

Election gears

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division at Rangpur Town Hall yesterday, JP Chairman HM Ershad said the BNP-led four-party alliance would not be able to resist the local government elections because it had become the demand of the people of the country.

"People will foil their attempt to resist the local government elections," Ershad added, reports our correspondent in Rangpur.

Ershad praised the government for reintroducing the upazila parishes.

Asked about the government's position on the four-party alliance's threat to resist the polls, Communications Adviser Ghulam Quader yesterday told reporters that any attempt to resist local government elections slated for August 4 would be unwise.

"I do not think the political parties will create obstacle to holding of the local government elections... Maybe we have not been able to communicate with them effectively... We will try to convince them; they will certainly understand," Quader said.

The local government elections are non-political and the caretaker government is not any party to contest the polls, he said, adding, "So, it is not logical to resist the elections."

The government would like to see decentralisation of power, he said, pointing out that elections are on the EC roadmap.

On holding the upazila elections, Quader said the High Court has laid down strong and clear instructions in this regard which has to be followed.

But the Workers' Party termed the communications adviser's speech "unfounded". The government is holding the local government election going beyond its constitutional jurisdiction and complicating the political situation, it said in a statement.

Addressing an extended meeting of Bagerhat district unit of the party, AL Organising Secretary Mannan said the government should hold the national election first to overcome the existing crises in the country. He demanded that the government withdraw the local government electoral schedule "to show respect to the people's demands".

Chaired by district AL President Dr Mozammel Hossain, the meeting directed party leaders to strengthen the organisation for the polls and press home the party's six-point demand including permanent and unconditional release of Sheikh Hasina, lifting of the state of emergency, and announcement of parliamentary poll schedule.

GRASSROOTS LEVEL
POLL CAMPAIGN
Our Mymensingh correspondent Aminul Islam reports that following announcement of the electoral

Altaf

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husband loaned her Tk 17 lakh.

Altaf also said that he purchased a jeep at Tk 8 lakh, but the actual price of the vehicle was Tk 20.17 lakh. Besides, he showed low price of the car he purchased in his wife's name.

Altaf Hossain submitted his wealth statement to the ACC on July 25, 2007 saying that he has wealth worth Tk 3.25 crore.

The BNP leader was arrested on May 28, 2007 for his alleged involvement in corruption.

SIGMA HUDA CASE
Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Golam Rabbani passed the order rejecting the bail petition for Sigma Huda after her lawyers submitted it.

Her husband, detained BNP leader Nazmul Huda, is the principal accused in the bribery case.

On June 18, ACC Assistant Director Belal Hossain filed the case with Motijheel Police Station accusing the couple of taking Tk 6 lakh bribe from a contractor of Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority.

The case mentioned that Nazmul Huda demanded bribes from the owner of a bridge maintenance firm in exchange for a work order for the maintenance of the Jamuna Bridge.

Huda was communications minister at that time.

As per his demand, the owner of the firm provided Huda Tk 6 lakh to the account of weekly Khorbor Antor at the Amin court (Motijheel) branch of Agrani Bank in 20 cheques between September 30, 2004 and October 18, 2006, the case statement said.

Sigma Huda, who used to run the weekly, drew the money from the bank, the complainant said.

Nazmul Huda was earlier given different terms of punishment in bribery, corruption and extortion cases.

On the other hand, Sigma was acquitted of two extortion cases and given three years' jail a case on charges of aiding and abetting her husband in taking Tk 2.4 crore bribe from the proprietor of a construction firm.

On June 5, the HC granted three months' ad interim bail to Sigma Huda in the bribery case under emergency power rules (EPR).

Delwar seeks

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schedule aspirant candidates for the posts of municipal mayor and ward councillors in Phulbaria Municipality launched their electoral campaign.

The candidates include local BNP leaders - Mujibur Rahman, the incumbent chairman of the municipality and President of municipal BNP unit, Abdullahe Mustaq, Chand Mahmud Sarker and Mohammad Kabir Hossain, and AL leaders Golam Kibria and Nurul Islam.

Abdullahe Mustaq told The Daily Star that the environment is favourable for the election.

Our correspondent in Sylhet reports: Election to Golapganj Municipality is scheduled for August 4. This is the second election for the small township since its inception in 2001.

Meanwhile, about 100 aspirants for the post of ward councillors were disappointed yesterday as they were informed that the nomination forms from the EC did not yet arrive.

Deputy Election Commissioner of Sylhet Division Khondker Mizanur Rahman said the nomination papers would be available from today.

DETAINED SYLHET CITY

Corporation Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran, city unit AL General Secretary Misbah Uddin Siraj, sadar upazila Chairman Babul Hossain Babul, BNP city unit General Secretary Nasim Hossain, former president of the district unit BNP MA Haque, JP leaders Abdus Samad Nazrul and Kunu Mia, and Jamaat-e-Islami leader Dr Shafiqur Rahman are the probable candidates for city corporation mayor.

The probable candidates for Golapganj Municipality mayor include sitting Chairman Zakaria Ahmed Paplu, former UP chairman and AL Joint Secretary Sirajul Jabbar Chowdhury, former UP chairman Fazlul Haque, municipal AL General Secretary Syed Misbah Uddin, upazila Juba Dal chief Alekuzzaman, municipal BNP Secretary Mushfiqur Rahman Mohi and JP leader Mamunur Rashid. Besides, over 100 candidates are there for the councilorship of ward-9. About 25 women are expected to contest for the three reserved seats.

22 get CIP status

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officials are Anisul Huq, president of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), Walur Rahman Bhuiyan, president of Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Saifuzzaman Chowdhury, president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCC), Mirza Nurul Gani (Shovon), president of National Association of Small and Cottage Industries of Bangladesh (Nascib), Abdul Hai Sarker, president of Bangladesh Textile Mills Association (BTMA), Nasreen Awal Mintoo, president of Women Entrepreneurs' Association of Bangladesh (WEAB) and MA Shahid, acting president of Bangladesh Chamber of Industries (BCI).

Individuals nominated under the large-scale industry category are Gulam Mostafa, chairman of Deshbandhu Sugar Mills Limited, Masih Ul Karim, adviser of the board of directors of Berger Paints Bangladesh Limited, Ali Hossain Akber Ali, managing director of Bangladesh Steel and Re-rolling Mills (BSRM) Limited, Riazuddin Al Mamun, managing director of Epylion Group, Mohammad Shahjahan, chairman of Jhal Ahmed Spinning Mills Limited, Mohammad Gulam Faruque, managing director of F S Chowdhury, director of Agricultural Marketing Company Limited and Mahbub Jamil, managing director of Singer Bangladesh Limited.

Nominated under the medium-scale industries are Maj Gen (retd) Amjat Khan, managing director of Pran Foods Limited, M Mozibar Rahman, managing director of BRB Polymer Limited, Engineer Mohammad Nurul Haque, director of Sagar Garments Limited, Mohammad Mizbar Rahman, managing director of Kiam Metal Industries Limited and M Miraj Hossain, managing director of M P Sweaters Limited.

Managing director of MBM Garments Limited Mahmudur Rahman and chairman of Tushuka Fashions Limited Arshad Jamal were nominated as CIP under the small-scale industries category.

The industries ministry statement said the CIP (industries) cards will be considered as entry passes in the secretariat. The cardholders will be invited to national programmes as well as to civic reception organised by city corporations.

The CIPs will enjoy preference when it comes to booking seats in public transport for business tours, the ministry statement said.

The foreign ministry will send letters of introduction to embassies and high commissions in Dhaka so the CIP could easily get visas.

They will also be able to enjoy the facilities of VIP Lounge-2 in airports during their travel.

Polls to be free

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directors on the reforms the interim government has brought about in order to strengthen governance and democracy in the country. These include reforms in the Election Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Public Service Commission, separation of the judiciary from the executive, formation of the Local Government Commission and the National Human Rights Commission and formulation of the Right to Information Act.

Fakhruddin said the government is acting not only to make the next general election free, fair and credible, but also all future general elections.

The chief adviser's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munain briefed newsmen after the meeting.

He also criticised the state-owned BTV for not letting the voices of common people be heard.

ABD Country Director Hua Du was present.

Govt sectors limp

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retirement), leaving more posts vacant.

At a secretary-level meeting on April 28 to review activities of the government, top bureaucrats expressed concern over lack of civil servants. They said stalemate in recruitment process is affecting government activities in various sectors.

Several secretaries pointed out that a civil servant has to perform many duties resulting in public suffering.

Different sectors have already been burdened with huge workload. The government officials now bear the burden of overseeing the financial, development and administrative activities," a top official of the establishment ministry told The Daily Star.

The deputy commissioners at their meeting three months ago also pointed the same problem and said many civil servant posts in upazila and district levels are vacant which is the main cause for low performance in providing service to the people.

The DCs asked the establishment ministry to recruit fresh officials more rapidly, especially before the next general elections.

However, recruitment of officials through the 27th BCS has been stalled due to a case pending in the court.

Matin

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and the people involved in it.

The NCC chairman said there would be more coordination between the NCC, law commission, Anti-Corruption Commission and the attorney general's office in dealing with the cases.

Security

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steps will be taken on the basis of intelligence reports and effectiveness of the primary measures taken, the IGP explained.

"Although the local body elections are non-political, we will be taking extra measures," he added.

Non-govt teachers

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The National Front of Teachers and Employees (NFTE), a combine of eleven teachers' organisations.

Around 4.7 lakh teachers and employees of more than 30,000 non-government high schools, colleges and madrasas under different teachers' organisations had announced a series of programmes in protest at the finance adviser's not including teachers as recipients of dearness allowance to under-pricing of public services.

It further questions, "What is the level of subsidies required to eliminate losses in BPC (Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation) and other SoEs, including the funds needed to address depreciation of capital? What progress has been made in reducing the operating costs of BPC and other key SoEs?"

"What has been the progress on SoE privatisation and closures, including the effect on employment?"

The Fund wants to know how robust the growth rebound projection was in the second half of FY2007-08 and how international price rises and domestic inflation have affected economic activity.

Earlier in April last year, it forecast that the economy would grow by 5.5 percent, while the finance adviser projected it to be 6.21 percent for the outgoing fiscal year, officials concerned said.

In its questionnaire, the IMF seeks details of the pricing formula for petroleum products and monthly sales volumes for diesel, gasoline and kerosene. It asks how much of the poor performance of the state-owned enterprises (SoEs) is attributable to under-pricing of public services.

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It also questions the effect on employment of the SoEs' not including teachers as recipients of dearness allowance to under-pricing of public services.

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