

Kader Siddique meets BNP secy-general

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Krishak Sramik Janata Party chief Bangabir Kader Siddique yesterday had an exclusive meeting with BNP secretary general Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan at 29 Minto Road.

Earlier on Tuesday night, Siddique also held an exclusive meeting with BNP Chairperson and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia.

Details about any of the meetings could not be known, as Siddique was not available for comments while Bhuiyan refused to disclose anything.

Sources, however, said Kader Siddique, who resigned from parliament and was later expelled from the ruling Awami League on charge of violating party discipline, is now seeking BNP's support in the upcoming general election.

They said the veteran freedom fighter is seeking his party's election in two constituencies, one at Tangail for himself and another at Kishoreganj for Fazlur Rahman, a senior leader of his party. He has requested the BNP not to nominate any candidates from the main opposition or from the alliance for his Tangail-8 constituency or for

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BJP, Trinamool allies no more?

SAKYASEN MITTRA, Kolkata

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Wednesday asserted that it would contest for all the 294 seats in the West Bengal assembly elections, signalling an end to its honeymoon with the Trinamool Congress.

The decision came after a meeting between BJP Vice-president Kailashpati Misra and leaders of its West Bengal unit.

This has paved the way, to some extent, for a Trinamool Congress-Congress alliance in the state.

The BJP in West Bengal took a very firm stand on Wednesday.

"The question of discussion with Trinamool does not arise till they make their position clear about the National Democratic Alliance (NDA)," Misra said after the meeting. "Mamata Banerjee will have to state in clear terms what will be her future stand regarding the Alliance."

"We are still ready for an alliance only if our demands are looked into sympathetically. The list of candidates for all the 294 Assembly seats is ready," he added.

Sudip Bandopadhyaya of Trinamool said on Tuesday that there was no question of changing the constituencies given to BJP.

West Bengal BJP President Ashim Ghosh strongly reacted to it.

"We have been given negative constituencies, places that are known as Red Fortresses. How can

we contest there?" he said.

"If a BJP candidate wins, it will help Trinamool in the long run to form the government. But some Trinamool leaders want to show their personal strength rather than think of ways that will benefit the Alliance."

"In Dantan, 17 BJP workers were killed last year. We have voters' sympathy there. But that constituency has not been given to us."

West Bengal Congress President Pranab Mukherjee, however, did not have any meeting with Mamata Banerjee today, as announced earlier, to discuss a probable alliance.

"Yes, we will definitely have talks," Mukherjee had said. "Mrs Sonia Gandhi has entrusted me with the responsibility of opening up a dialogue with Mamata Banerjee."

Sources in Congress said Mukherjee has been holding meetings with Somen Mitra and Pradip Bhattacharya since Wednesday morning. In the afternoon, Mitra called up All-India Congress Working Committee member Kamal Nath and asked him to give the go ahead for formation of an alliance with Trinamool.

Mitra told Kamal Nath over telephone that it was the right time

now to make an alliance with Trinamool because the Prime Minister and all the parties of the NDA were fed up with Mamata, the sources said.

He also told Kamal Nath that Congress would demand a minimum of 70-80 seats from Trinamool and that Mamata would have to accept the demand, the sources said.

In the evening, feelers were sent to BJP that the Trinamool Congress wanted to open fresh talks. This came after there was "an open revolt within the party," sources said.

A large group of senior leaders headed by veteran politician Ajit Panja made it very clear that they would like the old alliance to remain.

The group includes Subrata Mukherjee, Mala Roy, Sovande Chatterjee, Pankaj Bandopadhyaya, Gautam Basu, Ashis Chakrabarty, Baishanor Chatterjee, Atin Ghosh, Tapas Roy, Sanjay Bakshi, Saugata Roy and Pradip Ghosh.

They may not vehemently oppose an alliance with Congress but will definitely distance themselves from Trinamool if the understanding with BJP fails, the sources said.



Looking for fortune
Women clean cattle horns in city's Hazaribag tannery area, which, priced at Tk 8 to 10 per kg, are used to manufacture melamine products and combs.

Call to ensure safe water to combat arsenic poisoning

Int'l seminar on 'water for people, water for health' ends

BSS, Dhaka

Speakers at an international seminar marking World Water Day yesterday called for forging regional cooperation to combat deadly arsenic poisoning, water pollution, health hazards and ensuring safe water for all.

They were participating in the concluding session of the two-day international seminar on "Water for People, Water for Health" organised by Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) and World Water Forum of

Journalists (WWFJ) at The National Press Club here yesterday.

Presided over by FEJB Chairman and WWFJ Secretary General Quamrul Islam Chowdhury, the concluding session was addressed by Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan MP, WWFJ member and CEJA Secretary General Nina Ratulele, WWFJ member and AFEJ Regional Director Mangal Man Shakya, WWFJ member and The Daily Star Managing Editor Syed Fahim Munaim, Health Ministry's Dr AZM Iftikher Husain, Water Ministry's Anifur Rahman, WWFJ member

Zahurul Alam and FEJB General Secretary Mofizur Rahman.

Dr Moyeen Khan described water as the river of life for the whole world and said lack of safe water is a more critical problem for countries like Bangladesh.

He emphasised the need for finding the root cause of the arsenic contamination in the groundwater of Bangladesh and traces of this deadly poisoning in the floodplains of Nepal and said mere marking of tube-wells red and green would not cure the arsenic patients.

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Transparency International Bangladesh survey Textbook crisis to tell on education system

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Most teachers and students of the secondary schools said the persistent crisis of textbooks and their sub-standard quality would adversely affect the overall educational system.

They said students of the secondary level would not be able to sit for their examinations in time this year, as they faced an 'irrecoverable' loss.

A survey report at a press conference in the Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) auditorium yesterday revealed these observations.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) conducted the survey among 53 headmasters and 636 students of 53 higher secondary schools under 27 thanas in 21 districts with a view to finding out the problems created by the textbook crisis.

The crisis has emerged as the three concerns of the BEXIMCO Group awarded the job of printing 8.5 crore textbooks by the National Curriculum Textbook Board (NCTB) have failed to print and distribute those books within the stipulated time which ended on November 30

last. The survey disclosed that none of the students of the secondary level could buy all sets of new textbooks even after more than two months of the beginning of classes.

Seventy-two per cent of headmasters said they were taking classes with the old sets of books, while 19 per cent said they were taking classes without any. Seventeen per cent, however, said there was no class at their schools.

Ninety two per cent students disclosed that they were facing

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Toxic water behind skin diseases, cancer

World Water Day seminar in city told



NGO Forum Chairman Fazle Hasan Abed addresses the seminar on Safe Water for Sound Health in the city yesterday.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar in the city yesterday said toxicity in water is greatly responsible for most of the skin diseases and also deadly diseases like cancer.

This goes undetected and causes slow poisoning like arsenic contamination. "Either we are not aware of this or the issue is being ignored," said one speaker.

"A significant number of deaths in the country are due to water-borne ailments. This is definitely because we have not been able to ensure safe water for all our people," said Zillur Rahman, Minister for Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives (LGRD).

He was the chief guest at the seminar on 'Safe Water for Sound Health' held on the occasion of World Water Day yesterday, organised by NGO Forum for drinking

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1,323 more expelled

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Expulsions numbered 1,323 during the General Science and Social Science examinations for the SSC yesterday.

The number of the expelled fell suddenly, as examinees did not get any chance to cheat thanks to the descriptive type of questions, sources said.

The expulsion number climbed in the Rajshahi board, but in the Sylhet board the number decreased.

One hundred and thirty nine examinees faced expulsions under the Dhaka Education Board, according to the board officials.

Of them, 58 were in Netrokona, six in Mymensingh, 14 in Kishoreganj, five in Gopalganj, 14 in Shariatpur, six in Munshiganj, two in Narayanganj, one in Faridpur, one in Manikganj and seven in Madaripur.

Five hundred and nineteen examinees were expelled under the Rajshahi Education Board on the fifth day of the SSC exams.

Ninety five were expelled in Chapainawabganj, 65 in Rajshahi, 33 in Naogaon, 127 in Pabna, 93 in Rangpur, 54 in Panchagar, 37 in Nilphamari, 30 in Lalmonirhat and 80 in Thakurgaon.

Two hundred examinees were expelled under the Chittagong Education Board.

According to the board officials, 166 were expelled from different centres in Chittagong, 24 in Cox's Bazaar and 11 in Rangamati and three in Bandarban.

Sixty-one examinees were expelled under the newly commissioned Barisal Education Board.

Of them, 33 were in Barisal, eight in Patuakhali, four in Bhola, seven in Pirojpur, four in Barguna and five in Jhalokati.

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Jamaat demands restructuring of EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami has demanded restructuring of the Election Commission (EC) with "acceptable and nonpartisan personalities" to ensure fairness in the next general

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Mar 23		6.11pm
Mar 24	5-59 am	

Prayer Timings		
March 23		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fazr	5-10	5-40
Juma	12-15	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-13	6-18
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation