

Democratic field to grow after Hillary throws hat into ring

AFP, Washington

The field of US Democratic presidential contenders was expected to grow even more yesterday after Senator Hillary Clinton dramatically reshaped the budding contest by entering the 2008 race.

New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, a former US ambassador to the United Nations and energy secretary, is likely to announce that he is creating a presidential exploratory committee, according to people close to the Democratic Party.

Richardson, a prominent Hispanic leader, will appear on ABC's "This Week" program that airs at 9:00 am (1400 GMT) Sunday.

He said Friday he believed Congress needed to either put legal caps on the number of US troops in Iraq or to take other steps to stop the war.

"I have very firmly said the troops should be withdrawn this year, redeployed," Richardson told MSNBC television.

Still, his announcement was expected to be overshadowed by reverberations from a bombshell dropped Saturday by the former first lady, whose long-awaited entry into the race opened up what promises to be one of the most exciting and groundbreaking political contests in US history.

As it is shaping up, the race will be pitting Senator Clinton, determined to become the country's first female president, against fellow Senator Barack Obama, who aims to be the first African-American in the White House.

"I'm in. And I'm in to win," Clinton said in a video announcement on her website Saturday.

Four days before Obama signaled his own plan to fight for the nomination, saying he had formed a committee to test the waters and start raising money.

With their entry the field of confirmed Democratic hopefuls expanded to seven, still 12 months ahead of the first crucial state-based primary elections that will decide the Democratic and Republican party nominees who battle for the White House in November 2008.

Clinton, 59, the wife of former president Bill Clinton, ended years of speculation over her political ambitions with her announcement.

"The frontrunner has just stepped on the stage," said Washington's veteran political analyst Charlie Cook.

"This is the first woman in our history who will be taken seriously

Ulfa leader's claim

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he does not know the identity of those officials.

Bangladeshi newspapers and television channels carried the news with utmost significance.

A Bangla national daily reported that former National Security Intelligence (NSI) chief Maj Gen Rezakul Haider Chowdhury assisted the Ulfa in carrying out the attack on August 21 and Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) later in raising bomb attacks.

Meanwhile, Ulfa Chairman Aravinda Rajkhowa yesterday denied his party's involvement in any attack in Bangladesh.

A CID official yesterday said they do not totally brush aside the possibility of Ulfa involvement in the attack and will try their best to verify the information.

Home Secretary Abdul Karim yesterday said he asked for information in this regard from the Bangladeshi intelligence agencies and the foreign ministry. "We will decide what to do after we get the information," he told reporters at his office.

Meanwhile, questions like who plotted the attack, what was the attack's motive, who supplied the grenades, how the same type of grenades were sneaked into Dhaka Central Jail, why the evidence was destroyed deliberately, and why two victims were buried hurriedly have remained unanswered although two years have passed since the grenade attack to assassinate Al chief Sheikh Hasina.

The government has not only shown lack of interest in bringing to justice those who carried out the grisly attack but is yet to clear why law enforcers totally failed to ensure security at the rally and arrest any of the attackers from the spot.

Although the government attempted to earn public acclamation by inviting the Interpol and US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), it has failed to make any credible revelation into the mystery.

The investigators attempted to submit the charge sheet of the case over a year ago basing on the confessional statement of Joz Mia, but the government held them back following media flak terming Joz

by everyone," said political scientist Ruth Mandel of Rutgers University.

But while polls showed Clinton the odds-on favorite to capture the Democratic nomination next year, her continuing ability to divide voters meant that the race was still wide open with Obama, former senator John Edwards and others yet to commit to the race angling to demonstrate they have a better chance to defeat the Republican challenger.

In a Washington Post-ABC News poll released Saturday based on voters surveyed before her announcement, Clinton outpaced Obama 41 percent to 17 percent in the contest for the Democratic nomination.

Likewise, a Gallup poll taken a week ago put Clinton ahead with backing from 29 percent of Democratic voters, compared with 18 percent for Obama and Edwards at 13 percent.

But questions remain over whether Clinton, whose eight years as an untried first lady left a large swath of US voters cold, can defeat any politician the Republicans choose to fight for the White House.

A CBS News poll at the beginning of January pointed to her big weakness: 38 percent of all voters, and a whopping 78 percent of Republicans, have decidedly unfavorable feelings toward Clinton, suggesting that in a country closely divided between the two parties she might not have the ability to woo the Republicans necessary for a decisive victory in 2008.

Indeed, a Newsweek poll released Saturday suggested that Edwards, the vice presidential running mate of John Kerry in their ill-fated campaign for the White House in 2004, could be the Democrats' best bet.

Asking voters their preference in certain matchups, Newsweek reported that Clinton, if she runs against Republican Senator John McCain, would narrowly come out ahead, 48 percent to 47 percent.

In an Obama-versus-McCain scenario, the Democrat carried 46 percent against McCain's 44 percent. But Edwards trumped McCain 48 percent versus 43 percent.

Measured against current leading Republican contender Rudy Giuliani, a former New York mayor, Clinton came out one percentage point behind and Obama was two points behind. But Edwards held a 48-45 percent lead over Giuliani.

Meanwhile, the advisers to the industries and agriculture ministries will comprise the national award committee headed by the communication adviser.

The previous caretaker government, headed by President Iajuddin Ahmed, had made the law adviser the head of the purchase committee though usually the finance ministry chairs it.

SC asks govt

FROM PAGE 1
forgiveness as the proceedings began at 9:42am. After a while, they were however asked to sit down.

Attorney General (AG) AJ Mohammad Ali said the rules for the judicial services have already been submitted to the court in affidavit.

In reply, the bench said it has detected some errors in the rules and those need to be corrected.

Mohammad Ali said the rules were promulgated in line with the court order.

"One or two errors may be there, but there is no deviation from the court directives," Ali said.

The bench then asked him to minutely re-examine the rules, get rid of the flaws and issue a gazette notification on the amended CrPC. It also wanted to know when the ordinance of the CrPC would be issued.

At that point, Mohammad Ali asked for two weeks' time to complete the amendments to the CrPC.

But unsatisfied with the answer, the court reminded the AG that he had earlier sought 10 days for the work to be done. It said it couldn't wait forages.

President Iajuddin Ahmed approved the four rules of the judicial services on January 16. The following day, the AG explained the rules to the Appellate Division that after a hearing ordered the government to submit all rules before it by January 21.

The mystery behind the quick burial of two unidentified victims on August 22 night has not been resolved.

The one-member government judicial inquiry commission of Justice Joynul Abedin linked a foreign enemy with the attack but his report was not made public.

The government is yet to declare if there were any recommendations in that report and, if any, whether they were implemented.

The judicial inquiry commission claimed to have identified the perpetrators but its head declined to disclose their identity.

"The incident is a stark attack on the independence and sovereignty of the country," Justice Joynul Abedin had told reporters.

Mia's story very weakly-woven.

Twenty people were arrested after the attack but 17 of them were released as the allegation against them had "no merit". The rest three gave statements admitting their involvement in the attack.

The investigators are alleged not to have collected the pieces of evidence, including the unexploded grenades, which were vital for the investigation.

Army explosives experts detonated two unexploded grenades—one found near the spot and another at the adjacent Gulistan Hawkers' Market—in the dead of night without taking fingerprints on them. They carried out a similar detonation of another grenade recovered from the Dhaka Central Jail a day after the attack.

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Judicial probe

FROM PAGE 16
hero for destruction in the power sector, which was false, fabricated and concocted and it was done to dent Mamun's image.

However, according to the law, only the person, who loses reputation, name and fame for newspaper reports or anyone's personal behaviour, have to file defamation cases.

Earlier, an advocate filed a similar case with the CMM's court on behalf of BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman against the same defendants for allegedly running a defamatory news item casting aspersion on Tarique's character.

The government yesterday formed the advisers' committee on administration with the chief adviser as its head. "This committee will assess the situation and bring changes if necessary," the source said.

Amidst uncertainty about getting the free books, the school authorities find no way but to suggest the anxious guardians to buy

the original price of each set of class V books stands at Tk 140 while books of class IV and III cost Tk 145 and 140. A set of books of both class II and I are being sold at Tk 40 in the wholesale market," said Md Ali, owner of Mousumi Book House at Bangla Bazar. Retail prices of each set of class V, IV, III, II and I vary from Tk 200-250, Tk 180-200, Tk 170-180 and Tk 60-70 at Bangla Bazar. Outside the capital, each set of class III, IV and V books cost Tk 120 while a set of class I and II books are selling at Tk 60.

Most of the government, non-government and private primary schools started classes for this academic year in the first week of January but free textbooks are yet to reach the students.

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