

BNP starts

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He said the BNP parliamentary board would interview nomination-seekers from Chittagong and Chittagong 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, Jyotipurhat, Bogra, Chapainawabganj, Naogaon 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.

Acting CEC

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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 CEC MAAziz 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 the 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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and outrage endangering the public peace in and around the Supreme Court demonstrated clear acts of the sedition against the State which includes Governments established by law including legislature, judiciary and executive."

The meeting also decided to seek 'sufficient' security for individual judges in their residences, in the courtrooms, and on the SC premises as a whole with immediate effect.

Following the judges' decision, Rafiqul Islam, the SC court keeper, filed a complaint with the police station with a request to register it as a regular case, but police recorded it as a General Diary (GD).

In the GD, he mentioned that about 200 people including lawyers of three writ petitioners, who had filed petitions regarding the ongoing electoral dispute in the country, their assistants and some outsiders vandalised the chief justice's chamber, courtrooms and other public properties after the chief justice had issued a stay order on the petitions.

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 best and on their provocation and the offence is detected 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 Shekhar 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 Basir Majumdar, Ozair Farooq, Mahbubul Alam, Abdul Matin Khashnu, Enayetur Rahim, and M Amin Uddin attended the meeting among others.

Jatiyatobadi Ajnabi 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.

Stating that SCBA will continue boycotting the court of chief justice, the association's President Barrister Amir-Ul Islam said the meetings in a new crisis, which is unfortunate for the nation.

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

World failing

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civilians die right now from violence directed against them" in Iraq, he said.

At a UN summit in September 2005, world leaders pledged to protect civilians from genocide, war crimes and ethnic cleansing. A Security Council resolution adopted in April reaffirmed their agreement.

"Last year as members of the United Nations you solemnly pledged to accept the responsibility to protect civilian populations," Egeland said. "We are sadly still far away from seeing this responsibility translate into predictable and adequate action."

Even though recent analysis indicates that the number of conflicts declined by 40 percent since 1989, he said, civilians are increasingly the victims. Attacks against noncombatants increased by 55 percent between 1989 and 2005, Egeland said, with the most significant increase occurring in the last five years.

Egeland cited several reasons for the increase in the proliferation of armed groups supplied with sophisticated weapons and "the intentional, reckless and often times disproportionate use of military weaponry and tactics with little or no regard for their impact on the civilian population."

Tailored policies

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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 politics.

Yed 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

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But as the police intercepted the processions, they held rallies at Russell Square, Dhamondi 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 depolitisation 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 Dhamondi 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 Razzaq, Suranjit Sengupta, Obaidul Quader, Abdus Shahid, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal President Hasanul Huq Inu, Gono Forum 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 EC 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 Andolok 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, Lalmoni and Dhamondi areas were choke-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

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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 7,64,300 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) Mafuzur 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.

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