

Focus on election-'91

Electioneering gains momentum

STAR Report



public meetings. The candidates belonging to big or small parties and the independents are literally chasing voters

Electioneering in the country has gained momentum with political parties campaigning almost round the clock. More arches have been erected on vital points of the city roads.

Most leaders have left the city and are staying in their own constituencies to personally supervise polls campaign. The leaderless capital is being dominated by party candidates and activists who are bringing torch processions, holding rallies and public meetings.

Election camps have been set up in most cases, side by side. Microphones are being used by the party activists from the same places almost throughout the day. One group is trying to jam the microphone of the other group creating a chaotic situation.

Awami League president Sheikh Hasina is now on a tour of the northern districts while BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia has gone to the southern districts. Other prominent leaders are also touring the districts to promote their propaganda work.

This year's polls are characterized by the fact that the whole process of electioneering is not confined to public meetings and processions. Party candidates are choosing house-to-house approach to impress voters than to hold

upto the remotest corners of rural areas. In the election race, women are not lagging behind. Latest reports show that 33 women are contesting the parliamentary elections. Originally 46 women submitted their nominations.

According to Election Commission sources, 90 political parties have taken election symbols. But it is not clear how many parties have finally been drawn into the election battle. A conservative statistics say 75 parties have been contesting the elections. Out of them, 19 parties have no candidates but have taken symbols. Fifteen parties have only one candidate each. Eight other parties have only two candidates. This suggests a forlorn look of the strength of many 'grassroot' political parties which registered a mushroom growth in the country over the years.

Widespread confusion is also prevailing among the parties of the electoral alliances over the issue of symbol.

Only 24 days are left for holding the parliamentary polls. The present trend of electioneering suggests that the campaign will be more intensified with each day passing. It is a healthy sign that no major violence took place in the city yet.

Poetry festival opens

The fifth National Poetry Festival opened yesterday with the call for protecting moral values. The theme of this year's festival is 'poetry for democracy'.

Begum Sufia Kamal inaugurated the two-day long festival organized by the National Poetry Council while poet Shamsur Rahman, president of the council, presided over the opening session.

Begum Sufia Kamal deploring the erosion of values called for efforts to reverse it.

Election manual

Instructions are also being issued to returning officers, assistant returning officers and election officers to properly brief presiding officers and polling officers to check casting of false votes.

Presiding officers and polling officers would be asked to ensure that non-erasable ink to be applied on a right-hand finger of each voter got dried before a voter drops his ballot paper in a ballot box. They will also be asked to examine if the appearance of a voter and his statements tally with the records of the voter concerned.

BNP's boycott

Thousands of workers rendered jobless, she added.

Sheikh Hasina said, before bringing any charges against Awami League of making collaboration with Ershad, BNP chief Begum Zia should look at her own face in the mirror. 'It was not Awami League chief that Begum Zia herself who is enjoying her own living costs, educational expenses of her kids, the costs of her furniture, utensils, carpets, sofa, wall screens, electricity, water and gas bills and salary of her maid servants, gardeners, maintenance cost of her car and other day-to-day expenses from the autocratic regime of Ershad,' she observed.

As a successor of a former president, I am also entitled to enjoy these facilities,' she said adding that she rejected those out of hatred and anger. Sheikh Hasina denied the charges of Begum Zia that Awami League prolonged the rule of Ershad by contesting 1986 parliamentary polls. She alleged, rather it was BNP who helped Ershad to stay in power by boycotting that crucial poll-challenge, which Awami League faced courageously and successfully. She asked Khaleda Zia not to destroy the history or hide the truth.

She said, it was decided that three alliances would contest the polls against Ershad's Jatiya Party and there was written agreement over the sharing of seats. 'I put my signature on the document but Begum Zia betrayed fearing that Awami League may gain more out of the poll results,' she added.

Iraq retreats

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British spokesman Niail Irving said, Saudi troops had succeeded in clearing Khafji of Iraqi forces except perhaps for 'The odd sniper or so'.

The Allied command regarded the Khafji attack as a 'Clear military disaster' for Iraq, Irving said. According to earlier Reuters reports: Allied Bombers tried to stop a new armoured thrust into Saudi Arabia Friday after Iraqi tanks lunged across the border for a fifth time and fought a pitched battle with US Marines.

Hundreds of planes, including American B-52 bombers and British and French Jaguars, pounded Iraqi troops and tanks.

Western reporters in Baghdad saw six US Cruise missiles flying over the city Friday and were taken by Iraqi officials to see damage in two residential areas.

Meanwhile, US President George Bush, meantime, made a morale-boosting tour of US military installations, telling a cheering Marine-base crowd

DESA

Improving its overall performance and finally put forward the condition with the deadline which expired yesterday. The donors categorically said the financial assistance to PDB would be stopped if this condition along with others were not met.

Meanwhile, different trade unions of PDB employees opposed the creation of DESA and threatened to go on strike if it starts functioning. A group of angry workers has already locked the head office of DESA located at Gulshan on December 4 which still remains closed.

The concerned authorities have already explained the situation to the donors and sought more time to solve the problem. It is reliably learnt that the donors have taken a lenient view considering the political situation of the country. The issue is likely to be settled after the February 27 elections.

that the sacrifices of US troops 'will end the nightmare of Iraq's brutal occupations' of Kuwait.

A reports from Nicosia, Iraqi radio on Friday threatened world leaders heading the multinational alliance and said captured pilots should be treated as war criminals.

Candidates

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mitted statements. A total of 28 candidates are in the fray in three Feni constituencies. A Rangpur district administration source told The Daily Star that he was not sure if any candidate had failed to submit statement in six constituencies of Rangpur 82 candidates are in the fray. Former president Ershad is contesting in five of the constituencies.

An Election Commissioner source said the candidates will have to submit returns of their election expenses within 15 days of the holding of the election. The commission has tightened regulations about election returns by requiring election agents of candidates to produce vouchers against expenses.

The source said the procedure may sound simple, but in practice it would be difficult to suppress information, because candidates themselves would keep watch on each other. If submission of false returns are proved elections will be set aside by the election tribunal on the charge of corrupt election practice, the source added.

Ekushey

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National open Air Drama Festival' at Shahid Minar. The theme of the festival also reflected the great achievement of the people through the mass upsurge. The theme was 'Drama for Democracy'. Prof Yazuddin Ahmad, Advisor for Cultural Affairs, opened the festival.

A drama was staged on the first day of the festival. Bangladeshi National Museum also opened an art exhibition on Friday marking the death of artist Kamrul Hassan. Kamrul Hassan died during the third Jatiya Kabitla Utsab.

The Midnight File

Concern over Iraqi detainees

LONDON, Feb 1: Amnesty International, the London based Human Rights Organisation, expressed concern today that some of the Iraqi and Palestinians detained in Britain were prisoners of conscience whose conditions of detention would breach international law, reports AFP.

UNIMOG mandate extended

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 1: The UN Security Council yesterday unanimously adopted Resolution 685 extending the mandate of the UN Iran-Iraq Military Observer Group (UNIMOG) for a further one month until February 28. The council took the action with firm indications given by Iran and Iraq that they remained determined to implement fully the remaining tasks of the force despite the conflict in the Gulf area, reports Xinhua.

Cruise test over Canada

COLD LAKE (Canada), Feb 1: The US army Thursday successfully test fired a Cruise missile in northern Canada, a military spokesman said. A US air force B-52 bomber jet launched the unarmed missile over the Beaufort sea in the Canadian arctic. Major Luigi Rosseto reported from the Cold Lake military base in western Canada, reports AFP.

Albanian cabinet reshuffled

VIENNA, Feb 1: Albania's communist authorities announced a cabinet reshuffle on Thursday, with two ministers losing their posts and five new appointments. The changes were announced by Albanian radio, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation, reports Reuters.

France studying B-52 overflight

PARIS, Feb 1: France is studying a US request to allow B-52 bombers based in Britain to fly over French territory for missions in the Gulf war, officials said Friday. The decision will 'naturally be made by political authorities,' said an authorised source, speaking on condition of anonymity, reports AP.

Manila not to break ties

MANILA, Feb 1: Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus said today that the Philippines had 'no intention' of breaking ties with Iraq and 'irked the American ambassador by questioning the US role as 'constable of the world', reports AFP.

Thai to bid for UPI

BANGKOK, Feb 1: A Thai publisher said Friday he and a group of Hong Kong industrialists may bid for United Press International, the financially troubled US news service. 'If it makes sense and the price is right then we will do it,' said Sondhi Limthongkul, a former journalist who heads the Bangkok-based Manager group of companies, reports AP.

Sanctions on companies

BONN, Feb 1: The German companies or enterprises involved in the sale of weapons to Iraq should be thrown out of the Association of German Chambers of Industry and Commerce. The suggestion comes from the Chairman of the Association Hans Peter Sthil, addressing the German newspaper Neue Presse. He also asked German government to impose sanctions on these companies and enterprises and confiscate profits obtained from Iraqi sales, reports Xinhua.

US move in Gulf: Kremlin smells rat

MOSCOW, Feb 1: Communist Party officials have warned the United States not to go beyond the U.N. mandate to liberate Kuwait reflecting concern among Soviet traditionalists that America wants to impose its will on the Mideast, reports AP.

'We call upon the leadership of the United States to take more necessary measures so that they serve the cessation of the bloodshed, and serve the cease-fire,' said Alexander Dzasokhov, the party's ideology chief and member of the national legislature's Foreign Affairs committee.

His statements, Thursday, echoed a joint U.S.-Soviet communique issued this week saying a cease-fire would be possible if Iraqi President Saddam Hussein made a commitment to withdraw from Kuwait.

The 500-member Central Committee approved a statement urging the U.S. government to limit its objectives in the Gulf.

Soviet officials so far have not directly said support for the allied mission in the Gulf would be withdrawn, but major newspapers have editorialized against an escalation of the conflict.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Vitaly Churkin said this week that the Soviet Union, while urging restraint, stands by the U.N. Security Council resolution authorizing the Gulf action.

In Washington, U.S. officials said the Kremlin had promised to continue its support for the U.S.-led war in exchange for a White House pledge to 'back

off its tough line against the Soviet military crackdown in the Baltics this month.

Dzasokhov and other Communist Party officials addressed a news conference before reports of the deal reached Moscow.

But Dzasokhov did seem to link the Baltic crackdown and the Gulf War.

Soviet officials, mindful of their longtime Iraqi allies and fearing a powerful new U.S. presence in the Middle East, have expressed concern that U.S.-led forces planned to destroy the government of Saddam, rather than just drive his troops from Kuwait.

The U.S. sources, speaking on condition they not be identified, said an unannounced agreement between Bessmertnykh and Secretary of State James A. Baker led to the joint

statement on the Gulf. U.S. officials also received assurances the Soviets would withdraw some troops from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

Reuter adds: A senior Soviet officer said in comments published Thursday he feared the Gulf war could spill over onto Soviet territory if the United States resorted to more powerful weapons against Iraq.

Even if we discount the idea of an intentional nuclear strike (by the United States), one cannot exclude a simple accident, a computer error or sabotage, D. Major-General Sergei Bogdanov said.

There is no guarantee that in such circumstances the situation can be kept under control, he told the Defence Ministry newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda.



Group Theatre Federation marked the beginning of its Ekushey programmes yesterday by staging 'Pala Badaler Pala' of Subachan Natya Gosthi at Central Shaheed Minar.

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Published by the Editor on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd., 52 Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000 and printed by him at Offset Printing Dialogue Publications Ltd., 19 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1215. Editorial, News & Commercial offices: 28/1, Toynbee Circular Road, Dhaka-1000. Tel: 246023-4 (PABX), 863035, 863036.

Video-taping

From Page 1 Col. 8 of the country within the shortest possible time, he added. The alliance will try to prove that most of their opponent candidates are not potential enough to bear the expenditure they are doing now.

Khaleda

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pendence not to become slaves of others. Begum Zia said those cannot be the friends of the people who in 1981 welcomed the martial law, forged entente with Ershad, and enjoyed all facilities of the past regime.

Blaming Awami League for cooperating with the government of President Ershad, she said 'Ershad and the leaders of that party are equally betrayers'.

The BNP leader also painted a grim picture of Awami League regime saying this party had done nothing good for the people.

She said this party had snatched the right of all political parties by introducing BKSAL rule, gagging the press, and putting thousands of people behind the bars in the name of justice.

'People died of starvation, bodies were buried wrapped in banana leaves during their so called Golden Era. People do not believe in the Awami democracy which was rejected in the elections held in 1978, 1979', she said.

Referring to Special Powers Act introduced by Awami League in 1974 and torture of private bahinis, Begum Zia said this party neglected the armed forces and created its own bahini for their selfish goals.

Criticising Awami League for terming BNP rule as 'autocratic', Begum Zia obliquely said Sheikh Hasina had received back her paternal properties from President Zia's government. Even the politics of Awami League was resumed during BNP's rule, she said.

In an oblique reference to Jamaat-e-Islami she said this party would not be able to do politics and continue their normal activities if Awami League comes to power.

She urged them to cooperate with BNP and strengthen the hands of nationalist forces to safeguard independence, establish democracy, and resolve people's problems.

'If you (Jamaat) love the country and want to do politics, establish democracy and keep 'Bismillah' Rahman' Rahim' in the constitution, come with the nationalist forces', Khaleda said.

Begum Khaleda Zia visited separately the homes of shahed Maharaj and Selim here yesterday.

Begum Zia talked to their family members and gave them some money.

She also assured them that if BNP goes to power, the two families would be rehabilitated properly.

Maharaj and Selim were killed in the city during the anti-Ershad movement late last year.

Blast at BNP poll rally: Five hurt

CHITTAGONG, Feb 1: Five persons were injured when a hand bomb was hurled on an election rally of BNP at Borerbazar of Shakerkhalia union under Mirsarai upazila, 65 km off here yesterday evening, police said today, reports BSS.

The injured persons were given immediate treatment at local dispensary.

Advertisement for 'Nikkaton' (নিকটন) featuring a large image of a woman and text in Bengali. The text includes promotional messages for a limited-time offer and contact information for the company.