

Focus on election- '91

Kader Siddiky AL nominee, Hasina tells EC

Freedom fighter Abdul Kader Siddiky is contesting the parliamentary polls from Tangail-8(Sakhipur-Basail) constituency as Awami League nominee, party sources said on Monday, reports UNB.

Form probe body to terminate corrupt bureaucrats : APSU

By DU Correspondent

All Party Students Unity (APSU) demanded the formation of a probe body to enquire into the activities of the bureaucrats involved in corruption.

still active to foil the democratic process. Democracy would not be restored if they were allowed to continue such activities unabated, they added.

Prof. Abul Kashem Fazlul Haque, was addressed by, among others, Amanullah Kabir, Kamal Haider, Khalilur Rahman, Dr. Sakhawat Ali Khan, Shamsuzzaman Milon and Nasim Ali.

Prof. Fazlul Haque said he had not taken a lesson from the mass upsurge of '89. That's why we were supposed to fight against autocracy once again, he added.

He called upon the people to be alert against comeback of the autocratic rulers.

Amanullah Kabir said certain quarters were active to foil the success achieved through the mass movement of 1990. They should be resisted, he added.

Dr. Sakhawat Ali Khan called upon the political parties to include the solutions of the problems of the people in their election manifestos and said real democracy would not be restored until the economic, social, cultural and political interests of the people were protected.

Basic rights

Speakers at a discussion meeting, organized by 'Shaheed Asad Parishad', yesterday stressed the need for establishing basic rights of the people in order to materialise the objective of the mass upsurge of '89. The discussion meeting, presided over by

Hasina and Khaleda

From Page 1 Col. 4

Zia is a matter of long-standing commitment, Sheikh Hasina sees it as a necessity, forced on the country by the deliberate policy of two successive governments to "damage" the nationalised industries. According to the Awami League leader, "The losses in the nationalised industries were well-planned and deliberate. De-nationalised banks were bought by the private sector with loans taken from the public sector financial institutions."

In contrast, Begum Zia's commitment to the private sector remains unequivocal. This is not surprising, since it was the BNP government, as she reminded The Daily Star team, which had initiated the process of privatisation.

During the interview, she said: "We shall go all-out to encourage privatisation and build up a market-oriented system so that foreign entrepreneurs are encouraged to invest in Bangladesh."

However, the Awami League leader offered an olive branch to the private sector. She made it clear that an AL-led government "will not nationalise the industries which have already been de-nationalised." At the same time, the government "will try to remove all obstacles and make the existing nationalised sector profitable."

In foreign affairs neither appeared to oppose the existing policy as pursued by successive governments of Bangladesh. In fact, neither offered particularly strong views on the subject.

They reserved their strongest expressions for three subjects: the question of reverting to the parliamentary system, as demanded by AL; the background to the anti-Ershad struggle which, over the years, displayed serious differences between the two major parties; and eight years of misrule by the ousted Ershad regime.

a government led by her party would agree to give more power to the parliament, she said: "Our organisation will think about this. We want welfare of the people. We will act accordingly." Sheikh Hasina insisted that during discussions held last year, all political groupings, including the one headed by BNP, had agreed that the power exercised by a caretaker government would be transferred to the "sovereign parliament."

In the words of Hasina: "Non-compliance of any party or alliance with this agreement in the next parliament for the establishment of parliamentary democracy will be considered a treachery."

Begum Zia repeated her demand that Ershad be tried by the caretaker government "under the existing law of the land," and Sheikh Hasina asked that the killers of Bangabandhu, who, she said, were still engaged in conspiracies, be put in the dock.

On the repeal of the Special Powers Act, the Awami League leader came up with an unexpected answer: "Ershad will have to be released if this Act is repealed. Do you want that? I once said that no law can be branded as black or white. It all depends in the way it is exercised. The law under which a man like Ershad has been arrested cannot be branded as a black law."

The two interviews ended on different notes. Asked about political parties arriving at a national consensus on basic economic needs of the people, Sheikh Hasina expressed her hope that the matter would be taken up by the parliament.

In the case of Begum Zia, the question about the need for a code of conduct during the election campaign brought forth a tough answer from the BNP leader.

"Those who are loudly proposing such a code of conduct are themselves violating it by their actions," she said. And of course, she named the Awami League as the offender.

Khafzi

From Page 1 Col. 5

Iraq from submarines in the Red Sea and fired a remote-controlled missile called Slam, stand-off land attack missile, for the first time.

Reuter correspondent John Fullerton near the frontline in Saudi Arabia said Allied forces were gearing up for a possible ground attack.

The United States, saying 25 allied aircraft were missing from raids on Iraq and occupied Kuwait, protested over the apparent mistreatment of prisoners.

Harrasment rounds

Meanwhile, US Marine helicopter gunship pilots say they believe Iraq may be holding its best anti-aircraft weapons in reserve to combat any ground offensive.

"What we assume now is they're just playing cat-and-mouse with us," said Captain Steve Springer, 29, of Camp Pendleton, California, who pilots a marine corps Cobra helicopter gunship.

"They're just sending out harrasment rounds and they want to see how we react," Springer said Sunday.

Editor : S. M. Ali

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Jamaat to strengthen armed forces

The Acting Ameer of the Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh Mr. Abbas Ali Khan on Monday said, if voted to power, his party would strengthen the armed forces of the country for consolidating independence and sovereignty, reports BSS.

Addressing separate election campaign meetings at Panchbibi upazila of Joypurhat, the Jamaat chief said if the party won the elections, the armed forces would be inspired with the Islamic spirit.

Presided over by upazila Ameer of Panchbibi Mr. Abdul Wadud, the meetings were addressed, among others, by freedom fighter Azizur Rahman Aziz and former student leader Dr. Omar Faruq.

Explaining the significance of the forthcoming parliamentary elections, Mr. Khan said vote was the amanat (trust), gifted by Allah.

"If we do not exercise our right of franchise we will have to be accountable in the life after death," he said.

The Jamaat Ameer called upon the people to vote for honest and pious candidates.

Egypt to penalise pro-Iraqis

CAIRO, Jan 21 : Egypt, a key player in the Gulf crisis, has embarked on a round of intensive diplomatic consultations with Arab friends while penalising Arab countries showing sympathy for Iraq, reports AP.

A Foreign Ministry official said President Hosni Mubarak sent Safwat el-Sherif, his Information Minister, to Tripoli on Monday with a message for Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi. The official would only say it pertained to the Gulf war.

On Sunday, the President dispatched Foreign Minister Esmat Abdel-Meguid and Osama el-Baz, Mubarak's top Political Adviser, to Syria. They conferred Sunday night with Syrian President Hafiz Assad and on Monday with Assad's Foreign Minister, Farouk al-Sharrat.

Egyptian officials said nationalities of Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco now need visas before entering Egypt instead of getting them automatically on arrival.

The three northern African countries are among about half a dozen Arab states whose governments and peoples have exhibited sympathy for Iraq.

Jews' demand

In London, leading British Jews, concerned over security during the Gulf war, have urged the government to close the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) office in London.

Iranians held

Austrian police Monday were interrogating 11 Iranians arrested over the weekend on suspicion of planning terrorist attacks in retaliation for the US-led assault on Iraq.

Expulsion

The Philippines Monday ordered the expulsion of Iraq's Consul General in Manila for alleged links to last Saturday's failed bomb attack against a US government library in the Philippines capital.

Syria

Meanwhile, Syria, Iraq's arch-Arab foe, accused Jordan Monday of encouraging Saddam Hussein's expansionist dreams.

Syria's religious leaders also have rejected an Iraqi call for Jihad, or Holy War, against the US-led alliance and Israel, and held Iraqi President Saddam Hussein responsible for the Gulf war.

Presidential

See Page 10 Col. 8

Banani office here, Begum Zia said that party had also introduced one-party system burying democracy and gagging freedom of the press to hide its failures.

Begum Zia pointed out that the BNP government did not introduce presidential form of government. But, she said, the country's image of bottomless basket case was changed during the BNP rule through overall development under the same presidential form of government introduced by its predecessors.

Begum Zia said the associates of autocratic regime were holding meetings and even filling nominations. She said people of this country did not shed blood to allow such persons to move freely in the society.

Begum Zia called upon the patriotic forces of the country to come under the flag of nationalists to protect the sovereignty and independence of the country and take the nation towards progress.

She said only the nationalist force could ensure the progress of the nation and not the associates of autocracy Ershad who had destroyed the nation's socio-economic infrastructure.

War to last weeks, says Mitterrand

Iraq before engaging ground forces to take Kuwait. The French forecast agreed with remarks by British Prime Minister John Major, who said he expected the war to last "quite a few weeks."

'Half-time work'

Mitterrand said he was shocked at accusations in the media that France's Air Force units in Saudi Arabia were 'working half-time' because their raids had been restricted to Iraqi targets in Kuwait.

Such charges were insulting, the French leader said adding that French pilots were working almost around the clock with no relaxation.

"The essential objective is the liberation of Kuwait," Mitterrand said, "as for targeting Saddam Hussein I say 'no'. There is no aim against any individual".

Meanwhile, Britain, a key

member of the US-led coalition ranged against Baghdad, said more air strikes were needed on Iraq and reported two more warplanes lost.

"A lot more is still to be done with air strikes, we are not talking about ground warfare for some time yet," one government official said.

Prime Minister John Major and U.S. President George Bush reviewed the result of the first three days of fighting in a 20-minute telephone conversation of Sunday.

The British parliament was to debate the Gulf situation today, with Major introducing the discussion expected to reaffirm all-party support for the government's war to last several weeks, despite considerable damage already inflicted on Iraq's military in thousands of air attacks.

The Midnight File

CDU loses power in Hesse

BONN, Jan 21: Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats (CDU) lost power on Sunday in Hesse state elections seen as a barometer of anti-war feeling in Germany. Provisional official results gave the Social Democrats (SPD) 40.8 per cent of the vote in the traditionally leftist state, enough to re-establish a coalition with the radical Greens, who won 8.8 per cent, reports Reuter.

Iran to remain neutral

TEHERAN, Jan 21: Iran strongly denied Japanese reports today that 250 Iraqi warplanes are being sheltered in Iran from US-led allied air raids. Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, denying the claim, said, "The Islamic Republic of Iran is determined to preserve its neutrality on all levels", reports AFP.

Two tribal activists surrender

CHITTAGONG, Jan 21: Two activists of so-called Shantibahini surrendered to Bangladesh Security Forces in Khagrachhari Hill district, an official source said Monday. Mukul Bikash Chakma surrendered along with a SBBJ gun to the Security Forces at Gul Mara, Khagrachhari Sunday while Arun Chakma, a Juba-Samty leader surrendered to security forces at Khagrachhari Monday, reports BSS.

Human rights activists held

BEIJING, Jan 21: Chinese security officers Monday detained for questioning five foreign human rights activists seeking information about dissidents on trial. Five of a six-member delegation representing several human rights groups were removed from the Taiwan Hotel and taken to Public Security Bureau headquarters for questioning, said the diplomats, who witnessed the incident, reports AFP.

New Prime Minister in Somalia

NAIROBI, Jan 21: Somalia's embattled president Mohamed Siad Barre has appointed a new Prime Minister Artek Khaleb to try to implement a ceasefire between loyalist and rebel forces after three weeks of fierce fighting which shattered the capital Mogadishu, reports Reuter.

Indian ship sinks off Malta

PIRAEUS (Greece), Jan 21: An Indian-flagged ship with 35 crewmen sank off Malta early Monday, and rescuers picked up four survivors and 16 bodies. And 15 people were reported missing.

The harbour official said the Bombay-registered bulk carrier Continental Lotus sent out a distress signal at 4 am (0200 GMT) saying that its engines had stopped and it was taking on water, reports AP.

Australian arms industry shrinks

SYDNEY, Jan 21: While international arms dealers may get a boost from the Gulf war, the Australian arms industry is shrinking. Australian Defence Industries Ltd., the country's largest arms manufacturer, is closing three factories and sacking 1,000 workers, company spokesman Leigh Funston told Reuters Monday.

Rallies to halt war

BONN, Jan 21: Tens of thousands more joined protests throughout Germany on Sunday calling for a halt to the Gulf war.

The largest rally drew nearly 15,000 people in the southwestern city of Stuttgart, reports AFP. Berliners and Frankfurters also demonstrated anti-war sentiments on Monday.

Rok students

In Seoul, hundreds of South Korean students staged an anti-war rally Monday, denouncing US forces in the Gulf for 'drying up blood of the Arabs', witnesses said.

The protesters on the campus of Seoul National University burned a US flag, chanting 'oppose war' and the US aggressors are drying up

blood of the Arabs'.

India

In India, several thousand Indian Muslims Monday marched through Bombay city to protest US-led allied attacks on Iraq and demand an immediate end to the Gulf war.

Jordan

In Amman, doctors and lawyers joined anti-American protests Monday as pressure mounted on King Hussein from his subjects to aid Iraq.

Iran

Meanwhile, the Iranian Foreign Ministry issued a statement Monday condemning what it said were Allied attacks on civilian targets in Iraq and calling for a peaceful settlement of the war.

1,018 candidates

From Page 1 Col. 4

The candidates of Awami League and Bangladesh Nationalist Party are contesting all the four seats while Jamaat is contesting from two constituencies.

In Kishoreganj, 23 candidates out of 82 in seven constituencies of Kishoreganj have withdrawn nomination papers.

Nineteen nominations were withdrawn from Brahmanbaria's six constituencies out of 77 filed for the elections.

In 11 constituencies of Mymensingh district, 36 candidates out of 141 withdrew their candidature.

Four candidates out of 22 in two constituencies in Magura district have withdrawn their

candidature.

In Chandpur, 15 candidates out of 72 have withdrawn their nomination papers from five out of six constituencies in the district. None has withdrawn from Chandpur-1(Kachua).

Jamat-e-Islami has withdrawn candidates from 83 constituencies. The party in a Press release issued on Monday said, it nominated 298 candidates for the coming parliamentary elections. But the party had decided to withdraw candidates from 83 seats.

Bangladesh Islamic Revolutionary Council has withdrawn all of their candidates Monday from 18 constituencies according to a Press release.

Hasina

at 4-30 p.m. from Dhaka by road to begin campaign for the ensuing parliamentary elections.

She said after the autocratic rule of 15 years, the opportunity for reestablishing democracy is at the door and it should be availed.

Sheikh Hasina recalled that the people had freed the nation from the chain of Muslim League-Punjabi coterie in the past by casting their votes in favour of the historic 'boat' in 1954. The people again voted for the 'boat' of Bangabandhu in 1970, giving him the mandate for liberation of the country, she said.

If voted to power, Sheikh Hasina said, Awami League would waive land taxes upto 25 billion and write off agricultural loans upto Taka 5000 and the amount of interest on loans of more than Taka 5,000. The meeting, chaired by Tungipara Awami League president Mazle Huq.



Riyadh US Army MPs inspect damages caused by an Iraqi Scud missile which blew up early January 21 in Riyadh. —AFP photo

Lobbying for peace falters so far

UNITED NATIONS, Jan 21: Quiet lobbying by India and North African countries at the United Nations for a Gulf war ceasefire has faltered so far, mainly because of lack of encouragement from Iraq as well as from the big powers in the Security Council, diplomats said on Sunday, reports Reuter.

While several nations would like a Security Council meeting, no formal request has been made yet in view of opposition from Washington, London, Paris and Moscow.

A separate feeler from the Soviet Union conveyed to Iraq over the weekend also has not elicited a response yet, the diplomats said.

The Soviet moves, described in Moscow as keeping contact with Iraq and other countries in efforts to end the Gulf war, included a note from Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, UN sources said.

U.N. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar, informed of the Soviet letter on Friday, described it as a "direct initiative".

Algeria, which is not a member of the Security Council, has sent its Washington Ambassador to lobby delegates in what diplomats said was an effort to get a Council meeting on the issue. The Indian proposal,

backed by Algeria and other North African nations, calls for a "pause for peace" in the fighting for anywhere from 48 to 72 hours.

India, a Council member, has had consultations with other Non-Aligned countries the 15-member body, including Cuba, Ecuador, Ivory Coast, Yemen, Zaire and Zimbabwe.

Indian External Affairs Minister, Mr V C Shukla, is leaving for Belgrade Tuesday morning to further activate the Non-Aligned Movement's initiative to end the Gulf war.

Pakistan

Xinhua reports from Islamabad : Pakistan Prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif is to start a peace mission Tuesday by visiting four Muslim countries of Iran, Turkey, Syria and Egypt.

In his forthcoming mission, the Prime Minister will discuss and consult about the current Gulf war with leaders of the four nations and find out ways to end the hostilities as soon as possible.

Journalist missing

HONG KONG, Jan 21: A British journalist, Bruce Cheemson, has gone missing in Baghdad since last Thursday when allied bombings started there, for which the freelancer worked said today, reports AFP.

Operation Desert Storm

NICOSIA, Jan 21: Radio Baghdad went off the air today for the second time in less than 12 hours as the U.S.-led allies continued air raids on the Iraqi capital and other cities. The radio, which was functioning well on Sunday night, went off the air early this morning but came back at about 10.30 local time (0730 GMT). It went off the air again at 1645 (1345 GMT), reports Reuter.

Radio Baghdad off air for second time

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Bush sentenced

MULTAN, Jan 21: A mock court sentenced U.S. President George Bush to death here today for alleged "crimes against humanity." Arrangements were being made for his public execution - in effigy - later in the day, with a gallows prepared at the clock tower in the city center, residents said, reports AFP.

Americans flock to churches

WASHINGTON, Jan 21: Americans flocked to churches seeking comfort and support in the first Sunday since the United States attacked Iraq, minister said, reports AFP.

Photographers beaten

AMMAN, Jan 21: Three Western photographers were tied up, blindfolded, beaten and accused of being spies by Iraqi soldiers, reports AFP.