

DIALOGUE ON REFORMS

4-party names include Jamaat, IOJ leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling alliance yesterday announced the names of five leaders including one from Jamaat-e-Islami to discuss the electoral reforms while the opposition kept on refusing to sit with Jamaat at the proposed talks, dimming the prospects for a settlement of the issue.

In a letter to the Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil, BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said his party's standing committee members Dr Khandakar Mosharrar Hossain, Khandakar Delwar Hossain, Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General

Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid, Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) Chairman Mufti Fazlul Huq Amini and Bangladesh Jatiya Party General Secretary Mohammad Saifur Rahman will represent the four-party alliance in the dialogue.

Earlier Jalil, also coordinator of the 14-party opposition combine, in letters had requested Bhuiyan not to include in the panel for discussion anyone from fundamentalist or anti-liberation forces.

The opposition also suggested that the talks should rather be held between the BNP and the main opposition AL to avoid controversy. "In our reply to the opposition's

last letter, we have announced the names of the four-party representatives. We hope they would sit down to reach a consensus over the next election," the BNP secretary general said at a press briefing at his official residence.

"The next election would be held in line with the decision taken by the 10-member committee", Bhuiyan, also LGRD and Cooperatives minister said.

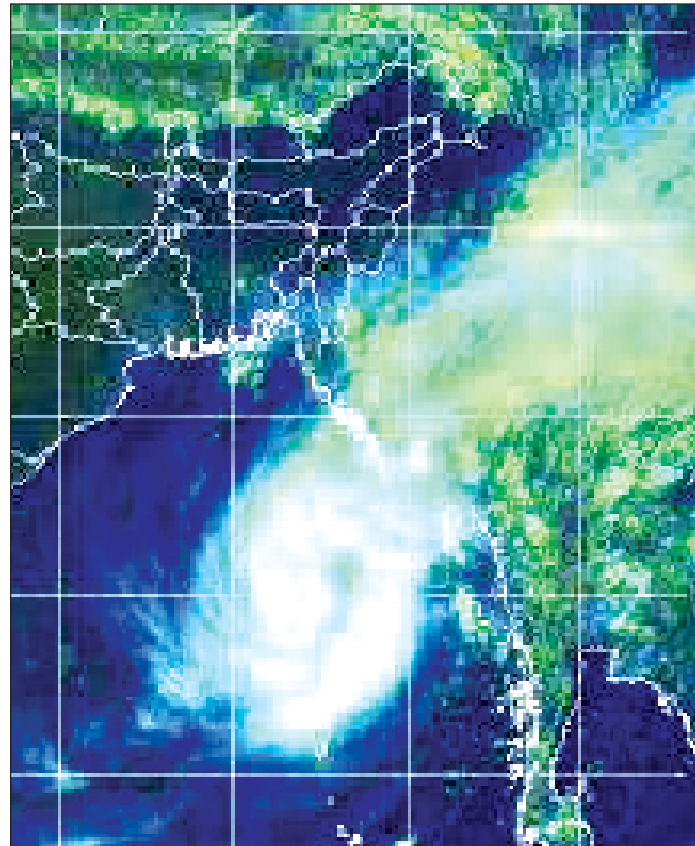
Reacting to Bhuiyan's letter, AL Presidium Member Suranjit Sengupta told The Daily Star that by nominating a Jamaat man in the committee, the government has yet again proved it is not sincere in

having a discussion.

"It is now crystal clear that they have only been killing time in the name of dialogue," observed Suranjit, also an opposition nominee for the talks. Terming the letter funny, he said, "We made it very clear to them (BNP) that there would be no discussion if a Jamaat leader is included in the panel."

On receipt of the letter, Abdul Jalil said BNP finally responded though it was too late. "We will give our formal reaction today after discussing the content of the letter with our party chief Sheikh Hasina," Jalil said.

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Cyclone likely to hit Cox's Bazar coast today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A severe cyclonic storm was formed over the east central Bay of Bengal yesterday with a core of hurricane wind, which is expected to hit land today near Chittagong and Cox's Bazar.

Mala, the first-ever named storm in the country after the Bengali word meaning 'a garland', is expected to head towards Myanmar coast by tomorrow afternoon unless it changes course, said the Met office.

"The storm is likely to intensify further and move in a north-northeasterly direction," a special bulletin of the Met office said last night.

"It might affect the Chittagong and Cox's Bazar coasts with rain and wind on its way to Myanmar,"

the special bulletin added.

Originated from a depression over the southeast bay and the adjoining Andaman Sea on April 25, Mala was spotted yesterday noon about 810km south-southwest of Chittagong, 720km south-southwest of Cox's Bazar and 830km south-southeast of Mongla port, said the Met office.

The maximum speed of sustained wind within 74km of the storm's centre is 120 KPH and rising to 160 KPH in gusts. The sea will remain very high and the weather will remain muggy under its impact, the Met office added.

Maritime ports of Chittagong

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1.4cr voters on new list suspected fake

Voters' number jumps from 7.48cr to 8.9cr

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The new voter list is set to see a huge rise in voters' number, which may call its fairness into question, fear election officials, while some quarters reckon it may contain as many as 1.4 crore ghost voters.

Officials at the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat said the new roll would comprise about 8.90 crore voters, as against 7.48 crore in the existing voter list.

However, over the last five years the number of voters in the current voter list prepared in 2000 has risen to 7.74 crore through updates in a number of local body polls.

"The number of voters in the new list should not exceed the 8-crore mark unless fake voters are included," a senior official at the EC Secretariat told The Daily Star wishing anonymity.

In the field-level work of the fresh voter-listing, frequent interference by ruling alliance activists were widely reported. Many quarters have alleged the ruling alliance men inserted huge numbers of fake voters on the list.

In the existing roll, 57.53 per cent of the then 13-crore population was registered as voters, while the new list will have over 63.57 per cent of the current 14-crore population as

voters. The ratio of voters to population in the fresh list will be much higher than that in all the rolls prepared since 1970.

Rationalising his move for preparing a fresh voter list, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz on Tuesday said the current list is flawed. In this respect, he cited a report of Washington-based National Democratic Institute (NDI) and another of the US State Department as well as a letter of the European Union (EU) to his predecessor, MASyed.

"An NDI survey in 2005 reported that the voter list of 2000 contained

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14-party may shun dialogue, go for movement to bring reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In reaction to inclusion of a Jamaat leader and an IOJ one in the government dialogue team on electoral reforms, senior leaders of 14-party opposition combine yesterday vowed to realise the reforms through mass movement, sticking fast to their 'no-dialogue with Jamaat or war criminal' stance.

The Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) men's nomination proves the conspiracy of the ruling alliance to rig the upcoming general elections, they alleged.

According to them, the government has made it clear that it really does not want to hold the dialogue but has been staging dramas in the name of dialogue just to kill time.

Within hours of ruling coalition's announcement of the

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PHOTO: STAR

With cyclone Mala nearing the coast, waves from the turbulent Bay of Bengal lash the protection embankment along the Patenga sea beach yesterday.

Cyclone killed 1.4 lakh on this day in '91

BSS, Dhaka

The nation today remembers the victims of the catastrophic cyclone that lashed the country's long coastal belt stretching from Bhola to Cox's Bazar on the dreadful night of April 29 in 1991.

According to the official estimate, the cyclone, one of the worst in living memory, killed about 1.4 lakh people and caused damage to property worth around Tk 12,500 crore.

In memory of the April 29 victims, various organisations have taken up programmes where possible government and non-government initiatives to cope with such natural disasters will be discussed.

Coastal Association for Social

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PHOTO: STAR

A procession was brought out at Muktangan in the capital demanding smooth supply of electricity yesterday. Biplobi Oikya Front organised the procession.

Charges pressed against 5 for bomb attack on Khulna journo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Charges have been pressed against five extremists for launching a bomb attack on journalist Dip Azad.

The accused are Iqbal Hossain Shadin, Rafiqul Islam Chowdhury alias Hasan, Mirajul Islam, Khairuzzaman, and Rafiqul Islam Rafique. Of them, four are now in Khulna jail while Rafique is still at large.

ASP Abdul Halim of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court here at 7:30pm yesterday.

Dip Azad, Khulna bureau chief of Dainik Jugantar, came under

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Iran enriched uranium defying UN: EIBaradei

AFP, Vienna

Iran has failed to comply with a UN deadline to halt uranium enrichment, UN nuclear chief Mohamed ElBaradei said in a crunch report yesterday that opens the door to possible international sanctions.

The report said the IAEA had taken samples on April 13 at Iran's enrichment facility in Natanz "which tend to confirm as of that date the enrichment level (of 3.6 percent) declared by Iran."

It said that during March, Iran completed a 164-machine cascade, referring to centrifuges arranged in series in order to enrich uranium, and that another two similar cascades were under construction at Natanz.

The confidential report, obtained by AFP, was also circulated to UN Security Council members in New York.

In a first reaction, US President George W. Bush said he wanted to resolve the dispute "diplomatically and peacefully," while British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said London would ask the Security Council to raise the pressure on Iran.

The world body had set Iran a non-binding, 30-day deadline -- running out Friday -- to comply with demands to halt enrichment, which makes the fuel for civilian nuclear reactors, but which can also be the explosive core of atom bombs.

But Iran has strongly rejected suspending enrichment, hardline President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

vowing Thursday that his nation "will not bow to injustice and pressure."

EI Baradei's report clears the way to a new phase of diplomacy, with the United States now ready to seek a Security Council resolution legally obliging Iran to meet IAEA demands.

If Iran still refuses, such a resolution could lead to punishing economic sanctions and even military action, although Tehran's allies and major trading partners Russia and China oppose any such move.

EI Baradei also said in his report that Iran has failed to fully cooperate with UN inspectors trying to

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Japanese envoy praises campaign for 'competent candidate'

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Japanese Ambassador to Dhaka Matsushiro Horiguchi has pinned high hopes on the "Competent Candidate Movement" mooted by a civil society platform.

"It is important that they grow this movement to realise mid- and long-term political reforms, not confined to encouraging free and fair elections alone," he said in the 49th issue of the Japan-Bangladesh E-Bulletin published by the Japanese Embassy here.

Horiguchi described the move as "remarkable" in terms of the fact that the intellectuals of the country have taken an action for the first time through their strategy to select competent candidates that has drawn some criticism. "They

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First regional dialogue today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first regional dialogue on national election policy and the initiative of the civil society will be held in Mymensingh at 9:30am today.

The dialogue styled "National Election Policy: Civil Society Initiative for Accountable Development" will be jointly organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), the daily Prothom Alo, The Daily Star and Channel i.

Eminent academicians and professionals, development and cultural activists, public representatives, political leaders and civil society representatives of Mymensingh will speak at the dialogue.

Members of the Nagorik Committee 2006 who are preparing the "Vision Paper of Bangladesh" will also be present at the meeting to receive public feedback.

Two top outlaws killed in Kushtia 'shootout'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Two underground operatives were killed in encounters between police and their cohorts in Mirpur and Daulatpur upazilas of the district early yesterday.

They are Kabil Uddin, 32, regional leader of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janajuddho), and Alauddin alias Ala, 37, regional leader of outlawed Gono Bahini (GB).

Police said they arrested Kabil at a hideout in Savar of Dhaka on Tuesday and brought him to Mirpur Police Station in Kushtia for quizzing.

On his statement, Mirpur police took Kabil to Gopalpur village at about 4:30am to arrest his accomplices and recover hidden firearms.

Sensing the presence of the police, Kabil's accomplices opened fire on the law enforcers, forcing them to retaliate.

Police said Kabil received bullets

as he tried to flee during the shootout and died instantly.

Police retrieved one shutter gun and 22 bullets from the scene.

Kabil was an accused in seven murder cases including that of BNP Mirpur upazila unit president Mamunur Rasul Babu Khan. He was sentenced to six years imprisonment in an abduction case last year.

Gono Bahini's regional leader Alauddin alias Ala was arrested by Daulatpur police at Kazipara village in the upazila Thursday evening.

During interrogation, Alauddin admitted to his involvement with the underground outfit and gave information about firearms hidden in different areas of Sherpur village under the upazila.

On information, police set out for Sherpur at around 3:30am.

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