

ROAD TO PARLIAMENTARY POLLS

14-party has to 'wage war' against a series of challenges

HASAN JAHIH TUSHER

Awami League (AL)-led 14-party opposition coalition sees politicisation of the administration, violence by militants, possible attacks on its leaders and candidates, and armed forces' role as major challenges in the next parliamentary election.

It also apprehends that BNP-Jamaat-led ruling alliance candidates will use black money and muscle in the upcoming election scheduled for early next year.

Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon told The Daily Star, "The main challenge for us is to hold a free, fair and neutral election where the people can exercise their constitutional right to franchise in the face of a politicised adminis-

tration, black money, and criminal activities by militant forces."

The opposition coalition, especially the high-command of its principal component AL, believes that if they participate in the next election without the proposed electoral reforms implemented, they have a little chance of winning it as, according to their claim, the present government has already in place all the mechanisms of 'election engineering' in a bid to return to power again.

"Even if the electoral reforms are implemented, the situation will remain against us because of the BNP-Jamaat-led government's thorough election engineering," AL Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed said.

He told The Daily Star that the

challenges will exert themselves more powerfully during the pre-election period. "But we believe all the conspiracies and challenges can be overcome through mass movements," he added.

The AL leadership believes that the government has politicised all the sectors including the Election Commission (EC) Secretariat, district election offices as well as upazila election offices across the country to make sure the ruling alliance's return to power through rigging the next election.

The chief election commissioner (CEC), two other election commissioners and the EC secretary alongside about 20 district officers and 300 upazila election officers are seen by senior opposition leaders as politically appointed by

the BNP-led alliance government as part of its 'election engineering process'.

They also see Justice KM Hasan, who was a leader of BNP, as either politically loyal to BNP or against AL now, and expect him to be the head of the next caretaker government.

The entire AL leadership including its President Sheikh Hasina criticises Justice Hasan for being 'too embarrassed to hold a hearing of the case in connection with the murder of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman', and believes that he will not perform the duties of the head of the caretaker government neutrally.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Tribute to Zia on BNP founding anniversary

UNB, Dhaka

BNP leaders and workers yesterday paid rich tributes to late president Ziaur Rahman by placing wreaths at his grave to mark the 28th founding anniversary of the party.

Prime Minister and Chairperson of the ruling BNP Khaleda Zia first placed wreath at the grave of Ziaur Rahman, founder of the party, at Zia Uddin at Sher-e-Banglanagar in the city at 11:00am.

Later, she along with party leaders placed wreaths at the grave on behalf of the party.

A special prayer was also offered, seeking eternal peace for the late leader and peace and progress of the country and welfare of its people.

BNP standing committee members, city BNP leaders and leaders

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and her party colleagues offer munajat at the mazar of BNP founder late president Ziaur Rahman on the 28th founding anniversary of the party yesterday.

Dhaka should protect foreign investment

Says British HC

UNB, Dhaka

The British High Commission here yesterday said Bangladesh should encourage and protect foreign investment that is in the interest of this country.

"We hope the government of Bangladesh will encourage and protect foreign investment, and it is, of course, in the interest of Bangladesh," a spokesman for the mission told the news agency.

The spokesman, William Amall-Culliford, made the observation when asked to comment on the reported government decision asking the UK-based company Asia Energy to fold from the coal-mining project at Phulbari in Dinajpur as a measure to calm violent protests.

In reply to a question, he, however, said, "We recognise peaceful demonstration and democratic rights of the people and we would expect the government of Bangladesh to handle the situation

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



An activist with money collected from participants at a meeting at Mukhtangon that was organised to press home the demand of releasing Ahle Hadith chief Asadullah Al Galib.

Abandoned Nigerian boy handed over to HC official

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Nigerian boy who was found abandoned at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) on July 23 was handed over to an official of the Nigerian High Commission in New Delhi yesterday.

On behalf of the Nigerian High Commissioner AG Abdullahi, First Secretary MO Enebechi (Monica) received 14-year-old Abache Aloysius Peter at Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) auditorium in Dhaka.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the BNWLA and the Nigerian High Commission in New Delhi.

BNWLA with the help of home ministry arranged the handing over of the boy who will fly for Nigeria today.

BNWLA Executive Director advocate Salma Ali at a press conference yesterday conveyed special thanks to the Nigerian High Commissioner to New Delhi for his quick initiative to repatriate the boy who was allegedly trafficked.

The names of the boy and his so-called aunt were not found on the passengers' list at Zia International Airport.

The boy was possibly a victim of a strong network of international traffickers, and the Dubai airport authorities and the Emirates Airlines by which the boy flew to Bangladesh deserted the boy here shirking their duties, Salma Ali said.

"If two countries are serious and

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Syria to respect arms embargo against Hezbollah: Annan

AFP, Damascus

UN chief Kofi Annan said yesterday he has won a Syrian pledge to respect an arms embargo against militant group Hezbollah, on the latest leg of a Middle East tour aimed at shoring up a truce in Lebanon.

Syria President Bashar al-Assad, whose country is widely believed to funnel arms to the Lebanese Shia group, vowed to help implement UN Security Council Resolution 1701, he said.

"The president committed to me that Syria shall take all necessary measures to implement in full paragraph 15 of Resolution 1701 (which deals with the arms embargo and

rearmament" of Hezbollah, Annan told reporters.

He said the Syrian leader had undertaken in their meeting to help secure the border with Lebanon by increasing the number of guards deployed there and by establishing liaison mechanisms with the Lebanese army and border police.

Syria would also establish, where possible, joint border patrols and control points with Lebanese authorities, while Assad had agreed to international personnel providing technical assistance to the Lebanese.

"Syria is an important regional player, the international community is looking to Syria to play a constructive role in this crucial period," the

UN chief said.

There was no immediate comment from Damascus itself or from Israel on the Annan-Assad talks.

The UN resolution which halted Israel's month-long war in Lebanon calls for an arms embargo against Hezbollah along with the deployment of Lebanese and international troops in south Lebanon to monitor the Israeli border.

Syria, a staunch backer of Hezbollah, has been accused along with Iran of supplying weapons to the Shia group, a charge it denies.

Damascus last month threatened to close its border with

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Family to appeal against verdict if JMB chief allows

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

If Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) chief Shaikh Abdur Rahman permits, his family will appeal against the High Court verdict that confirmed death sentence to seven JMB kingpins including the chief and his top aide Siddiqui Islam alias Bangla Bhai on August 31 in the judges killing case.

"If they allow us we will file appeal for Abdur Rahman, his younger brother Ataur Rahman Sunny and son-in-law Abdul Awal," Abdur Rahman's younger sister Atika Begum said.

She, however, expressed fear that the mujahids would not allow

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Fears of Shia reprisals after Iraqi bloodbath

67 civilians, 2 GIs killed

AFP, Baghdad

Iraqis gathered for weekly prayers yesterday fearing violent reprisals after a spate of attacks on mainly Shia areas of the capital killed 67 civilians and raised already sky-high tensions.

A five-day surge in attacks has left more than 400 Iraqis dead, many of them in bombings on Shia markets and neighbourhoods in Baghdad, and Sunnis and Shias headed for their rival mosques under a cloud of suspicion.

Health ministry executive direc-

tor Hakim al-Zamly said August's overall death toll would be lower than the previous month's, after a joint US-Iraqi military crackdown, but that the latest killings could spark reprisals.

"Now I fear the violence will go up, especially after what happened yesterday," he said, referring to synchronised barrage of bomb and rocket attacks on Shia and Christian districts which he said killed 67 civilians.

"It will bring violence from this side and the other," Al-Zamly warned.

More than 300 people were also

wounded in the blasts, which tore through a street market killing women and children and demolished several homes, including some in Sadr City, a bastion of Baghdad's powerful Shia militias.

Meanwhile, a US marine and a soldier died from wounds sustained due to "enemy action" in the western Iraq province of Al-Anbar, the military said Friday.

The two servicemen were wounded on Wednesday, but the military did not specify when they actually died.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

BNP FOUNDING DAY

Khulna factions hold separate programmes

Sue each other after clashes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Two feuding factions of Khulna BNP held two separate rallies and processions in the city yesterday afternoon on the occasion of the 28th founding anniversary of the party.

Earlier on Thursday night, the rivals filed a case each against the other with the Khalishpur Police Station following clashes the same day.

Lawmaker Ali Asgar Lobi faction held their rally at the Shahid Maharaj Square that was presided over by Lobi. City Mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman and Khulna BNP President professor Majidul Islam was present at the rally.

Their rival, lawmaker Nurul Islam Manju faction, held another rally at Sonali Bank Square and it was presided over by Manju. A huge number of ward commissioners, 24 out of 31, and four out of five thana committee presidents attended this rally.

Speakers at both rallies, however, called upon the people to stand united against any conspiracy to foil the next general election.

Security measures were tightened in and around both rallies in apprehension of violence as provocative slogans were being chanted by supporters of both

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

2 criminals held, arms recovered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested two listed criminals in the city's Lalmatia and New Eskaton areas on Thursday night and recovered a revolver and three bullets from their possession.

According to a Rab press release, the arrestees, Mehedi Hasan Ujjal of C/25, Lalmatia, and his accomplice Himel Hossain of 31/A, New Eskaton Road, were involved in criminal activities in Khilgaon area.

Rab had earlier arrested Himel for his criminal activities. He was released on bail recently and again started criminal activities in the area.

Both Mehedi and Himel are accused in several murder cases filed with Khilgaon Police Station, the press release said.

Taxi cab blows up while refuelling

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A compressed natural gas (CNG) filling station caught fire at Mirpur as a CNG-run taxi blew up while refuelling early yesterday injuring two people.

Sources said the taxi's cylinder suddenly exploded when gas was being pumped into it at Purbachal Filling Station on Darus Salam Road around 1:00am.

The taxi was turned into a junk of twisted metal and knocked down a gas-pump machine as it exploded. Another taxi waiting for refuelling was also burned in the explosion. Parts of the 25-foot high shed of the filling station were also blown up.

Two fire engines from Mohammadpur rushed to the spot and extinguished the fire 35 minutes after the incident.

Additional Deputy Commissioner of Dhaka

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



The devastated CNG-run taxicab after its cylinder exploded while refuelling at a filling station on Darus Salam Road in Mirpur early yesterday. The explosion left four people injured.

KILLING OF COPS

Suspect handed over to police in Manda

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) handed over arrested outlaw Firoz alias Farhad, a suspect in the recent murder of four policemen and a Jubo Dal leader in Naogaon, to Manda police yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, Rab-5 personnel arrested Firoz, a cadre of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Lal Pataka) at Bagogram village in Birampur upazila of Dinajpur district at dawn on Thursday.

They brought him to Rangpur Rab office and interrogated him for 12 hours, Rab sources said.

During interrogation, Firoz admitted to his involvement in the killings. He left Naogaon for Dinajpur immediately after the incident, the sources added.

On August 25, the PBCP cadres shot and slaughtered four police men and a Jubo Dal leader at Choubaria Bazar in Manda upazila of Naogaon district.

Prayer Timing		
September 2		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-30	5-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-23	6-26
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation