

Joy to help party in polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sajib Wajed Joy, son of Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina, expressed his desire to help the party rather than seek nomination for the upcoming polls. But he will consider joining politics only after the election.

Joy, who arrived in Dhaka yesterday, articulated his doubts over holding a free, fair and neutral election with a "fake voter list".

"I wonder whether the next general elections will be held in a free and fair manner," he told newsmen at the Zia International Airport on his arrival from the USA.

Expressing concerns over the recent police atrocities on the female opposition activists and journalists in Chittagong, the grandson of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman said, "It is a bad sign for the country. Only an autocratic government conducts such activities. No democratic government can behave like this."

Joy congratulated the new office bearers of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), student wing of the AL. "Young leadership was necessary," he said.

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TRANSIT

Experts favour facility against package deal

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

Country's leading trade experts, economists and businessmen express their views in support of providing transit facilities to India.

The business leaders also suggest carving out a comprehensive package deal with India, involving all bilateral problems including water and trade deficit issues while resolving the transit issue.

According to the experts, a country cannot advance while staying isolated from the international community.

The government at a ministry-level bilateral meeting last Friday opposed an Indian proposal for transit facility raised by Indian State Minister for Commerce Jairam Ramesh.

Some business leaders, however, foresee negative impacts on local industries from the transit and

favoured it in a controlled manner to earn foreign currency as royalty.

Kazi Khaliqzaman, president of Bangladesh Economic Association (BEA), extends his support for giving India transit as "connectivity is a must for the modern world era".

"We did not sign the Asian Highway [agreement and] we have missed some opportunity of connectivity," he says. "But the transit deal should be under a package, involving water, economy and trade issues to force more business and economic relation with the big neighbour," he adds.

Cooperation is a matter of give-and-take and one has to give something if one demands something from the other, Khaliqzaman says.

To Mir Nasir Hossain, president of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and

Industry (FBCCI), transit is a very sensitive issue. The government should consider it carefully as such transit may create negative impact on the local industries.

"If transit is given to India, the existing business interest of Bangladesh with the northeastern states of India will be hampered. We currently export some toiletries, beverage and food items to these states. If the government approves a transit, it will make the Indian products cheaper than the Bangladeshi products [in those states]," Mir Nasir argues.

But a package deal involving all other bilateral and economical issues, including the transit, between the two countries can be considered as a tool for realising other interests of the country, he says. The government should first

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PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister and BNP chief Khaleda Zia chairs a meeting of top leaders of the ruling four-party alliance at her office yesterday.

Hartal observed at Chatmohor for smooth power supply

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Rural power subscribers enforced a half-day hartal at Chatmohor upazila in Pabna yesterday in demand for uninterrupted power supply.

"Palli Bidyut Grahok Kalyan Sangram Parishad" called the hartal to fulfill its 13-point demand, which also includes checking corruption in local unit of Rural Electrification Board.

The Sangram Parishad activists brought out a protest procession and besieged Chatmohor Palli Bidyut Office at about 12:00noon. Later, they barricaded the Pabna-Chatmohor road and held a rally presided over by Advocate Shakhwat Hossain Shakho, convenor of the forum.

The speakers at the rally issued a one-month ultimatum to the authorities for fulfilling their demands, otherwise they would go for continuous hartals.



PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN

Lifeboats from foreign ships lying unused at Barabkunda ship-breaking yard in Chittagong. Ship breakers fail to sell these due to lack of demand in the domestic market.

India slaps tax on Bangladesh fish violating Bangkok pact

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Indian government has imposed tax on Bangladeshi fish including hilsa violating the Bangkok pact of 1996.

Under the pact, all kinds of fish imports including hilsa from Bangladesh are exempted from import taxation in India, Bangladesh fishing export sources said.

The new taxation was applied on April 20, according to the notification of Indian customs department.

The imposition of import tax on fish by Indian government has resulted in price hike of imported fish in India and created complications in fish export from Bangladesh.

The Indian importers have already created pressure on

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MOTIJHEEL COP KILLINGS

4 to die, 4 get 41-year jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced four people including a Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader to death and four others to 41 years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) for killing two policemen in June 2004.

The convicts with death penalty are JCD leader Idul alias Shahidul Islam alias Abdullah Baqui and his accomplices Kala Sohel alias Killer Sohel, Millat alias Miladunnabi and Kiron alias Shariar Kiron.

Of them, Idul is in custody and the other three are absconding.

The four who got 41 years' RI are JCD leader Tanjil alias Tanjilur Rahman alias Nawab and his accomplices Priyo alias Priyokanta, Azad alias Nurul Alam and Leon alias KM Shah Newaz Khan.

Tanjil is in custody while the three others are absconding. Judge Shahed Noor Uddin of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 handed

down the sentence in presence of Idul and Tanjil for the killing of Assistant Sub Inspector (ASI) Aminul Islam and Havildar Liakot Ali on June 20, 2004.

Earlier on August 4 last year, Idul was given death penalty for killing decorator Rabiullah Khokon at Gopibagh in the city on April 23, 1999. On March 17 last year, he was awarded 20 years' RI for possessing illegal firearms and ammunition.

Punishment of the fugitives will be effective from the day of their arrest or surrender.

The convicts awarded death can appeal to the High Court (HC) within 30 days of receipt of the judgement copy, the judge said.

The others can also appeal to the HC but no time limit was given for it.

Idul, allegedly backed by a leader of Dhaka University (DU) unit of the ruling BNP's student wing JCD, led a notorious gang that shot dead the two policemen and injured

others in a gunfight to evade arrest during a robbery at a currency exchange shop at Motijheel on June 20, 2004.

The gang, known as Idul group, looted Tk 1.17 lakh from the office of Albert Gomes, managing director of JA Money Changers Ltd at BCIC Sadan at Motijheel. The robbers also took away four mobile phones from the shop and Tk 1,900 from a staff at an adjacent office.

Tipped off about the operation by Idul group, a six-member Cobra team of the police led by Inspector Salahuddin rushed to the spot. After an encounter with the robbers, police arrested Idul with bullet wounds in his chest and recovered Tk 20,000, a sophisticated CZ pistol, two magazines and 30 bullets from his possession.

The shootout left Assistant Aminul Islam and Liakot Ali dead,

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TONGI POURA POLLS

AL-backed chairman candidate leading

UNB, Tongi

Awami League-backed candidate Ajmatullah Khan is leading in Tongi Municipality chairman election held yesterday.

Official sources said Ajmatullah bagged 43,239 votes in 61 centres out of total 65 while his nearest rival Nurul Islam Sarkar (independent) got 35,457 votes. Ruling BNP candidate Hafizuddin Sarkar is trailing far behind them.

Nurul Islam Sarkar, sentenced to death for murder of Ahsanullah Master MP of Awami League, contested the election from prison. He was expelled from BNP after police investigation found his involvement in the murder of Ahsanullah Master.

Koirala made new Nepal PM

Maoists declare truce

AFP, REUTERS, Kathmandu

President of the main opposition party Nepali Congress Girija Prasad Koirala was appointed Nepal's prime minister by King Gyanendra yesterday evening.

Koirala, 84, was unanimously recommended by the top leaders of the seven-party alliance after three weeks of intense "people's movement" that forced the nation's monarch to restore parliament after a four-year gap.

"His Majesty King has appointed Girija Prasad Koirala as the new premier upon recommendation from the seven agitating political parties," the statement issued by the Royal Palace press secretariat said last night.

Reuters adds: Nepal's Maoist rebels declared a three-month ceasefire from yesterday and political parties forming a new government promised to work with them, dramatically raising hopes of an end to the decade-old conflict.

Just earlier this week, the impoverished kingdom was paralysed by sweeping anti-monarchy protests by hundreds of thousands of people and there was no end in sight from years of Maoist insurgency in which more than 13,000 have been killed.

"The fires, stones and trouble were part of the movement," said Mira Joshi, a housewife who was among tens of thousands of people attending a noisy but peaceful

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Bangladesh take on Australia in final ODI today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will get one last chance today to finish their toughest home challenge on a high when they play the third and final one-dayer against Australia at the Fatullah Cricket Stadium.

The Tigers have already lost the three-match series following a

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Iran poised to defy UN nuclear deadline

AFP, Tehran

Iran's hardline leadership was yesterday poised to defy a UN Security Council deadline to freeze sensitive nuclear work, confident that it can escape any tough sanctions or US military action.

In Washington, the White House said the country was facing further international isolation after supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei threatened global retaliation to any American military action.

The UN's nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), was scheduled to release a report Friday on Iranian compliance with its probe into allegations the country is seeking nuclear weapons.

"This is a regime that continues to defy the international community. It continues to ignore and refuses to

abide by its obligations," White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan said, as Iran looked set to ignore Friday's UN deadline to stop uranium enrichment.

Iran insists it has a right to enrich to make reactor fuel, but the process can be extended to make nuclear weapons. Western powers, led by the United States, are convinced Iran is seeking either a nuclear bomb or the "strategic capacity" to make one.

"This is a regime that continues to further isolate itself from the rest of the world, by its statements, by its threats, and by its actions," McClellan said.

In Beijing, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Qin Gang issued an appeal for calm. Like Russia, China has been opposed to

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Prayer Timing		
April 28		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Juma	12-30	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-29	6-34
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation