CEC; 4 other commissioners also appointed

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and BAHARAM KHAN

Amid much speculation about when the next election might take place, former health and energy secretary AMM Nasir Uddin has been appointed as the new chief election commissioner.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin yesterday also appointed retired additional secretary Anwarul Islam Sarkar, retired district and sessions judge Abdur Rahmani Masud, retired joint secretary Begum Tahmida Ahmad, and Brig Gen (ret'd) Abul Fazal Md Sanaullah as election commissioners.

Nasir is also a member of the local government reform commission formed on November 18. The appointments are made as political parties have for weeks been asking when the election will be held.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus on November 17 said the government would issue a roadmap to the election as soon as decisions on electoral reforms were made.

The Election Commission (EC) had been vacant since September 5 when members of the previous commission, led by Kazi Habibul

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Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus exchanges greetings with BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at a reception organised at the Dhaka Cantonment to mark the Armed Forces Day yesterday. Story on page 2.

PHOTO: PTI

## Armed forces a symbol of confidence

Says Prof Yunus

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus said the armed forces are recognised as a symbol of confidence for the country alongside the people of the country.

"The armed forces stood by the people during the recent anti-discrimination movement and after the movement. By doing so, they have once again been recognised as a symbol of confidence by the people of the country."

The chief adviser made the comment while addressing a reception at Senakunja in the capital on the occasion of Armed Forces Day yesterday afternoon.

Recalling the contribution of the armed forces in the Liberation War, Yunus said on this day in 1971, the valiant members of the armed forces and the common people of Bangladesh jointly launched a coordinated attack on the Pakistani occupation forces.

As a result, victory was achieved, and Bangladesh emerged as an independent and sovereign state, he added.

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### PROTEST OVER BAN

## Electric rickshaw drivers stop traffic, trains in city

City dwellers, commuters, travellers suffer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of battery-run rickshaw drivers yesterday blocked roads and rail lines in Dhaka, including at Mohakhali, Agargaon and Mirpur-10, bringing traffic to a halt for more than five hours.

Rail communication between Dhaka and most of the country was suspended for around six hours from 9:45am after a group of drivers blocked the Mohakhali level crossing.

All trains to and from Dhaka were delayed due to the disruption, said Khairul Kabir, divisional transport officer (Dhaka Division) of Bangladesh Railway.

The gridlock that was caused on city streets left many commuters and travellers helpless.

Earlier on Tuesday, the High Court directed the government to take necessary steps to stop the plying of battery-run rickshaws in Dhaka within three days. The following day, drivers took to the streets in protest at the decision.

Yesterday, over a hundred drivers took to the airport road in Mohakhali around 9:30am. The demonstration caused severe traffic jams on both sides of the road, said Rasel Sarwar, officer-in-

charge of Banani Police Station.

Other groups of drivers blocked roads in Agargaon, Mirpur-10 and Rampura areas.

Members of the army dispersed the rickshaw drivers in Mirpur-10 and Agargaon around 2:00pm. Two protesters were detained at Mirpur-10.

The police and the army personnel removed the protesting drivers from Mohakhali area around 2:30pm.

Battery-run rickshaw drivers blocked several streets in Dhaka and police drove them away, said Talibur Rahman, DC media of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Traffic in Mohakhali began to move again around 2:30pm, witnesses said.

Inspector (investigation) Md Abu Hanif at Kafrul Police Station said there were several incidents of vandalism during the demonstrations but no case was filed as of 10:00pm.

Sajib, one of the protesters, said, "I am the sole breadwinner for my family. The decision is a blow to my livelihood. What am I supposed to do? How will I provide for my family?"

Explaining why they are demonstrating, Faruk

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**Rail communication between Dhaka and most of the country was suspended for around six hours from 9:45am after a group of drivers blocked the Mohakhali level crossing.**

## Increase women seats in JS thru direct vote

Journos tell election reform commission, urge local govt polls before nat'l election

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Editors and senior journalists from different media outlets yesterday recommended increasing women's seats in parliament, electing representatives to those seats through direct vote, and punishing those responsible for irregularities in the last three national elections.

They made these recommendations during a views-exchange meeting with the Election Reform Commission, held at the Election Commission building.

After the meeting, the commission's Chairperson Badiul Alam Majumder expressed satisfaction with the recommendations, saying they align with the commission's priorities.

"These [the commission's priorities] include direct elections for women's seats, conducting local government polls before national elections, reinstating a caretaker government, and ensuring voting rights for expatriates."

Senior journalist Masud Kamal suggested holding local government elections under a caretaker government and using National ID cards as voter cards.

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### DARK LEGACY OF GODFATHERS

## Bodi: Yaba overlord's reign of terror

MOKAMMEL SHUVO

Former Awami League MP Abdur Rahman Bodi pulled all the strings in the murky world of Cox's Bazar. His name surfaced in at least five intelligence reports, each painting a darker picture of his involvement in yaba trade and smuggling.

Allegedly, Bodi wove a web of influence, enlisting his five brothers, personal aide Mong Mong Sen, and former Teknaf upazila chairman Zafar Ahmed to spread the drugs across the nation and engage in other illicit activities. The true extent of their operations remains shrouded in secrecy.

Zafar was one of the linchpins in Bodi's shadowy empire. His role was pivotal, a cog in the dark machinery that kept Bodi's operations running smoothly.

As Zafar sought re-election in May, tension flared up in the area. Bodi, in a brazen display of power, fired warning shots at supporters of Zafar's opponent, Nurul Alam, president of Teknaf Jubo League. Bodi used an MP sticker on his car during the campaign, flouting the

rules with impunity.

The Anti-Corruption Commission recently seized Zafar's assets worth around Tk 4 crore, reportedly amassed through yaba trade. The Rapid Action Battalion arrested Zafar in Dhaka on October 31.

He has more than 12 cases against him, including on drugs and illegal arms charges.

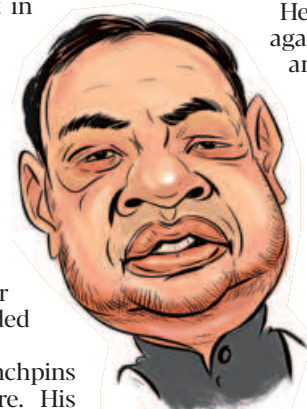
After his arrest, RAB-15 Senior Assistant Director (Legal and Media) Md Kamruzzaman said, "Former MP Bodi turned Teknaf into a safe haven for drug traders, smugglers, kidnappers, extortionists, and killers over the past 17 years. And Zafar is said to be the right hand of Bodi in his world of crimes."

Like Zafar, many listed yaba smugglers in Teknaf and Ukhiya are reportedly controlled and blessed by Bodi, known as the kingpin of drug lords of Cox's Bazar.

One of the major indemnities he arranged for the yaba lords was the surrender of 123 smugglers of Teknaf in two phases.

He allegedly rehabilitated his family

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### STUDENT MOVEMENT

## 18-member executive committee formed

Full martyrs' list by Dec 30, says Sarjis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Discrimination Student Movement has formed an 18-member executive committee.

On their verified Facebook page last night, the movement released a list of the members' names. It also announced that the members of the central committee, formed on October 22, will serve as ex-officio members of this committee.

In the central committee, Hasnat Abdullah serves as the convenor, Arif Sohel is the member secretary, Abdul Hannan Masud acts as the chief organiser, and Umama Fatima is the spokesperson.

The executive committee member are: Mahin Sarker,

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Battery-run rickshaw drivers, who were blocking the Mohakhali rail tracks yesterday, throwing brickbats and stones to chase away the police officials after army personnel dispersed them.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

### NINE BRIDGES IN SIX DISTRICTS

## No one paying any tolls since August 5

RHD seeks home ministry's intervention as locals bar authorities from collecting tolls

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Toll collection from vehicles using nine bridges under the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) remains suspended since the political changeover on August 5.

The RHD has sought intervention from the home ministry as, in most cases, locals are preventing toll collection, officials said.

In light of this situation, the Road Transport and Highways Division has decided to send a second letter to the home ministry, asking for support to resume toll collection, they said.

Of the nine bridges, four are in Mymensingh and one each is in Chandpur, Chattogram, Dhaka, Kushtia, and Munshiganj.

This fiscal year, RHD is collecting tolls at 68 bridges across the country.

The department earned Tk 896.52 crore from these bridges in 2022-23 fiscal year, according to its annual report.

While most tolls are collected through lessees, in some cases, the RHD's field offices collect them directly.

After the fall of the Awami League government on August 5, students and local people halted toll collection on 16 RHD bridges nationwide.

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