

BNP, AL under allies'

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showing keen interest in having Jatiya Party (Ershad) on board their alliances to ensure victory in the election.

But the party [JP-Ershad] itself seems divided over the issue. While a section of JP leaders wants to join the ruling coalition, the others oppose the idea. Party insiders said Ershad will take decision in this regard during the caretaker government rule.

Meanwhile, the plot continues to thicken with Ershad declaring recently that his party would not join any coalition. Addressing a view-exchange meeting in Rangpur on Sunday, he said, "We will contest the next election on our own."

Sources said partners of ruling BNP want to finalise seat sharing within a very short time. Jamaat, most significant ally of BNP, has already identified at least 60 seats to contest for. But they have yet to get the nod from the BNP high command regarding this plan.

The Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ), another partner of ruling BNP, had announced that they would nominate candidates for 17 seats in the next election. Fazlul Huq Amin, leader of an IOJ faction, has expressed a desire to contest from Sunamganj-2 in addition to his regular constituency at Brahmanbaria. But BNP leaders are not happy with some of the IOJ leaders' activities.

Sources said Jamaat has expressed dissatisfaction over the move to have JP-Ershad in their coalition. Jamaat policymakers fear the JP's joining the coalition will mean for them [Jamaat] less importance within the alliance. JP-Ershad will be allotted at least 50 seats in the northern districts, they think.

"Jamaat is now more organised and has expanded its organisational activities across the country during the present regime. The foundation of the party is stronger than ever before and I know all these factors will be considered," Jamaat chief Motiur Rahman Nizami told a private television channel.

On Nizami's comment, Law Minister Moudud Ahmad has said it is premature to discuss the matter [seat sharing].

In 2001 election, Jamaat as a coalition partner contested at 31 constituencies and won 17 seats while the IOJ won only two of the seven seats they contested for. Later, two more IOJ candidates won the by-elections in Narail and Sunamganj.

Bangladesh Jatiya Party (JP-Nazir), another partner of the ruling coalition, won four of the eleven seats it was allocated. This time the party will seek more seats, sources said.

A BJP leader told The Daily Star that their chairman Nazir Rahman

Manjur will contest at two constituencies including Bhola-1, from where the State minister for Religious Affairs Mosharrar Hossain Shahjahan was elected in 2001.

Sources said Nazir is now bargaining with both BNP and AL over seat sharing. His son Andaliy Rahman Partho will also contest the next election from a constituency in Bhola district.

The AL allies in 14-party want AL to come clean about its position on seat sharing for the next election. Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon and JSD President Hasanul Huq Inu said the 14 party alliance should start working on seat sharing alongside the ongoing movement for electoral reforms.

"The Workers Party is planning to field candidates at 40 constituencies and I think it will be finalised on discussion within the opposition combine," Menon told The Daily Star yesterday. "Seat sharing should be the main topic for us to discuss after forcing the government to accept the reform proposals," he added.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil who is also the co-ordinator of 14-party alliance has said that they will take decision on it later. "When the election is still in doubt, how should we discuss seat sharing now?" he questioned.

20-year-old

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July 9 the same year.

The IO also prayed for discharge order acquitting Jahangir and four others from the case to the trial court.

The case was then transferred to the Second Court for Prevention of Public Safety Disturbance Crime, Dhaka for its quick disposal.

The court took up the case for trial on July 29, 2001 and after examining all documents of the case, the judge discharged Jahangir and four others of charges.

The court staff did not send any discharge order for Jahangir's release despite the court order. As a result, Jahangir had been in custody for over five years.

When reached, peshker (staff) of the court Mohammad Mojibur Rahman told The Daily Star that he knew nothing about the incident and his predecessor peshker should be able to answer why the discharge order was not sent for Jahangir's release.

Rahman's predecessor peshker was not available for his comment as the PSA court had earlier been dissolved and he was transferred to another district.

Jahangir's lawyer Mozammel Haq Chowdhury regretted the negligence and expressed his dissatisfaction over his client's loss of five invaluable years from his life.

US custody to interrogation centres in Jordan and at least three other countries: Egypt, Poland and Romania.

Britain and the United States dismissed the report, saying it lacked firm new evidence.

US officials have acknowledged flying up to 150 of the most serious suspected terrorists from one country to another, but said they receive "diplomatic assurances" from authorities that they will not use torture on the detainees they receive.

In an 87-page report filed in January with a United Nations committee, the United States insisted it is "unequivocally opposed" to torture and that its commitment to the ban "remains unchanged."

The January report said President Bush "has made clear that the United States stands against and will not tolerate torture under any circumstances."

The assistant registration officers (ARO) are repeatedly saying that many assistant officials have refused to join the work.

"Ten of 59 assistant officials applied to me today seeking relief from the task," Abul Kalam Mostafa, an ARO and also headmaster of Mirpur Government High School, yesterday said, adding, "Those who applied seeking relief did not join the task."

"Only 15 of the required 25 officials are now working. The rest refuse to work saying that they did not get payment for their work during preparation of the 'controversial' fresh voter list," Kazi Abdur Razzak, ARO of Mohammadpur in the capital, told reporters on Sunday.

In many rural areas, the task is yet to begin, as there is confusion among the assistant officials due to uncertainty of the remuneration as well as non-communication about their recruitment and lack of adequate publicity.

Our Nilphamari correspondent adds: The task of voter list update is yet to get momentum as the assistant officials who were recruited for door to door visit expressed unwillingness to do the job. In the situation, the deputy commissioner has warned of 'stern action' for failure to do the job properly.

None of the EC officials visited the Jahangirnagar University (JU) campus in last four days although over 10,000 people including students and teachers are eligible for being registered as voters, reports our JU correspondent.

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In recent months, rising separatist violence in Kashmir had hurt momentum with India accusing Pakistan of failing to keep a promise that it would not allow its territory to be used by anti-Indian militants.

Economic sense

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discord the two countries are now developing economic relations considering economic benefits.

She said the ADB is interested in developing regional cooperation by providing assistance in transport, port and energy sectors.

"She described the next election as a 'major internal challenge' for the country and said it is critical to keep up the reform momentum in the lead-up to the elections.

"A number of challenges continue to pose risks to the macroeconomic performance in the period ahead. These include political transition, weakness in the infrastructure and the under-pricing of energy products," she said.

The ADB country director also disagreed with the Transparency International's label of Bangladesh as the most corrupt country. "I never agreed that Bangladesh is the most corrupt country. Maybe, there are corrupt officials, but how can an entire country be corrupt?" she said.

"Of course, there is corruption in this country, but at the same time there are many honest people...We need to work on it and address the problem," she added.

Describing some landmark projects of the ADB in Bangladesh, Hua Du said the bank is considering to support the construction of the Padma Multipurpose Bridge by financing \$300 million.

She said the amount includes \$25 million for the detailed engineering design of the bridge and safeguarding issues like its environmental and social impact.

Hua Du said under the Gas Transmission and Development Project approved last year, four gas pipelines totalling 353km would be constructed to transport about 360 million cubic feet natural gas per day to the country's less developed western region that includes districts such as Rajshahi and Khulna, covering an area with a population of nearly 15 million.

The Saran-Khan talks were to review progress in the peace process, launched in 2004 after the nuclear-powered rivals came close to the brink of another war.

The peace process has made slow progress, particularly over the central dispute over Kashmir.

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India, Pakistan

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Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) on Sunday requested people not to carry sticks, sharp weapons or explosives during the 14-party opposition combine's road march programme.

The restrictions have been imposed to keep law and order in the city and ensuring security to public life and property, said a DMP press release.

The opposition alliance announced the six-day road march from today to July 30 aiming to involve thousands of people in the street agitation to compel the BNP-Jamaat alliance government to accept reforms in the caretaker government and in the election commission (EC).

Today the march will begin from Abdullahpur in Tongi at 4:00pm and head for Mohakhali in the capital. Senior leaders of the opposition alliance will also take part. The opposition leaders claimed they would mobilise around one lakh people for the programme.

Tomorrow the road march will start from Narayanganj Ring Road

"They say we exploit the workers but there is none to say that the garment owners in fact are being exploited," he added.

In addition to paying Tk 2,500 to the state coffers, a factory owner has to pay the customs officials Tk 10,000 and this trend needs to be changed, he argued.

Fazlul said getting imports cleared on time is another big problem for the garment owners. Moreover, electricity crisis has pushed up the production cost to a much higher level, he added.

Commerce Secretary Firoz Ahmed called on the garment owners to do their best regarding wages of the workers.

EC sounds

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home, could not gain enough pace even yesterday.

The armed men sprayed bullets on him as he fell down after the first shot to confirm his death, Jana Sanghati Samity sources and police quoted the locals as saying.

An armed group of UPDF had kidnapped Jana Sanghati Samity supporter Samaraj, 35, of Bhaibonchhara village of the same upazila on July 18. Samaraj is yet to be traced. The Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity suspects he may have been killed by rivals.

Following the incident, the Indian border guards have reinforced their position along the border.

BDR too has been put on alert to avoid untoward incidents, BDR sources said.

The five permanent Security Council members plus Germany decided to send the Iran nuclear dossier back to the Security Council after Tehran failed to respond to a package of incentives in exchange for a suspension of enrichment.

Elham said that Iran "is still considers the European offer a good opportunity to sort out Iran's nuclear issue with dialogue and diplomacy". Iran insists it wants to enrich uranium solely to make reactor fuel and argues that this is a right under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Top nuclear negotiator Ali Larjani said Iran would respond to the nuclear offer by August 22.

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Dhaka to attend

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will exchange views on regional and international security issues.

The meeting, he said, will review the outcomes of a number of expert-level meetings and adopt ARF statements on disaster management and emergency response, fighting cyber-terrorism and promoting people-oriented approach to counterterrorism.

"Bangladesh's presence will strengthen South Asian participation in the ARF process along with India and Pakistan," the foreign secretary said.

Replying to a question, Hemayetuddin said having experience in peacekeeping and disaster management, Bangladesh will share its experiences with ARF members.

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14-party long march

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Obaidul Quader said grenade attacks might be carried out to foil the road march programme. He also said the ruling party cadres might take to the streets to foil the programme.

He said the government would be responsible if any attacks were carried out or any untoward incidents took place.

The state minister for home affairs at an emergency meeting with the top officials of law enforcement agencies on Sunday directed them to deploy members of police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) to keep close eyes on the proceedings so that no untoward incidents took place during the opposition programme.

Sources said around 10,000 law enforcers will be deployed to maintain law and order.

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Hemayetuddin said he will not rule out the possibility of Morshed Khan's meeting with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who will attend the ARF meeting.

Established in 1994, ARF has been dealing with security issues as confidence building measures (CBM), peacekeeping, disaster relief, counter-terrorism, transnational crimes, maritime security and preventive diplomacy.

The forum comprises Asean member countries Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Ten dialogue partners of the forum are Australia, Canada, China, EU, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia and the United States.

Papua New Guinea, North Korea, Mongolia and Pakistan are observers to the forum. East Timor was admitted to the ARF in 2005.

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Steps taken

FROM PAGE 1

the Lebanon airport was damaged in bombardment.

The government would then arrange ships or chartered aircraft to bring the expatriates home.

IOM, however, is experiencing fund crisis and currently they are discussing fund-raising strategies with various governments. If unsuccessful, they might ask the governments to transport their own nationals at their own expense.

The foreign secretary at the briefing continued by saying that the Bangladesh high commissioners in Jordan and Egypt and honorary consuls in Beirut and Syria have been instructed to extend all possible assistance to any Bangladeshi citizen-in-distress.

He, however, said that there have been no reports of Bangladeshi casualties in the Israeli attacks so far.

A source in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs told The Daily Star that most of the 10,000 Bangladeshis residing in Lebanon are without valid documents and this situation might deter them from registering to come home.

ABCC report said, responding to an appeal by the Sri Lankan government, the IOM transported 270 Sri Lankan citizens out of Lebanon in two convoys on Thursday and Friday.

An Indian warship carried 600 evacuees to Cyprus on Thursday and an Air India plane brought 261 Indians to Mumbai, and the rest to Madras (Chennai).

RU classes

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Following university Proctor Enamul Haque and students' adviser Prof Zahid Hassan Milky's meeting with the aggrieved students, Vice-chancellor Prof Altaf Hossain called the students and teachers of marketing department at his residence and discussed students' demands.

After assurance by the vice-chancellor that the 'controversial' person will not be recruited, the agitating students withdrew their sit-in programme and went back to their department.

Earlier, the students boycotted their classes and examinations and formed a human chain on the campus demanding cancellation of the selection.

Meherpur

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A team of Rapid Action Battalion entered the campus at about 11:00am and beat up students. They picked up two others and handed them over to police.

After the incident, the students chased the transport workers and the law enforcers and snatched the two students from the policemen.

The authorities declared the college closed for an indefinite period.

Karnaphuli bridge

FROM PAGE 1

served a legal notice in this connection to the ministries of communications, shipping, and environment and the chief engineer of Roads and Highways Department, the project director of the third Karnaphuli bridge project and China Major Bridge Company. But the authorities concerned did not respond to the notice.

The petitioner said if the construction of the bridge is based on the faulty design ignoring the experts' recommendation, it would cause excess sedimentation in the Karnaphuli river resulting in the loss of navigability and adversely affect the port channel. Therefore, such construction will cause ruination of public property in violation of Articles 31 and 32 of the constitution.

Advocate Asaduzzaman moved the case on behalf of the petitioner.

The king sacked the government and took absolute power in February 2005. But an alliance of seven political parties working with Maoist rebels organised mass protests in April that led to Gyanendra reinstating parliament.

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