

Khoka to restore confidence in DCC, if elected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The ruling four-party alliance mayoral candidate in Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) Sadeque Hossain Khoka has said if he wins the April 25 fray, his first task would be to 'restore' the city dwellers' confidence in the DCC.

"The city people have lost confidence in the corporation in the last eight years as they suffered a lot due to its miserable failure to provide any service, resolve problems and ensure any development in the capital," he said.

Addressing a "Meet the Reporters" programme organised by the Dhaka Reporters Unity at its auditorium, Khoka said he would first 'remove' frustration of the city dwellers by taking steps to ensure that they get adequate service from the DCC.

He said although Awami League is 'indirectly contesting' the polls in 77 DDC wards, out of 90, for the posts of ward commissioner, it took an 'imprudent decision' to keep off the race for mayoral post.

Khoka, however, declined to make any comment on the 'failures' incumbent DCC Mayor Mohammad Hanif, saying, "I do not want to create further bitterness in politics." The city people are fully aware of the situation in the last eight years.

Replying to a question why he was not making specific commitments, he said that he was elected ward commissioner and then MP for several times without making any commitments.

"I will work sincerely, honestly and with dedication for the welfare of people. So there is no necessity of making commitments. With cooperation of all, I will try my best to make the city a beautiful place to live in," said Khoka who is also Minister for Fisheries and Livestock.

He said he is opposed to unplanned setting up of markets, shopping centres and bus terminals and parking of vehicles on main roads. "I have the plan to relieve the city people of traffic jam, air pollution and indiscriminate dumping of garbage."

Asked about the ruling alliance's nomination of "identified criminals"

as ward commissioner candidates, he said police published a list of 23 criminals contesting the polls, but none of the alliance nominees is in the list. He urged all concerned not to vote for those known as criminals in their respective wards.

He told a questioner, "Although I am a minister, I am not using any state facility in my campaign."

Khoka also said that if elected, he would take steps to establish coordination among the DCC, WASA, DESA and BTTB so that city people get rid of the sufferings due to frequent road digging.

Asked whether he would resign from the cabinet if he is elected DCC mayor, the city BNP chief said although there is no legal bar to holding both the posts, "I will abide the decision of my party."

DRU president Shahjahan Sardar chaired the function while general secretary Motaher Hossain Masum conducted it.

AL activist

FROM PAGE 12 Police sources said the army and BDR personnel raided the house of one Jahangir Alam Talukdar in the Housing Estate area in Comilla town, acting on a tip-off.

The arrested persons are Azharul Haque Arzu, Karimul, Sakhawat Hossain and Jahangir Ahmed Adel.

Feni Police Station said the arrested persons had been wanted since August 17 last year.

Nineteen warrants were issued against them in 50 cases, including those of mass-killing at Char Injeman under Sonagazi upazila and the murder in Sindurpur village under Daganbhuiyan upazila.

BSS adds: A leader of the Jatiyatobadi Chhatra Dal was stabbed at Shubhopur Bazaar under Chhagaloina upazila in Feni on Saturday night.

Police said a gang of armed criminals attacked Jahangir Alam Bhuiyan, 23, and stabbed him indiscriminately. He was admitted to the Chhagaloina Hospital.

A case was filed with the local police station in this regard.

HC rejects bail prayer of Bahauddin Nasim

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday rejected two separate bail petitions of Bahauddin Nasim, Awami Shechchashebak League leader and private secretary to Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina.

A division bench comprising Justice MA Aziz and Justice Mamtaz Uddin Ahmed rejected the bail prayer after hearing the petitions.

As his earlier bail petitions were rejected by the Court of Magistrate and Sessions Judge Court, the two separate petitions were filed before the High Court praying for ad-interim bail.

A criminal case was filed against Nasim for his alleged involvement in an attack on a motorcade of then leader of the then opposition (now prime minister) Begum Khaleda Zia at Madaripur on her way to southern region on June 17 last year.

Another criminal case was filed against him on February 27, 2002 for carrying illegal foreign currency. He was arrested from Zia International Airport when he was trying to leave for the United States.

At that time police recovered 6,300 US dollars from his possession while he had valid permission to carry only 300 US dollars.

Police security

FROM PAGE 1 A formality for this criminal (Newton) in the area because all arrangements have been made for his victory," said a resident at Mirpur 1.

According to traders at Mirpur-1 intersection and adjacent areas, ruling party musclemen led by Newton have taken control of all unauthorised offices of other political organisations and established their control over toll collection in the area.

"At least 600 vehicles including mini buses plying in routes 2, 9 and 14; taxis, tempos and autorickshaws, have to pay toll to the musclemen while crossing the intersection," said a trader.

When asked about deployment of armed security at Newton's house and his protection during public rallies, duty officer at Mirpur thana told this correspondent yesterday evening that she did not know anything about it. "It might have been done at the instruction of higher authorities," she said.

The OC was not available for comments.

When asked about the OC's mobile telephone number, she said it is not in operation.

Malaysian envoy

FROM PAGE 12 only a negligible number of undocumented workers were from here.

Asked if more Bangladeshi workers would be taken or those due to return be retained, he said that depended on the requirement and type of job they were engaged in.

Most illegal workers in Malaysia, he said, were from neighbouring countries like Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines.

Abdul Kadir who worked for a long time at the foreign ministry and served as deputy minister at several ministries felt that several opportunities existed for Bangladesh and Malaysia to work out two-way packages that could promote trade and tourism in both countries.

The area from Chittagong to the tip of Cox's Bazar and St. Martin's could be developed to attract tourists through joint venture cooperation. And Malaysian private investors could be interested in developing the tourism infrastructure, he said.

Malaysian tourism, the minister said, seems to be a success story. He said his country drew more than 12 million tourists to Malaysia last year.

"We are concentrating on the Asian market," the minister said. "You too could try to attract tourists. I can give you a tip: Tourism could give the highest return with the lowest investment," he suggested.

Asked about difficulty in obtaining Malaysian visa by visitors from Dhaka, the minister assured the process would be simplified before long.

He said his government would try to reduce the processing time so that visitors could obtain it within the same day.

BB rule

FROM PAGE 1 ation was done keeping in view the good borrowers.

"Term loans are of huge amounts and as such, if a borrower fails to repay one instalment due to some business difficulties, he faces huge financial involvement in getting it rescheduled," the BB official explained the latest central bank move. "So, we thought it was wise to help them out. But yes, there are scopes for misuse of the rule."

He, however, said the central bank was mulling a number of steps to discourage wilful default. He did not elaborate.

Meantime, it is learnt that at least two banks have rescheduled loans under the new provision. In the latest move, the Sonali Bank rescheduled Tk 170 crore loans of Rahman Group under the same conditions.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia speaks at the Education for All Week-2002 at the China-Bangladesh Friendship Auditorium in the city yesterday.

33,000 security personnel

FROM PAGE 1 Several hours before troop mobilisation, the first such deployment for any local government polls, Army Chief Lt. Gen. Harun-or-Rashid met Chief Election Commissioner MA Syed at the latter's office to discuss the existing law and order situation and the army's role in the election.

Explaining army deployment, Syed noted that it was due to the seemingly deteriorating law and order situation. "Troops deployment will scare away the 'naughty men' [trouble mongers]," the CEC told reporters immediately after the meeting.

According to official sources, 64 platoons of army have already been deployed in the three cities; 37 platoons alone in the 'most vulnerable' capital, 15 platoons in the port city of Khulna and 12 in the northern Rajshahi city.

Lieutenant General Harun said the army will try its best to ensure peace in the election areas before, during and after the polls. Asked whether the army has the authority to arrest criminals on the spot, the army chief said, "The troops will work along with magistrates and they would follow the magistrates' instructions."

Meanwhile, the EC has imposed a ban on carrying of licensed fire-arms, explosives and other injurious substances for 72 hours from Tuesday midnight. It also imposed a ban on the movement of five types of vehicles on the election day.

As the main opposition Awami League (AL) is staying away from the election, which finds some 1,349 candidates in the race, the poll has now become a contest between the ruling party and the independent candidates. A few numbers of local AL leaders are contesting in the posts of ward commissioners in all the three cities.

In most cases, the AL-linked candidates are under serious pressure from both the administration and their ruling party rivals, according to locals and candidates. Being 'threatened or repressed', such candidates have filed 174 general diaries with different police stations in the capital.

But the EC's action on such incidents is frustrating, commented an election official, preferring anonymity. He said the returning officers and the police commissioner was asked to look into the matters. "But due to time constraints, the authorities could not conduct a thorough investigation," he added.

On the other hand, despite the EC receiving over a hundred such complaints, it did not take any action against the alleged criminals.

In this context, the independent contenders are trying their best to get sympathy from the voters and moved from door to door, seeking votes.

In the capital city, 1,14,775 voters would exercise their franchise to elect their representatives -- a mayor and 120 ward commissioners including 30 women (reserved) commissioners among the 20 mayoral and 673 commissioner hopefuls.

In the Khulna City Corporations, 1,73,467 voters would choose their representatives -- a mayor and 41 ward commissioners including 10 women ward commissioners among the three mayoral and 275 commissioner candidates.

A total of 1,01,966 electors in the Rajshahi City Corporation are to elect a mayor and 40 commissioners, including 10 women commissioners, among the five mayoral and 373 commissioner hopefuls.

The EC has set up some 1,713 polling stations to accommodate a total of 14,23,228 voters in the three cities.

13 mayor candidates

FROM PAGE 1 election process.

Thirteen of these candidates observed a token hunger strike at Muktaganj in the city yesterday protesting the alleged violation of election code of conduct by the ruling coalition nominee, including influencing voters by abusing ministerial power. An action committee of these mayoral aspirants is due to announce a protest programme at a press conference in the city today.

On Saturday, they submitted a memorandum to Chief Election Commissioner MA Syed seeking action against Khoka for his alleged misconduct in electioneering. They also gave President AQM Badruddoza Choudhury a copy of the memorandum on Sunday.

"Violation of election code of conduct by the ruling coalition nominee is going on unabated as no action has yet been taken against him," said Adeb Raja who is leading the movement against Khoka.

These angry candidates also held a joint press conference last week to formally make their allegations public.

Electoral law does not require a minister to resign for contesting a local government election, but holding such a high-profile office does influence the voters in one way or the other, political analysts say.

And in the 1994 mayoral polls, none other than Mirza Abbas himself, the then BNP-nominated mayoral candidate, had set a precedent for quitting office when he resigned from the office of Dhaka's mayor before seeking re-election.

However, Abbas' commendable action having no legal compulsion followed mounting pressure from his strongest rival Mohammad Hanif of the Awami League. After losing the election to Hanif, Abbas was later made a cabinet minister in the then BNP government.

Addressing a meet-the-press programme of the Dhaka Reporters

Unity in the city yesterday, Sadek Hossain Khoka said he never used official facilities including cars in his campaign for the city polls, nor did he make any pledge to the voters as a minister.

Referring to the electoral law, Khoka said there is no legal bar for a minister to either contest the mayoral polls or continuing as minister even if he is elected mayor. "There are instances of holding both the offices...but I will go by my party decision."

DIG, five SPs

FROM PAGE 1 Inspector general (DIG) of police, four additional DIG, 24 superintendent of police (SP), seven inspector and 10 sub-inspectors to force retirement.

With the latest order the number of force retirement in the police department rose to 58 since the BNP-led four party alliance took over in October.

Nor'wester kills 12

FROM PAGE 1 educational and religious institutions, IRRI-Boro crops, snapped power and telecommunication lines and uprooted trees.

At least 100 of the injured were admitted to the Sadar hospital and different upazila health complexes.

Power supply network in the district remained snapped while over 300 telephone lines in the town and all upazila telephone exchanges remained inoperative since the storm.

Over 4,000 dwelling houses, 20 educational institutions including prestigious Kobi Sheikh Fazlul Karim Girls High School and 8 religious institutions were completely damaged in the storm.

Six motor vehicles belonging to 27 Rifles Battalion were damaged following collapse of a garage.

The district administration has sanctioned nine metric tonnes of rice for the victims of Sadar and Aditmar upazilas.

According to another BSS report from Netrokona, one person was killed and 50 people were injured when a severe nor'wester hit Dimla, Domar and Kishdhoriganj upazilas of the district Sunday night.

The dead was identified as Ashraf Ali, 50, of west Chhatnai village under Dimla upazila.

The storm damaged over 3,000 houses and Boro crops on over 7,000 hectares of land. Besides, two educational institutions were damaged and thousands of trees were

uprooted. BSS reported from Sherpur that a nor'wester hit Sherpur town and its adjoining villages Sunday night, damaging dwelling houses, standing crops and power supply lines.

A BSS report from Bogra said five persons were injured in a wall collapse when a nor'wester swept over Bogra town and its adjoining areas Sunday night.

The injured persons are: Abdus Salam, Kuddus, Solaiman, Momin and Saiful.

A UNB report from Rangpur said that at least 50 people were injured when a nor'wester lashed five upazilas of the district Sunday night.

Officials said the nor'wester accompanied with hailstorm damaged about 10,000 houses and uprooted over 100 trees and disrupted power supply and telecommunication in Gangachara, Taraganj, Badarganj, Kaunia and Pirgacha upazilas.

3 UPDF men

FROM PAGE 12 They were 'missing' in Kaptai lake at Rupban area under Borkol thana of the district after the gunbattle.

Proshan and Lengra Kanti died on the spot while Shujan was 'missing' since the gunfight, police said.

Police found the bodies floating on the lake and recovered them yesterday morning.

Loan rescheduling

FROM PAGE 1 and in one decade its classified loan totalled Tk 173.82 crore against only Tk 32.87 crore assets, according to a central bank report dated December 31, 2001.

The loans were taken against 11 enterprises of the Group. Rahman Hosiery Dyeing and Finishing, one of the enterprises, started business in 1991 with a principal amount of Tk 10.08 crore in loan, which went up to Tk 20.16 crore with accumulated interest over the years.

JC Hosiery Garments now has Tk 21.74 crore in loan although when it launched business in 1994 it had a loan of Tk 12.46 crore. Olympia Knitting Industries that started business in 1994 with Tk 13.17 crore loan now has Tk 23.07 crore in loan.

Rahman Spinning Mills Ltd. started business in 1996 with Tk 38.48 crore loan which has now snowballed to Tk 64.75 crore. Rahman Hosiery Garments started business in 1995/1996 with Tk 5.82 crore in loan and now the amount has reached to Tk 8.26 crore.

Rahman Quality Garments began operation in 1995/1996 with Tk 0.58 crore that has reached to Tk 1.16 crore with interest. Rahman Yearn Twisting started in 1989 with 0.35 crore that has reached to Tk 1.44 crore.

Fazlur Rahman Industries started business in 1995/1996 with Tk 0.22 crore that has now reached to Tk 0.47 crore; Fazlur Rahman Super Market started business in 1994 with Tk 1.80 crore loan and the defaulted amount now stands at Tk 4.46 crore.

Rahman Knitting and Yearn Processing started operation with Tk 0.04 crore loan that has come down to Tk 0.03 crore. Fazlur Rahman and Company secured Tk 33.02 crore in loan when it started business and it come down to Tk 28.28 crore.

The Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management (BIBM) had done a study on the enterprises of the Rahman Group a few years back. The study was the first of its kind where the defaulting company's portfolios were dissected by an institution.

The group was allowed different types of loan facilities and rescheduling benefits one after another with the patronisation of the bank's management, though none of its

projects/enterprises could show their repayment performances, according to the study.

The report said Rahman Group, with a negative net cash flow from operation and a negative net worth, is not capable to service the existing bank debts.

The BIBM study found that the group's management was the weakest area among all the operational aspects of the projects.

"Rahman Group is seriously lacking in that kind of managerial capacity, in terms of professional management, export marketing knowledge, production management, financial management, strategic decision-making, future planning, etc., which are needed for the efficient running of the projects of the sort having such a huge investment exposure," the report stated.

The management of the group is highly centralised symbolising the inflexible character of a closely held company. The top management members of the company are found to be lacking in appropriate professional qualifications which are the preconditions for quality leadership, the BIBM said.

"The mixing up of the projects in the same premise and absence of transparent financial disclosures have affected the independent viability of the projects and resulted in erosion of the repaying capacity of the group."

"The debt servicing capacity of the projects has come down to an abnormal low, prompting the sponsors to maintain 'evergreening' of loans by asking for frequent rescheduling," the BIBM report observed.

The sponsors did not submit the financial statements on a regular basis for fulfilling the requirements of the loan covenants. The statements contain a lot of inconsistencies in the data pertaining to the operational and financial health of the projects leading to inadequate analyses of such statements.

Anticipatory bail for Haji Selim

BSS, Dhaka

The High Court yesterday granted anticipatory bail to former Awami League MP Haji Selim in a criminal case filed against him with Lalbagh police station for his alleged involvement in an attack on a city corporation election procession.

A criminal case was filed against him on April 11 alleging that an election procession led by BNP leader and local MP of Lalbagh Nasiruddin Pintu was attacked under the leadership of Haji Selim on April 10.

A division bench comprising Justice M A Aziz and Justice Mamtaz Uddin Ahmed passed the order upon hearing the petition.

Graft case

FROM PAGE 1 In this way the former minister Motia and others accused in the case caused losses for the government, the BAC alleged in its case.

The others accused in the case are former joint secretary Md Shafayet Ali, Dr Md Ayub Rifat, Md Faruq Hossain, Ehsanul Aziz, Nayeemur Rahman, Abu Anis, Sultana Mamun, Nurul Huda and SM Erganjad Hossain.

Earlier, the BAC filed graft cases against 14 ministers of the immediate past government including the former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina since the BNP led four party alliance government took over. A number of bureaucrats also have been charged in those cases.

In contrast the government through an executive order last week withdrew graft cases filed against the incumbent Home Minister Atif Hossain during the AL regime.

Next budget

FROM PAGE 1 Telephone Board (BTTB) which still promises golden eggs for the exchequer.

Sources said this year's revised revenue income would be cut down to Tk 26,093 crore. At the same time, expenditure would be trimmed to Tk 21,000 crore. Foreign aid inflow is set to suffer a big jolt with the figure revised to Tk 8,032 crore from the original Tk 9,074 crore.

One of the areas of lowering next fiscal's expenditure would be capping the government's interest expenses on domestic loans, sources said. This year's outcome has been encouraging so far, with net government borrowing standing at Tk 1,161 crore as on April 4. It was Tk 2,160 crore on October 15 last year, when the government stepped in. The year-on-year figure is Tk 1,500 crore.

Meantime, the government is strictly monitoring and scrutinising all projects to rein in expenditure. A Bangladesh Bank committee headed by the governor is closely reviewing every payment over US\$ 1 million.

At the same time, all claims under reimbursable project aid (RPA) are also being seriously looked into.

Sources said the general practice was the project directors used to spend the local currency and bothered less to claim from the donor's reimbursement.

But now, the ministry is checking bank statements of the projects to

be sure that the project directors have settled the reimbursements with the donors and that the foreign currency has actually been transferred to banks before releasing fresh tranche.

Buddhist monk

FROM PAGE 1 murder, the sources said.

Some foreign countries, including the Netherlands and Japan finance the orphanage home to around 100 orphans.

The Japanese ambassador was scheduled to visit the temple on Friday next.

Dulal Barua was renamed Ganojyoti Mohasthobir after attaining the position of cleric and joined the monastery sixteen years ago.

The brutal killing of the monk whipped up a wave of condemnation among the people of all communities.

A mourning procession carrying the dead body paraded down the city streets and ended at the Buddhist temple for funeral yesterday evening.

The procession was joined by some monks and Buddhists who shouted slogans, condemning the killing and demanding punishment to the killers.

A case was filed in this connection. But none was arrested till filing of the report yesterday evening.