

Godfathers out, godfathers in?

STAR REPORT

While a number of godfathers belonging to Awami League have departed from the parliament, about a dozen others belonging to the BNP with similar reputation have entered the legislature.

The changes at the political godfather level are evident from the recent capture of bus terminals, market places and 'toll collection points' in the capital and other parts of the country.

The BNP leaders alleged to have direct underworld connections include names like Salauddin Quader Chowdhury (Chittagong-7), VP Joinal (Feni-2), Illias Ali (Sylhet-2), Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu (Dhaka-8) and Hafiz Ibrahim (Bhola-2 constituency).

Among them, some have charges of killings, illegal occupation of land, leading armed cadres and collection of extortion money labelled against them.

Even top ranking BNP leader Mirza Abbas (Dhaka-6 constituency) is alleged to have involvement with the capture of bus terminals. A case filed under the Public Safety Act (PSA) has been pending against Abbas.

VP Joinal is the most notorious among the godfathers who have been elected this time. Joinal has replaced his counterpart AL lawmaker Joinal Abedin Hazari, the most-talked about Feni-based terrorist in the country.

VP Joinal, who came from JSD political background, joined the BNP in the 1990s and started confronting Joinal Hazari and eventually emerged as a terrorist to counter another terrorist. He was an accused in 18 cases for murder and possession of illegal arms during the AL regime and was

put behind the bars for a couple of years till recent times. Feuds between the two have claimed a good number of lives and made VP Joinal a 'prominent' name beside that of Hazari.

There are currently four cases against SQ Chowdhury. These recent cases include charges of murder and possession of illegal arms. Chowdhury, who allegedly leads a strong armed group in Raozan and Rangunia areas, was arrested a couple of months back from his residence and illegal weapons were found in his possession. He was later released on bail.

Pintu, also the president of BNP's student front Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), is accused of involvement in widespread acts of terrorism and leading terrorist groups in the old part of the city as well as on the Dhaka University campus. As a student leader, Pintu defeated AL nominee and infamous godfather of old town Haji Mohammad Selim by a very small margin.

There are a number of gold smuggling and extortion cases against Nasiruddin Pintu. In the early 1990s, he was an accused in a murder case at Dhaka University. Disliked by his own comrades, Pintu was declared an unwanted person by the JCD for several months earlier this year at Dhaka University.

However, when contacted, he totally denied having any involvement in any criminal activities. "These are lies. My opponents are spreading lies against me to taint my image," he said.

Mirza Abbas -- who was defeated by the AL leader Saber Hossain

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Activists of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad formed a human chain in front of the Jatiya Press Club yesterday, demanding an end to attack and repression on members of the minority community.

Naziur can't join Khaleda cabinet now

STAR REPORT

Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) Chairman Nazirur Rahman Monzur is not eligible to become a member of Khaleda Zia's cabinet for the time being as he was convicted and punished for corruption as a minister.

However, the legal bar in this regard would be over next month.

BJP is a component of BNP-led four-party alliance that swept the October 1 general election.

Secretary General of BJP Kazi Firoze Rashid told The Daily Star yesterday that Nazir would take oath as a minister after a month.

Sources said it was initially decided that Nazir would be made a minister now. But when the Cabinet Division inquired, the Law Ministry explained that he was convicted in a corruption case.

According to the Law Ministry explanation, while Nazir was in prison, the then president Abdur Rahman Biswas using his constitutional powers granted him amnesty on October 8, 1996. As per constitutional provisions, he is not eligible to become a member of parliament or minister within five years of his release from prison.

Nazir was released on November 18, 1996. So, he cannot become a minister before November 18 this year. That is why BNP has suggested him to take oath as a technocrat minister next month.

CA to address nation today

BSS, Dhaka

Chief Advisor Latifur Rahman will address the nation at 6:30 pm today. Bangladesh Betar will broadcast the address simultaneously from all of its centres, an official handout said.

Menezes urges govt for steps to stop attacks on minorities

UNB, Dhaka

European Commission head of delegation Ambassador Antonio de Souza Menezes yesterday appealed to the new government to take action against those who attack minorities and maintain law and order.

In a statement, he said many NGOs and other organisations had contacted the European Commission expressing their concern over the current level of violence specially against the minority people.

Menezes said they had raised the matter with BNP leaders at recent meetings and requested them to refrain their partymen from such acts.

"But it is still continuing ... I strongly urged the new government to take immediate actions to stop it and maintain law and order in such areas where attacks are taking place on minorities and their property."

AG Mahmudul Islam resigns

BSS, Dhaka

Attorney General Mahmudul Islam yesterday tendered his resignation to President Shahabuddin Ahmed.

"I have submitted my resignation letter in line with the convention in view of the election of a new government," he told BSS.

Islam, a senior advocate of the Supreme Court, was appointed chief law officer of the country on July 15, 1998.

Our Court Correspondent adds: Advocate Mohammad Kamrul Islam, Metropolitan Public Prosecutor, Dhaka resigned from his post yesterday.

Advocate Kamrul joined as Metropolitan Public Prosecutor on January 7 in 1999 after institution of Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka.

Haji Selim, five others get bail in criminal case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Six people including former Awami League MP Haji Mohammad Selim were granted bail in a criminal case yesterday.

The court of Metropolitan Magistrate Muksudur Rahman Patwari granted them bail upon a bond of Tk 5000 with two guarantors.

Selim and others along with their lawyers appeared before the CMM's Court Dhaka and prayed for bail. The prosecution side opposed it.

After hearing both sides, the court granted them bail.

It is alleged that Haji Selim and 10 others ransacked the portrait of BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia and assaulted Mohammad Billal, president of Jatiyatabadi Ghat Sramik Dal, on October 6 as they did not cast votes for Awami League in the October 1 election in his constituency.



Eric A. Cornell



Wolfgang Ketterle



Carl E. Wieman

Physicists who 'made atoms sing' win Nobel

REUTERS, Stockholm

Three physicists who "made atoms sing" won the 2001 Nobel Prize in Physics yesterday for freeing matter into a new state that may help make microscopic computers and revolutionise aircraft guidance.

Eric Cornell and Carl Wieman of the United States and Germany's Wolfgang Ketterle won the prestigious \$1 million prize for creating a form of matter that is extremely pure and coherent, in the same way that lasers are a pure kind of light.

"This year's Nobel laureates have succeeded -- they have caused atoms to 'sing in unison' --

thus discovering a new state of matter," the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences said in a statement.

Their "atom lasers" could in future draw microscopic computer circuits many times tinier than the smallest in use today, to build extremely fast, powerful and compact computers.

Atom lasers could also power very accurate guidance systems and gravity meters that could pinpoint the position of airliners and spacecraft to within a few centimetres (inches).

Traditional electronics, in which

electricity flies around circuits, and even photonics, which uses bursts of light, may eventually be replaced by futuristic "atomtronics", using atom lasers to shunt individual atoms around computer circuits, Phil Schewe, chief science writer of the American Institute of Physics, told Reuters.

Atoms in gases usually jangle around like billiard balls, bouncing off each other and nearby objects. But when cooled to within a hair's breadth of absolute zero, they rank together like soldiers on parade into a new form that is neither solid,

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Political violence kills 46 since Oct 1 election

30 victims belong to Awami League

SHAIKH NAZRUL ISLAM

At least 46 people were killed in political violence in the country since the October 1 parliamentary election.

Of the victims, 30 were leaders and activists of Awami League and its front organisations, nine of BNP and its front bodies, two were activists of Jamaat-backed Islami Chhatra Shibir while identity of five others could not be known.

Six people each were killed in Chittagong and Bagerhat, five in Feni, four in Bhola and two each in Barisal, Natore, Kushtia, Jessore, Bogra, Shariatpur, Sirajganj and Rangamati.

Besides, one each was killed in Narsingdi, Khulna, Naranganj, Lalmonirhat, Sunamganj, Jhenidah and Gazipur.

It may be mentioned that at least 131 people were killed in political violence across the country during the first 75 days of the caretaker government till the election as against 68 in the previous 75 days during Awami League rule.

Of the 131 people killed, 69 were leaders and activists of Awami League and its front organisations and 29 of BNP and its wings.

Most of them were killed in shooting during clashes between activists of Awami League and BNP-led four-party alliance.

Over 600 political clashes took place during the period also left several hundred people injured.

Sources pointed out that incidents of killing after the October 1 polls increased as police failed to take action against musclemen with political backing.

The law enforcers took no action against musclemen backed by BNP or its front organisations, several political leaders alleged.

These elements 'captured' various public places including bus terminals.

Even rooms at MP hostels were also 'occupied' without authorisation.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia repeatedly urged her partymen and all others to exercise restraint and not to take law in their own hands, but untoward incidents continued to take place.

In some areas of the country, attacks were made on people of minority community. The areas include Rampal, Morelganj in Bagerhat, Narsingdi, Rajshahi and Satkhira.

Some political leaders said the present situation has resulted from 'virtual inaction' of the caretaker government at the fall of its tenure.

Meanwhile, the longest ever police drive involving the maximum possible manpower is still going on in the country. Moreover, additional forces were deployed in different areas to maintain law and order.

FICCI urges govt to declare Sunday as weekly holiday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FICCI) yesterday pleaded with the upcoming new government to declare Sunday as the official weekly holiday instead of Friday for the greater national interest of the country.

A FICCI press release said currently Bangladeshi businesses could not carry out most international transactions for 3 days a week (Friday through Sunday) because almost all other countries of the world, barring a few Muslim countries, observed Sunday as the official weekly holiday and conducted regular business on Friday. As such, Bangladeshi businesses suffered from a great competitive disadvantage internationally, it said.

It pointed out that even an Islamic country like Pakistan observed Sunday as the official weekly holiday in order to keep pace with the rest of the business world as it had become increasingly important in an era of globalisation.

It also mentioned that the official weekly holiday in Bangladesh used to be Sunday before it was changed to Friday in the mid-1980s.

FICCI strongly urged the upcoming government to consider the matter seriously and rationally and take a pragmatic step by declaring Sunday as the official weekly holiday instead of Friday for the greater national interest.

FICCI also felt that a one-and-a-half to two hours of recess for Friday prayers would be sufficient for employees to fulfil their religious duties.

Cox's Bazar-3 polls: 6 file nomination

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Six candidates submitted nomination papers for contesting parliamentary election to Cox's Bazar-3 constituency yesterday.

According to district election office sources, the candidates are: Lutfur Rahman Kajol (BNP), Mushtaq Ahmed Chowdhury (Awami League), Engineer Mohammad Shahiduzzaman (Independent), Krishak Mohammad Sadek (Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Mukti Andolon), Omar Farook (Independent), and Shahajahan Chowdhury (Independent).

Engineer Md. Shahiduzzaman, younger brother of late BNP leader Advocate Khalequzzaman, submitted his nomination paper as independent candidate.

Yesterday was the last day for submission of the nomination papers.

The Election Commission postponed the election of Cox's Bazar-3 constituency following the death of BNP candidate Advocate Khalequzzaman on September 29, just two days ahead of the 8th parliamentary election.

The polls will now be held on November 1.



A US F-14 fighter takes off from the main deck of the USS Enterprise early yesterday as a second wave US-led air attacks on Afghanistan was launched (left). Away in Rome, a girl displays a placard with a call for peace as thousands of people demonstrated in cities throughout Italy on Monday.



Security Council offers unanimous support to US, British strikes

AFP, United Nations

The UN Security Council has offered unanimous support to the US and British military strikes against Afghanistan, said Council president Richard Ryan.

The Trish ambassador, who leads the council this month, told reporters late Monday that unanimity was "absolutely maintained" with regard to the US retaliation to the September 11 terror attacks that left around 5,500 people dead or missing.

France's ambassador Jean-David Levitte echoed Ryan's remarks, noting the "extraordinary unity" continued.

Ryan's remarks came after US and British ambassadors John Negroponte and Jeremy Greenstock went into closed-door sessions to inform the 13 other

security council members of the nature of the military operation against Kabul and Kandahar that began late Sunday and appeared to continue yesterday.

Among the targets said to have been destroyed by the missile strikes were training camps operated by the terrorist al-Qaeda network led by Osama bin Laden, the Saudi-born Islamist militant who is the prime suspect in the attacks, as well as military installations of Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia.

"We continue to enjoy strong understanding of the actions we have taken and clear understanding that we are acting in our inherent right of self-defense," Negroponte said. "I think this has been understood and anticipated all along."

The United States has warned

the Council it could take "further actions" against other countries in its war on terrorism and invoked the right of self-defense to justify its military riposte in Afghanistan.

"We may find that our self-defense requires further actions with respect to other organisations and other states," the United States said in a letter sent Sunday by the US-British coalition to announce the raids.

When pressed by reporters what those "further actions" could be, Negroponte said simply: "We reserved the right to exercise our right to self-defense in the future if we thought that was necessary," noting no member of the Council raised the same concern.

Greenstock handed the council a 10-page document, mentioned Thursday in a speech by British Prime Minister Tony Blair, listing

the proof implicating bin Laden in last month's attacks.

Tunisia, Bangladesh and Mali -- the three Muslim or Arab countries represented on the Council -- offered thanks to the US and British delegates for their information, particularly for the assurances that any strikes would avoid civilian targets and focus directly on the terrorists and the Taliban.

Other diplomats stressed that the unanimous support given the operations by the Council was unexpected, as many foresaw that the apparent consensus for retaliation would fizzle with the first shells blasted at the beleaguered central Asian nation.

Ryan anticipated the Council would meet today to discuss further humanitarian aide for Afghanistan.

Musharraf breaks ice, calls Vajpayee over phone

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

For the first time since the failed Agra summit, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf spoke to Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee over telephone Monday night and was told that no dialogue between the two countries would be meaningful as long as Islamabad harped only on the Kashmir issue.

Musharraf rang up Vajpayee around 9:00pm and, during the 15-minute conversation, said that the two countries should not do anything to escalate tension in the region and instead try to reduce it, highly-placed government sources in New Delhi said.

The Pakistani president said he wanted the Indo-Pak dialogue to resume and continue.

Vajpayee told Musharraf that India had never done anything that heightens tension and always stood for peace. He reminded the military ruler that it was because of India's commitment to peace that he had gone to Lahore in February 1999 and invited him to the Agra summit in July this year.

But Vajpayee made it clear to Musharraf that meaningful dialogue between India and Pakistan could only take place when all aspects - and not just one - of bilateral relationship would be discussed in totality, the sources said.

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