

BNP starts

FROM PAGE 1
He said the BNP parliamentary board would interview nomination-seekers from Chittagong and Chandpur districts today.

Some changes have been made in the interview schedule, Nazrul Islam Khan said.

Earlier a party press release said the parliamentary board would interview the nomination-seekers from Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Rangpur, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Joypurhat, Bogra, Chapainawabganj, Naoagan and Rajshahi districts under Rajshahi division on Thursday.

Hundreds of supporters and workers of the aspirants gathered at Hawa Bhaban in a festive mood and expressed their support chanting slogans. The gathering caused heavy traffic congestion in the area adjacent to the Hawa Bhaban causing tremendous sufferings to the residents of the area let alone the nuisance created by the crowd.

Journalists were not allowed to enter the Hawa Bhaban during the

interview and Hawa Bhaban volunteers obstructed the reporters from talking to the nomination seekers.

Party sources said many candidates raised corruption and terrorism allegations during their interviews against the party lawmakers in the last parliament.

Barrister Mahbub Uddin Khokon, a nomination seeker from Noakhali-2 constituency, told the reporters after his interview that he was hopeful of getting the nomination as the party lawmaker in the last parliament was corrupt.

Meanwhile, a group of BNP leaders and workers distributed handouts against Haji Mujib, a nomination seeker from Moulvibazar-4, for his alleged involvement with smuggling.

Gaziul Hasan Khan, former editor and managing director of state owned Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), also came out of the interview being optimistic about getting nomination for Comilla-5.

SC judges start work

FROM PAGE 1
December 4 and 5, held in the residence of Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassir Husain, says a news release sent by Deputy Registrar of the HC Division Aminul Haque yesterday.

In yesterday's meeting, the judges approved the decisions taken on the day before, and fixed Wednesday and Thursday for the HC Division judges' work stoppage. The meeting also requested the chief justice to fix a date and place for another meeting with both the HC and appellate division judges.

The earlier meeting decided, "It is resolved that the judges will not sit in their courts unless the Bar Association and the Bar Council condemn such acts and apologise for the dastardly acts done by them, at their behest and on their provocation and the offence is detested and punished to the satisfaction of the judges by lawful means and congenial atmosphere is restored on the Supreme Court premises," reads the release.

"It is resolved that the Appellate Division is requested to take appropriate action against the perpetrators of the offence by issuing contempt rule against those responsible and also filing a case of sedition under section 124A/188/504/505 of the Penal Code through any officer of this court in the appropriate criminal court," the release goes on describing the November 30 incident as follows, "Resolved that the blatant attack on the Supreme Court on November 30 by an organised group of lawyers and their flunkies leading to desecrating the flag of Bangladesh, damaging the properties of Supreme Court, damaging the windows of the court rooms and thus desecrating the holy seat of Justice, defying the order of the honourable Chief Justice in a naked and dastardly way, intending and calculated to disturb the tranquility of the State by creating ill will, discontent, disaffection, hatred and contempt towards the Chief Justice and for that matter towards the Supreme Court, disobeying and defying order of the Chief Justice instead of proceeding against it in accordance with law, creating turmoil and acts of violence

After a general meeting in Shaheed Abdul Ahad Hall on the SC premises, he said the judges got themselves involved with the activities of political alliances and urged the chief justice to stay aloof from political matters.

He reiterated SCBA's claim that the chief justice had no right to stay the proceedings of the petitions in the HC and that he even did not follow proper procedures.

Amir-Ul also said nothing had happened that endangers the judges.

Former and current SCBA leaders Abul Basel Majumdar, Ozair Farooq, Mahbubey Alam, Abdul Matin Khattun, Enayetur Rahim, and M Amin Uddin attended the meeting

Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum yesterday morning formed a human chain and reiterated its demands for issuing a contempt rule against pro-Awami League lawyers and for closing down the court until they are punished.

Khandaker Mahabubuddin Ahmed, Barrister Shahjahan Omar, Habibul Islam Bhuiyan, Nitai Roy Chowdhury, Jainul Abedin, Shah Khasruzzaman and others spoke at the event.

Commander Frank Bainimarama said he had taken over the role of the president and would dismiss Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase, who says he is under house arrest inside his residence in Suva, surrounded by heavily armed troops.

Bainimarama had repeatedly threatened to topple Qarase's government, which won a second five-year term in May, claiming it was corrupt and soft on those behind Fiji's last coup, in 2000.

"As of six o'clock this evening the military has taken over the running of the government and the country," Bainimarama told a news conference in Suva, the capital.

Bainimarama said a caretaker prime minister would dissolve parliament and he would surrender presidential powers next week, when Fiji's Great Council of Chiefs would be asked to reappoint President Ratu Josefa Iloilo to the post.

Iloilo would then appoint an interim government to prepare the nation for fresh elections, but he gave no timetable for new elections.

"The takeover will not be permanent, tomorrow I will summon the chief executive officers and charge them with the duty of running their own ministries until an interim government is appointed," said Bainimarama.

"We trust that the new government will lead us into peace and prosperity and mend the ever-widening racial divide which currently besets our multi-cultural nation," he said.

Fiji's three earlier coups, the first in 1987, were racially motivated with indigenous Fijians fearing they would lose political control of their nation to ethnic Indian Fijians who already control the economy.

Fiji's political crisis has alarmed South Pacific neighbours, with Australia sending three warships in case it needed to evacuate holidaying nationals. Bainimarama has warned that his soldiers will oppose any foreign intervention.

Fiji military stages coup

Fourth in 20 years

REUTERS, Suva

Fiji's military chief said yesterday the army had taken over running the country, plunging the South Pacific island nation into its fourth coup in 20 years.

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Acting CEC

FROM PAGE 1
correcting the mistakes in the updated voter list and rearranging the election schedule.

"We will take all measures to update and correct the list," he only said.

However, when his attention was drawn to the caretaker government advisers' plan to give the charge of acting CEC to an election commissioner to be appointed soon, he described the issue as an "important" one.

"Whoever comes next will be the sixth election commissioner and will be a junior in accordance with taking oath," said Mahfuz, who made himself the acting CEC on November 23 two days after CECMAAziz went on a three-month leave.

"The first to join the Election Commission [as an election commissioner] is the senior most," he said. Mahfuz found himself at the helm of the EC in line of superiority after CEC Aziz.

"Can a junior head the commission?" he said.

On the demand for rescheduling the hurriedly announced polls date, Mahfuz said, "Holding the election within 90 days is a constitutional binding. But other deadlines in the polls schedule can be changed."

Freight charge

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They however claimed that the ship owners had given a notice of fare hike around two weeks before making it effective.

BGMEA President S M Fazlul Hoque said the fare hike of containers is unlikely to affect garments sector directly as apparel export usually takes place on the basis of freight on board (FOB). But buyers would have to count extra bucks while placing orders for apparels from Bangladesh, he said.

He however declined to go into details before a thorough study of the fare hike.

12 Rab men

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Shamsuzzaman, Major Rashidul Hasan, Major Mostafa, DAD Nurul Haque, eight other unidentified Rab officials and plain-clothes men.

He alleged that the Rab picked up Babu on Friday evening from a teashop of Taherpur market and shot him several times in front of villagers and market goers after taking him 100 yards away from the tea stall.

Babu fell on the ground after the Rab shooting, Mollah said adding that the Rab opened fire in the air to disperse the mob later.

"As I went to the scene within minutes, Rab members prevented me and other family members from seeing Babu's body lying on the ground and it was bleeding profusely," Mollah told the court.

Babu's body was kept at Durgapur Health Complex and the family members were not allowed to take or see it for 48 hours, he alleged.

About delay in filing the case, Mollah said local police refused to record the case.

Babu, a third year honours student of Rajshahi Government College, was the president of Kismat Gonokoir Union unit of BCL.

Local AL staged demonstration at Durgapur town yesterday afternoon and also held a rally.

Upazila AL President Nazrul Islam presided over the rally, which was addressed by, among others, District AL President Tajul Islam Md Faruk and AL leaders Tofazzal Hossain, Abdul Khalek, Rahmatulillah and Azhar Ali.

They called upon all to rise against extra-judicial killings in the name of crossfire.

They said the Rab killed Babu at the dictat of former BNP lawmaker Nadim Mostafa to help BNP-Jamaat alliance to frighten AL ahead of the next general elections.

Tailored policies

FROM PAGE 16
sometimes incomplete data on the poorest, Mesbahuddin urged for improvements in data collection system.

Dr Naila Kabeer of the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex observed that the economic, human and political seeds of change must be sown and alternatives to strictly market-based or political solutions for the poorest must be explored.

The seeds of change must be sown so that the poorest can withstand market pressures, prevent or reduce intergenerational poverty, and facilitate participation in mainstream policies.

Syed Hashemi of the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) said he was concerned with the increasing losses of the social missions of microcredit as only 25-30 percent of microcredit loans would be provided by development organisations in the coming decades, while the rest would be disbursed by commercial banks or commercial enterprises.

David Hulme, of the University of Manchester, and Fazle Hasan Abed, chairperson of Brac, also reflected on the conference in the concluding session.

The Daily Star and Channel i were the media partners of the conference, while it was sponsored by the UK's Department for International Development, Canadian International Development Agency and the Aga Khan Foundation.

14-party starts sit-in

FROM PAGE 1
But as the police intercepted the processions, they held rallies at Russell Square, Dhanmondi Road No 27 and Agargaon.

A number of major roads near the EC were off-limits to motorised vehicles during the programme, causing sufferings to the commuters.

RUSSELL SQUARE
Addressing a brief rally at the Russell Square, the 14-party leaders threatened to go on an indefinite sit-in outside the Bangabhaban as well if the advisory council's decisions regarding reconstitution of the EC, correction of the voter roll and depoliticalisation of the civil and police administrations are not implemented.

Calling for an immediate cancellation of the election schedule announced on November 27, they said the polls timetable should be declared only after the EC is rendered non-partisan and an atmosphere congenial to free and fair conduct of election is created.

"We want the [interim] government to make a final declaration on the advisers' decisions," said AL Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed.

He added that they are on the verge of victory, still they will not leave the streets before reaching the objectives of their long-running campaign.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon said a fair election on the basis of a correct voter list matters more than holding polls within 90 days [since dissolution of parliament].

"We shall establish the people's right to vote no matter what gets in the way," he added, speaking from a makeshift podium on a truck.

The 14-party leaders and activists started to gather at the Russell Square from around 10:00am.

The law enforcers closed off the Dhanmondi Road No 27 by barbed wire barricades when the demonstrators tried to march towards the EC Secretariat at around 2:00pm.

Barred from approaching further, the 14-party leaders held the rally

and wound up the day's programme.

Among others, Mohammad Nasim, Abdur Razzak, Suranjit Sengupta, Obaidul Quader, Abdus Shahid, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Huq Inu, Gonotontri Party leader Nurul Islam and Gono Forum leader Pankaj Bhattacharya spoke at the rally presided over by Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya.

AGARGAON
Activists of the 14-party combine and allies massed at the Agargaon intersection after the police had halted their march towards the EC Secretariat.

They were carrying banners, one reading 'no election until the Election Commission is reconstituted and fake voters are expunged from the list'.

Processions coming from the direction of Rokeya Sarani had to stop at Agargaon intersection as the police put up barbed-wire fences there.

The 14-party, Zaker Party and Oikyabaddha Nagorik Andolon staged separate rallies.

Cultural activists sang patriotic songs from podiums built on trucks, keeping participants cheered up throughout the sit-in.

AL Presidium Member Motia Chowdhury addressed the gatherings.

A huge contingent of police and paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) personnel patrolled the area in armoured vehicles to make sure no procession entered the perimeter of the EC Secretariat.

Meanwhile, hundreds of commuters found it extremely difficult to get to their destinations during the rush hours as no motorised vehicles were allowed on the roads near the EC Secretariat.

Roads in Mohammadpur, Lalmatia and Dhanmondi areas were chock-a-block with traffic as the buses and private cars from Mirpur, Gabtoli and Savar used those during the sit-in hours.

Voter list correction

FROM PAGE 1
said yesterday.

Over 6,000 AROs will arrange hearing for deletion of names on December 13 and 14 and then will bring the changes in the voter list on December 15. But before that, they will have to send their recommendations to the EC seeking directives as the EC alone can amend the voter list after announcement of election schedule.

Earlier, while updating the voter list, the EC also did not publish the draft of the updated electoral rolls.

The updated voter list with a staggering 9.30 crore voters triggered enormous controversy over its correctness. It showed at least 1.28 crore unaccounted for voters as per the 2001 census report of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). According to the BBS report, there were 8.02 crore eligible people to be registered as voters.

EC Secretariat documents showed that 2,11,63,408 persons registered themselves during the updating while EC officials across the country deleted only 45,08,680 names from the list that had 7.64 crore voters.

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) revealed on Saturday that a total of 1.22 crore names registered in the updated list are either excess or duplicate.

The NDI submitted its report to acting Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Mahfuzur Rahman, who rejected it.

But the council of advisers to the caretaker government discussed the matter and asked the EC to make the voter list credible by correcting its mistakes.

The acting CEC and the EC secretary, who attended the meeting of the council of advisers yesterday on special invitation, informed the caretaker government of the EC plan for correcting the voter list.

Upon returning from Bangabhaban, the EC secretary told reporters that the EC staffs will visit door to door with the updated list for checking.

He sought cooperation from all political parties, NGOs, and the media in the task for correcting the updated voter list. The NDI will assist the EC in the task, he added.

An EC Secretariat press release also urged eligible people yet

unlisted to register their names.

Meanwhile, printing of the updated voter list has not been completed yet although the EC Secretariat ordered to complete the task in November.

On receiving instructions from the EC Secretariat, district election officers, who will act as the registration officers, last night said they will have to face tremendous difficulties in starting the task from this Friday.

Schoolteachers, who worked as assistant officials and AROs for updating the voter list, are now busy with examinations at their schools. "The examinations will continue at least until December 10. Besides, it is difficult to communicate with the schoolteachers within two days," a district election officer told The Daily Star last night.

Another district election officer said the forms for correcting the voter list are not available at the district election offices. "We are communicating with the EC Secretariat for the forms," he added.

Tigers clinch

FROM PAGE 1
lead for the hosts.

The Tigers had outclassed their southern African opponents by nine wickets in the first game at Khulna before achieving a six-wicket victory in the second game in Bogra on Sunday.

It was only the second ODI series triumph for the Tigers against Zimbabwe after a 3-2 home success against the same opponents last year. The overall fourth series victory -- they have won two against Kenya -- also helped them take revenge of a series defeat in Zimbabwe last August.

The win yesterday, however, did not come easy like the previous two matches as Habibul Bashar's men had to fight till the end in the day-night encounter.

For the first time in the series, Bangladesh came to bat first in Zimbabwean skipper Prosper Uteya won the toss but the Tigers failed to put on a challenging total when they were bundled out for 220 in 49.2 overs.

Opener Shahriar Nafees (35) and his partner Mehrab Hossain (38) were the notable scorers besides Mohammad Ashraf's 36 but it was Mashrafe, who recovered from a shoulder strain and passed the fitness test in the morning to be included in the side, who helped the side to cross the 200-mark with a quickfire 20-ball 23.

Christopher Mpfu was the most successful Zimbabwe bowler with 4-42 while spinner Keith Dabengwa captured three for 19.

In reply, Zimbabwe battled for 49 overs with Sean Williams and Elton Chigumbura (31) sharing an 85-run fifth wicket stand for the visitors but it was not good enough for them to overhaul the target. Williams made his second half-century in the series with a 109-ball 68.

Razzak became only the fourth Bangladeshi bowler to take five wickets in an ODI after Mohammad Rafique, Aftab Ahmed and Mashrafe.

Adviser Mashhud

FROM PAGE 1
decision [army deployment]... the army chief had called on the president and we don't know what they discussed. But I don't think the situation demands army call in," he told reporters at his ministry yesterday.

A congenial atmosphere has been created in the country to hold a fair and credible election as the caretaker government has taken a number of major decisions, he added.

Akbar said the issue of army deployment was not discussed at the advisory council's meeting on Monday.

Asked to comment on threats over telephone and a former minister's threat during Saturday's meeting between the BNP-led four-party and the president at Bangabhaban, he said, "I always say what my conscience holds as right, and it is what I have done in my life."

"I am a freedom fighter and I do not yield to any threat. In my government job, I have always spoken the truth outright and I am doing the same now," he added.

Cop, outlaw

FROM PAGE 1
Sensing the presence of the police team, the outlaws opened fire on the law enforcers, prompting them to retaliate.

Police said constable Jahangir and the outlaw were shot during the shootout and died instantly.

Rajbari police superintendent said NBCP member Akil Hossain, who is an accused in 27 murder cases, was presiding over the secret meeting at the house.

Police recovered one rifle and 40 bullets from the house.

He said police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) are jointly raiding the area to arrest the outlaws who managed to escape with bullet injuries.

Liberalisation

FROM PAGE 16
The WB said India will stand to profit more from the continuation of its policies of unilateral liberalisation, paying special attention to the removal of non-tariff barriers, specific duties on textiles and garments, and prohibitive tariffs on agricultural products.

"Progress could also be made to tackle informal and illegal trade that, by some estimates, could be as high as three quarters of recorded trade and is mostly from India to Bangladesh," the study said.

Pointing to the negative aspects of cheaper import, the report said, "By keeping out cheaper third-country imports, the FTA risks providing a captive, protected market where Indian producers might collude amongst themselves or with Bangladeshi importers to artificially increase prices."

On the other hand, cheaper goods from countries of East Asia, for example, might be excluded, forcing Bangladeshi consumers and businesses to overpay, the report said.

The study did not find any gain for India from the FTA. "For India, the economic benefits from a Free Trade Agreement would be modest since its trade with Bangladesh is small in relation to India's overall trade. These modest gains would mostly stem from expanded exports," it said.

Besides suggesting improved infrastructure at land border customs posts, streamlined customs procedures and administration, and expanded facilities at smaller customs border post, the study said Bangladesh needs to bring down its protective tariffs to levels closer to those of its competitors in South Asia and elsewhere.

Militant Galib

FROM PAGE 16
However, another RU teacher claimed that Galib was promoted to professor post two years ago and his job was confirmed despite his failing to render the required "satisfactory service" for over one year.

RU Registrar Abdus Salam, however, claimed Galib's job confirmation was legal.

Galib was arrested in February 2005 over allegations of scheming militancy and for his connections with different international militant outfits.

After his arrest, the RU authorities suspended payment of his salary and the suspension order is yet to be withdrawn, said sources.

Meanwhile, RU authorities lost documents that questioned Galib's secret tour to India. RU Registrar Abdus Salam said he was unaware of any file or documents regarding Galib's India tour.

In 1998, the then RU registrar Muhammad Yunus issued a show cause notice against Galib asking him to explain his visit to India with a business passport and without the authority's no objection certificate.

Prof Yunus was killed in December 2004 and Jama'atul Mujahideen, Bangladesh chief Abdur Rahman and Siddique Islam Bangla Bha's accomplices claimed responsibility for the murder later on.

Police implicated Galib in seven cases at different districts and mentioned his name as a leader of militants in a sedition case in Natore. Galib received bail in five cases but he was denied bail several times in a bomb blast case in Bogra and an NGO robbery case in Gaibandha.

Tough to find anyone

FROM PAGE 1
names of the persons. "You can also propose competent persons' names through your writings," he told journalists.

"It is unfortunate that all posts are now controversial, even if we resign from the posts of advisers, anyone would hardly agree to become an adviser," he added.

Talking to reporters in his office after a meeting of the council of advisers, Akbar Ali said, "Two main issues will dominate the discussions with political parties -- holding of the election within the stipulated 90 days period after correcting the voter list and rearranging the election schedule."

He said all efforts of the advisers are directed to holding the election within the 90 days period since the dissolution of the last parliament, as stated in the constitution. There is not enough time, and if the EC decides to change the election schedule it should do that within a couple of days, he added.

Replying to a query on whether the election date could be changed, he said it will be very difficult as the EC is bound to declare the election results by January 25. "So, if there is to be any change in the election date it could be January 22 instead of 21, but not January 26."

Asked about a guideline for resolving the ongoing crisis, he said, "We don't want to give any guideline to the Election Commission since constitutionally it is an independent body. It's the EC which should hold discussions with the political parties to end the impasse. But, it's true that the EC has made hardly any effort to hold such discussions."

"Alternatively, we are assisting the Election Commission in holding the election," he added.

He predicted more hurdles in the future for the caretaker government as well as for the EC, and said, "We are now passing through the first tunnel to bring all the parties to the election. There are other tunnels that we will have to pass."

BDR man killed

FROM PAGE 16
The smugglers opened fired on the BDR team and killed Jafor after kidnapping him.

Shapori border outpost Nayeb Subedar Majid filed a case against six smugglers.

Teknaf BDR Commanding Officer AMMAKaisar visited the spot.

Meanwhile, border forces of both sides of the frontier have been put on alert, sources said.

Pakistan would give up

FROM PAGE 16
In an interview with Indian news channel NDTV, Musharraf reiterated a phased plan to solve the decades-old dispute over Kashmir, proposals he also spelled out in his recent memoirs "In the Line of Fire".

Asked if Pakistan would give up its claim to Kashmir if India agreed to implement this plan, Musharraf said:

"We will have to ... Yes ... If this solution comes up," according to a statement from NDTV.

"I'm not giving up ... at all ... but one is prepared to give up, in case India leaves its stated position also," he added later when pressed.

First, Musharraf wants India and Pakistan to focus on the parts of the former princely state of Kashmir that are genuinely disputed by both sides, according to details of a plan he has discussed in the past.

For example, Pakistan might give up any claim to the mainly Hindu Jammu region and the largely Buddhist region of Ladakh, if India renounced its claim to the overwhelmingly Muslim areas of Gilgit and Baltistan currently ruled by Pakistan.

That would leave a majority Muslim region centred on the Kashmir Valley, most of which is now under Indian control but a part of which is ruled by Pakistan.

The Kashmir Valley is also the centre of a 17-year insurgency against Indian rule, which has been backed by Pakistan.

The two sides would then soften the border dividing Kashmir until it became "irrelevant", so that people and goods could move freely. A phased demilitarisation would

follow on both sides of the current Line of Control dividing Kashmir.

Autonomy or self-governance would then be offered to Kashmiris, under the joint supervision of the two countries.

The proposals are nothing new but Musharraf has in the past expressed his frustration at what he sees as a lack of response from the Indian government.