

Barack Obama seeks to conquer Texas

AFP, Fort Worth

Democrat presidential frontrunner Barack Obama is seeking to conquer Texas, the conservative home ground of President George W Bush, hoping to permanently derail rival Hillary Clinton's run for the White House.

Democratic voters, an endangered species in Texas, are on the move for the Illinois senator, who wherever he goes draws huge crowds of enthusiastic followers, often times political neophytes.

Recent polls put Obama ahead of Clinton in Tuesday's Texas primaries, which if they hold true would deliver a near mortal blow to the former first lady's presidential ambitions, many experts concur.

Ahead of an Obama rally in Fort Worth late Thursday and a Clinton rally next Saturday in the same city, Texas Democrats are energized and ready.

"It's the most attention we've had since Lyndon was running," said former state lawmaker Bob Barton, referring to former president Lyndon Johnson who succeeded president John Kennedy after his 1963 assassination in Dallas, and in 1969.

Unlike Johnson, a native Texan, Obama, an African-American, was born in Hawaii and was raised partly in Indonesia. His father is from Kenya and his mother from Kansas.

Barton, who publishes the weekly Hays Free Press, south of Austin in Hays, boasts of always voting Democrat since 1956 and of being an Obama follower. He says the enthusiasm he generates reminds him of Robert Kennedy's run for the presidency in 1968.

"Of course, Bobby Kennedy had that, but he got killed before he got to Texas," he said alluding to his assassination in California that same year.

The hall where Obama's rally is held in Fort Worth is a stone's throw from the hotel where President John F Kennedy spent his last night before he himself was killed on November 22, 1963.

Musharraf

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released within the next two days," Burney, who also heads a private welfare trust, said in a statement.

Burney said the President expressed "shock and disbelief" when informed about Singh and accepted his mercy petition and issued orders for his release and repatriation.

He added that he had now located Singh's family in India.

Nuclear-armed Pakistan and India have fought three wars since their independence in 1947 but launched a slow-moving peace process in 2004.

They have recently held a series of prisoner exchanges, mainly of fishermen who strayed into each other's territorial waters and were detained.

Cellphone jammers

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According to the jail authority sources, a number of other VIP prisoners also have been using mobile phones in prisons as well as various other criminals, dodging the eyes of the authorities.

The seizures of mobile phones prove that mobile phones are somehow being smuggled into jails, the IGP-prisons said adding, "We have decided to install cellphone jammers, so the mobile phones smuggled into jails by prisoners won't work."

Our Rajshahi correspondent Anwar Ali reported that Deputy Inspector General of Prisons (DIG-prisons) at Rajshahi Maj Hafizur Rahman Mollah said, "The authorities of all 16 prisons in the northern districts have been asked to provide data about where in the prisons the jammers could be installed, without interfering the signals in areas adjacent to the prisons."

The jail authority sources said they also asked the jails to provide data regarding whether they have division wards and hospitals where VIP prisoners are usually kept, and what are the capacities of those as well as of the general cell blocks.

CEC: Govts since '71

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consequences of the deeds of former president General Ershad and Pakistani leaders including Ayub Khan and Iskander Mirza.

He said none of them could escape punishment and people's wrath, as they ignored people's will and the parliament.

"The history of Pakistan could have been different if the then Pakistani leaders acted according to the six-point demand placed by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman," Sircar said.

Meanwhile, Sircar told the journalists that he is ready to work for strengthening unity of BNP, if the two factions of the party are willing to sit together.

Recalling the historic days of the language movement of 1952, movement veteran Abdul Matin said today's intellectuals are forgetting

But the young Obama crowd doesn't really care about ancient history.

For Brian Henretta, a student, Obama "represents... the idea that these stuffy old ways of doing things can change."

On Wednesday, around 12,000 mostly young people like Henretta went to hear Obama speak at the University of San Marcos campus, between Austin and San Antonio.

Obama has generated a buzz among young voters with his soaring speeches.

"The fact that we have such an energized electorate is a very good thing," said Carol Wilder, chair of the San Marcos Area Democrats.

"I haven't seen anything like this in years. In fact I don't think I ever have."

Texas Democrats can take part in two separate votes on Tuesday.

First they head to regular voting stations to choose 126 delegates to nominate a candidate at the party's convention in Denver in August. In the evening, caucuses will be held to select a further 67 delegates.

Liberation war

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They also called upon the freedom fighters and politicians to work together to overcome the existing crisis in the country.

"If Osmani were alive and had attended this meeting at this moment, his demands would be specific and focused. The demands would include bringing the war criminals to justice, reinstating democracy and establishing a government of the people and by the people. We demand the same," said senior five Commander Lt Gen (ret) Mir Shawkat Ali, Bir Uttam.

"At the beginning of the liberation war, there was lack of co-ordination among the freedom fighters. They became organised after Osmani was made the commander-in-chief of the Liberation Forces," said senior four Commander Maj Gen (ret) CR Dutta.

"As far as the 1971 liberation war is concerned, the contribution of the young people was tremendous which cannot be measured," said Maj Gen (Ret) BG Gupta, who fought for Mitra Bahini in the liberation war.

The government must recognise those who had to pay a price for the liberation war. Even Osmani had not been given proper recognition. But it would not be possible to erase his name from history, said BMF Chairman Maj Gen (ret) KM Shaifulah, who presided over the meeting.

"The country is in the present state because it moved away from the values it fought for in 1971. If the war heroes are given proper recognition for their contribution, it would help establish the country we dream of," said Prof Dr Neem Chandra Bhowmik.

BG Gupta was given a crest by the BMF for his contribution to the liberation war of Bangladesh.



Sewage from a ruptured sewerage line underneath surfaces through a large hole in the road at Malibagh Chowdhurypara in the capital; putting vehicles at risk and spreading a stench in the area.

Reconciliation Smaller parties

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decisions taken at the October 29 meeting of the standing committee would have to be cancelled for any dialogue to take place.

The standing committee meeting in question did not approve the chairperson's orders expelling Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and Ashraf Hossain and instead reinstated Bhuiyan as its member. It also appointed Saifur and Major (ret) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed as acting chairman and acting secretary general.

Meanwhile, Brig Gen (ret) Hannan Shah, an adviser to the now detained chairperson, has recently said he will strive to unite the party. He however declined to elaborate on his plans to that end.

Insiders say pro-Khaleda leaders have no problem with return of most of the Saifur-led group, but they have strong reservations about bringing the expelled leaders back into the fold.

Most of the pro-Saifur faction leaders now have no objection to Khaleda Zia retaining the helm, but they would not accept Khandaker Delwar as the secretary general.

"Through dialogue, the senior leaders should not have difficulty finding someone acceptable to both the factions to replace Delwar as the secretary general," a pro-Saifur leader told The Daily Star last night.

A good number of pro-Khaleda leaders too support the idea as they think Khandaker Delwar has failed to resolve the internal crises. But they remain opposed to taking back those expelled for anti-party activities.

One of them said, "Only the chairperson can decide on the expelled leaders' fate." Besides, the decision on appointment of a new secretary general too rests with her, he added.

Earlier on Thursday, Maj (ret) Hafiz said there is no alternative to unity. Petty differences could be removed if the two leaders - Saifur and Delwar - agree to be at the negotiating table.

Second Test

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were able to give even some trouble to the openers by stopping their record-breaking path.

It was a day for the home players to chase the ball all through as left-handed Smith was unbeaten on 223 with the help of 31 fours and a six and his right-handed partner McKenzie smashing an undefeated 169 that featured 20 boundaries and two sixes.

During their association, Smith and McKenzie broke the South African opening stand of 368 in which Herschelle Gibbs was the other batsman involved with his captain against Pakistan in 2002 at Cape Town.

Book fair

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stalls for the academy prizes for their eye catching and artistic decorations. Shahitya Prakashani, Suborno, and Monon were selected for the first, second and third prizes for the year 2008.

Speaking at the ceremony, Rasheda K Choudhury said Ekushey Book Fair has been successful with active participation and wholehearted co-operation of readers, writers and publishers. The book fair is an exhibition of creativity, she added.

She thanked all concerned for extending all out cooperation for holding the month-long fair that began on February 1.

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to form a consensus government fearing they might not be able to make it to the next parliament because of their role in the post 1/11 days, added the sources.

At the same time, some of the parties with little representation in the last three parliaments want to strengthen the relations with Awami League (AL)-led combine.

They favour a united stance on the issues to be discussed during the dialogue between the caretaker government and political parties, added the sources.

Most of these left-leaning and moderate political parties believe that a programme-based national consensus government after a free, fair and credible election is a must to establish a sustainable democ-

Saarc ministers

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investments in these areas, they added.

A number of the areas in which Saarc countries like India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal have bilateral investments include energy, food products, pharmaceuticals, garments and textile.

Tourism is one area where all Saarc countries are interested in investment pouring in. Some additional sectors could also be identified.

Establishment of a dispute settlement mechanism would be a key part of the treaty and the issue is likely to come up once again in the meeting.

Reflecting its own keenness to see a spur in cross-border investment in South Asia, India had in January this year allowed investment from Bangladesh through Foreign Investment Promotion Board route.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee had supported the move to remove Bangladesh from the negative list of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into India. Pakistan is the only country from where investment into India is barred.

Officials in New Delhi say

Billboards on rooftops

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Besides the ban, DCC guidelines on outdoor advertisements allow no overhead billboards in front of hospitals, government offices, educational institutions, mosques, temples, churches, museums, and historical sites.

However, Shahab, Bangla Motor, Karwan Bazar, Farmgate, Mirpur Road, Mohakhali, Gulshan, Kuril Bishwa Road, Airport Road, Dhaka University campus and other major roads and intersections are bristling with over 10,000 billboards and other signage.

Over 3,000 rooftop billboards are currently installed in the city. Haphazard bristling of billboards, trampling on the aesthetics of the city, is exceedingly blocking the city residents' view of the open sky and the landscape, complained a number of Dhaka residents.

According to DCC rules, the size of a billboard may not exceed 13 square feet and it cannot be built within 10 feet or 3 metres of the edge of a road.

Neither can a billboard be built obstructing traffic movement at turnings of roads or at intersections. Moreover, no billboard is to be installed within 53 metres of bridges, level crossings, and intersections.

There also may not be more than 20 billboards within a span of

racy in the country.

"We've had some discussions about forming a national consensus government with all political parties except Jamaat after the election," said JSD President Hasanul Haque Inu adding that currently there is no alternative to forming such a government.

Talking to The Daily Star, he said, "Our aim is also to have a common platform against the fundamentalist forces including Jamaat."

Bimal Biswas said, "We believe all secular political parties and forces should reach a consensus on holding a free, fair and credible election to restore democracy and resolve the prevailing political, economical and social crises."

India's north-eastern states stand to gain from possible flow of investment from Bangladesh, particularly in areas like textiles, food processing, bamboo-based products and pharmaceuticals.

They said while Asia has drawn impressive dose of foreign direct investment from outside over the years, the cross-border investment in the region has remained negligible compared to potential.

India hopes Bangladesh's speedy clearance of \$3 billion investment by Tata Group in steel, power and fertilizer would go along way in brightening up the investment scenario in South Asia.

Another issue likely to figure in the commerce ministers' meeting is an agreement on trade in services. A study is already on to firm up the services which could be thrown open to regional trade.

The issue of tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade among Saarc countries would also come up in this week's meeting.

In January this year, India scrapped import duty on more than 4,800 items from Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives and slashed customs tariff on these products from Pakistan, Sri Lanka as part of efforts to boost trade in Saarc region.

Two parties call to withdraw emergency

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) and Gonotratrik Bam Morcha yesterday demanded that the government immediately withdraw state of emergency, ensure democratic rights and check criminalisation of politics, businesses, administration and the media.

Criticising the government for its failures to tackle price spiral of rice, pulse, edible oil and other essentials, they said the government should start rationing system and mass-distribution system for the poor in rural and urban areas.

During a meeting presided by CPB President Manjurul Ahsan Khan at CPB's central office, the party leaders observed that only through active movements people can defeat the looters and mafias and ensure progress of democracy.

Demanding withdrawal of all sorts of restrictions on trade unionism, the meeting emphasised the need for a united movement under the leftist political forces to combat the evil caused by the "politics of criminalisation".

CPB leaders Muzahidul Islam Selim, Shahidullah Chowdhury, Morshed Ali, Shamsuzzaman Selim, Dibalok Singha, Ahsan Habib Lablu, Abdul Kader and Gonotratrik Bam Morcha leaders Saiful Haque, Khalequzzaman, Tipu Biswas, Rezaur Rashid Khan, Bazul Rashid Firoz, Hamidul Haque and Babul Biswas were present at the meeting.

Launch salvaged

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if any more bodies are found floating.

The OC also said they filed a case against the cargo driver. The cargo was taken to the police custody and the law enforcers are looking for the owner and the driver of the cargo.

Relatives received the bodies of 32 passengers while seven remained unidentified. Of the seven unidentified bodies, six were given to the Anjuman Mufulidul Islam for burial. Police kept one body for post-mortem examination.

Earlier, the BIWIA announced Tk 20,000 for each victim's family and Tk 2,000 more for the burial of each victim.

But a number of relatives of the victims alleged that they were not given money for burial.

A five-member inquiry committee, led by Joint Secretary of the Shipping Ministry Abdul Matin, started its investigation yesterday. The committee was given seven days to report.

Bogra bihar

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brick built structures. Temples built in that era would generally be decorated with terracotta plaques, he added.

The Bihar now in ruins has walls as wide as 16 feet in some parts and it seems that the height of the temple was at least 40 feet, Mahabub said, adding that the Bihar probably had a courtyard in the front.

Archaeologists presume that like the Vasu Bihar the Bagoi Dhibi also had statues of gods.

A local alleged that people have been taking away the bricks from the walls of the Bihar and adjacent areas and selling 200 bricks for Tk 20-25.

Tariqu

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Having finished his investigation within 45 days, Aminur Rahman submitted the charge sheet to the court under sections 25(2) and 109 of Anti-Corruption Act and under section 15 Gha (5) of Emergency Power Rules 2007.

Tariqu's wife, his two sons and daughter-in-law have been absconding since filing of the case.

'Chemical Ali'

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defence minister, and Hussein Rashid al-Tikriti, his armed forces deputy chief of operations.

The three were convicted after being found responsible for the slaughter of tens of thousands of Kurds in the so-called Anfal campaign of 1988.

Under Iraqi law they were supposed to have been executed by October 4, 30 days after their sentences were upheld by the Iraq Supreme Court.

But their executions were held up by legal wrangling after Iraq decided to postpone the hangings until after the Muslim holy month of Ramadan which ended on October 15, because of the outcry that followed Saddam's hanging during another Muslim holiday in December 2006.

The executions were further delayed because two members of the presidential council - Talabani and Hashemi - refused to sign the execution orders.

The matter was further complicated after Talabani refused to sign the execution order of Sultan Hashim whom he said had personally "provoked" to rebel against Saddam.

"We were urging him to revolt

against Saddam. How can I today sign his execution order when I was the one who provoked him then to rebel against Saddam. No, No, No. I will not do it," Talabani was quoted as saying.

The three men are currently in the custody of the US military, which has refused to hand them over to the Iraqis until the legal wrangling has been resolved.

In the Anfal campaign, an estimated 182,000 Kurds were killed and 4,000 villages wiped out in the brutal campaign of bombings, mass deportation and gas attacks.

"Thousands of people were killed, displaced and disappeared," Iraqi High Tribunal chief judge Mohammed al-Oreibi al-Khalifah said after he had passed sentence in June.

"They were civilians with no weapons and nothing to do with war."

Majid, in his 60s, was the last of the six defendants to learn his fate in the Anfal case -- the second trial of former Saddam cohorts on charges of crimes against humanity since the fall of the feared regime in 2003.

Train link

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BSP outpost where he was received by Inspector General (South Bengal) DV Murlidharan.

From the outpost, the team was driven to the Gede station where they were shown around by the Divisional Railway Manager of Sealdah, Swapan Mondal.

Gen Moeen reached Gede station at 10:25am. Bangladesh Army's 66 Infantry Division GOC Maj Gen Fatmi Ahmed Rumi, BSF North Bengal IG SM Tewari and Krishna Nagar BSF DIG Sarandri were present.

Later, the Bangladesh Army chief held an hour-long meeting with BSF officials at the outpost before returning to Kolkata.

Gen Moeen also called on West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee at the Writers Building in Kolkata yesterday and exchanged views on bilateral interests including Dhaka-Kolkata passenger train service and border issues.

During a 45-minute-long meeting, they talked about militancy and infiltration of terrorists, women trafficking, arms and commodities smuggling, extradition of militants and terrorists, sending home of the Bangladeshi prisoners in jails of West Bengal and Indian rice export.

In the evening, Gen Moeen visited Indian army's eastern command headquarters Ford William and held meetings with eastern command GOC Lt Gen KS Jamwal and other army officers. He also joined a dinner hosted by Gen Jamwal.

The Bangladesh army chief is expected to meet new GOC of the eastern command KV Singh and visit Shantiniketan today before returning to Dhaka in the evening.

UN may slap

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Monday that he would vote against the current draft, and Indonesia's UN Ambassador Marty Natalegawa reiterated his country's serious concerns on Thursday.

"As of today, we feel there are more questions than answers," Natalegawa said. "We are in a cycle of sanctions, non-compliance, more sanctions, more non-compliance, and where does that lead the Security Council to?"

Iran insists its enrichment activities are intended only to produce fuel for nuclear energy to generate electricity, but the US, the European Union and others suspect its real aim is to produce atomic weapons.

The draft resolution would expand travel restrictions and the freezing of assets to more Iranian officials linked to the nuclear effort, and impose a travel ban on some of those most involved in proliferation activity.

For the first time, it would ban trade with Iran in goods, which have both civilian and military uses. It would also introduce financial monitoring on two banks, call on all countries "to exercise vigilance" in granting export credits, and authorise inspections of shipments to and from Iran that are suspected of carrying prohibited goods.

Essentials

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stable for about a month, shot up slightly by Tk 1 per kg while the price of coarse rice of all varieties leapt to Tk 1 per kg on the retail markets.

Abdul Hannan, a rice retailer of Karwan Bazar, told this correspondent that prices of both the coarse and fine rice like swarna (Indian), guti, irri, pajjam, miniket, lata hiked by Tk 10 to 30 per mound.

Price of pulses hiked by Tk 8 per kg on both the retail and wholesale markets. The low quality pulses was selling at Tk 66 while the fine quality at Tk 84.

Price of sugar increased by Tk 4 to 6 per kg in the last two weeks on the both retail and wholesale markets. A kg of sugar was selling at Tk 34 to 36, which was sold at Tk 29 to 30 two weeks ago.

Artefacts

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for Paris in the second shipment, were stolen at Zia International Airport on December 21. In the first shipment, 42 artefacts were sent to Paris on December 1.

Adviser to the Cultural Ministry Rasheda K Chowdhury will inaugurate the exhibition at 3:30pm. The exhibition will be open for all during the museum hours.

Special tribunal

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including transfer of the judge. On February 25, the date of taking deposition was deferred until March 2.

It was the 4th consecutive deferment since the tribunal judge was transferred a month ago.

Besides, a good number of prosecution witnesses did not turn up at the court on scheduled dates for giving deposition prompting the judge to issue warrant against them.

Special Public Prosecutor of the tribunal Advocate Fokhor Uddin Ahmed yesterday told The Daily Star that fate of 24 sensational cases had become uncertain as any judge is yet to be posted there even after a month.

The 30-day extension in the case for carrying out grenade attack on the British high commissioner ended on February 14, he said adding that they would have to seek another extension.

Suicide bomber

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battling Islamic militants in Swat Valley, a once-popular tourist site.

Regional commanding officer Major General Nasser Janjua said Monday there were 400 hardcore militants hiding in the valley.

Troops have been searching for Maulana Fazlullah, a radical cleric who has demanded Islamic law in the valley. The army launched a major offensive in November to drive his followers out of Swat.

Fazlullah is known as "Mullah Radio" for broadcasting fiery speeches over his private FM radio station.

Bush admn distancing

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against violence."

Negroponte said Pakistan's recent elections were a "big step" towards civilian democracy and reflected the will of the voters, despite the deaths of more than 70 people on election day.

"The violence could have been worse," Negroponte said