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## NOMINATION RACE IN CITY POLLS

# Grassroots rivalries come to the fore

### AL, BNP in disarray as central leaders stay silent

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Divisions within Awami League (AL) and BNP seem to have resurfaced with the local leaders vying for nominations to contest the August 4 mayoral polls.

Alongside intra-party disputes, rivalry between prospective candidates within alliances too is intense. In four divisional headquarters, mayoral aspirants in both AL and BNP brace themselves for challenges from components of the 14-party and four-party combines.

Things have been even worse for lack of instructions from central leadership of the parties that have yet to decide whether to take part in the elections to four city corporations and nine municipalities.

In Rajshahi, the fight between the Workers Party politburo mem-

ber Fazle Hossain Badsha and city AL General Secretary AHM Khairuzzaman Liton for mayor nomination has grown quite fierce. In BNP, as many as eight candidates have been working towards mayoral nomination. Of them, party insiders believe, Central Office Secretary Ruhul Kabir Rizvi stands a good chance of winning the coalition backing.

In Rajshahi, Sylhet and Barisal, Jamaat-e-Islami leaders are going to mount serious challenges to BNP leaders seeking four-party alliance nominations.

In Sylhet, several leaders in both AL and BNP have been staking out a claim to nominations.

Leaders of Khulna unit AL and BNP however have refrained from airing their mayoral aspiration. While those in AL are waiting for decisions from the high command,

their counterparts in BNP are fearful of disciplinary action in the event of participation in the polls.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, some leaders from divisional units of BNP and AL said that the central committees should step in to quell the rising discontent within the parties.

Though policymakers have yet to make up their mind about the elections, the grassroots leaders in both the parties are in favour of contesting the polls. Some of them are even ready to run for the polls as independent candidates in case their organisations opt not to take part in the race.

However, sources said the parties might finally decide to join the race on strategic consideration that they might fall behind if the rivals go to polls and they do not.

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## Voter lists of 200 upazilas by July

### Poll schedule to be announced soon

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Voter lists in around 200 upazilas will be ready in July third week, facilitating the Election Commission (EC) plan to announce poll schedule for upazila parishads in the first phase.

The EC plans to hold the long overdue polls to upazila parishads in phases before the parliamentary elections. Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda on Sunday also said the commission would announce the schedule in a month.

The commission will take a decision on appropriate time to announce the schedule, Election Commissioner Muhammed Sohul Hussain told The Daily Star over telephone yesterday.

"It's been decided that we'll hold upazila elections before the parliamentary polls. The schedule might be announced in a month," Sohul said.

Once announced, polls to around 200 out of 482 upazila

parishads might be held in late August or early September, senior officials of the EC Secretariat said.

Until yesterday, printing of the final voter lists for 90 upazilas were completed. By the third week of July, the number will increase to 200 upazilas as printing has been expedited with field level registration being almost over, say officials engaged in voter registration.

Voter lists with photographs for another 130 upazilas are expected to be complete by mid-August, a senior official said. The entire task is likely to be completed in the end of September or early October, he added.

If the commission wants it can hold second phase of upazila elections in October, the official added.

The EC has however yet to decide how many upazila parishads will go through polls in the first phase, sources say.

Election Commissioner Sohul Hussain however said the commission will finalise names of the

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## Govt to talk with parties to end mix-up over polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will hold discussions with the political parties to resolve misunderstandings over holding of the elections to local government bodies prior to the parliamentary election.

"There may be some misunderstandings over the local government polls. We will take more steps and hold direct talks with the parties to make everything clear," Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman said when asked if the government would confront the major parties, which have announced to oppose and resist the local body polls.

He was talking to the reporters after a meeting with Communications and Public Works Adviser Ghulam Quader at the Secretariat yesterday.

Zillur said the government wants to strengthen the local bodies by holding the elections to them as well as to create an atmosphere of confidence before the parliamentary election.

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## Fresh MRP project drafted in ADP

SHAMIM ASHRAF

The Department of Immigration and Passport (DIP) could start issuing machine-readable passports and visas from July next year as a Tk 560 crore fresh project for this purpose has been included in the Annual Development Programme of 2008-2009.

The project, awaiting approval, is required for Bangladesh to comply with the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) deadline of April 2010 for completing the job.

Once implemented, the Department of Immigration and Passport hopes to start issuing machine-readable passports (MRP) and machine-readable visas (MRV) from July next year," said Abdur Rog Hawlader, director general (DG) of DIP.

This fresh move follows the abandonment of the BNP-led coalition government's Tk 1,546-crore project for MRP, MRV and national identity cards due to irregularities in appointing a consultant and tender evaluation in

late 2006. As soon as the fresh project is approved in the budget, the DIP will float tenders to purchase necessary equipment and expedite the tender process. The department has already finished most of the groundwork for preparing tender documents, said DIP officials.

In the meantime, the DIP hopes to receive a Tk 1-crore fund next month to appoint a consulting firm for the project. The firm will be responsible for the management, monitoring, supervision, evaluation and implementation of the MRP and MRV project.

The DG of the DIP said his department has been working relentlessly to meet the ICAO deadline.

Four honorary consultants from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) have been assisting the DIP for the last six months for preparing the tender documents, said a DIP official adding that besides helping in the MRP-MRV project, the four IOM consultants will also monitor the work of

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## CEC for change in political culture for democracy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday observed that the country's political culture has to be changed to establish democracy in the true sense.

A lawmaker should not participate in local development

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## Home clarification on EPR relaxation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The home ministry yesterday said easing of the Emergency Power Rules (EPR) would also apply to the other city corporation and municipalities if schedules are declared for polls there during the state of emergency.

In a press release it sought to clear up 'misunderstandings' over the notification it issued Friday relaxing the EPR to allow processions and rallies in areas going to polls.

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## Tk 500 notes won't be demonetised

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Bank has no plan to withdraw 500-taka notes from circulation, said an official release yesterday.

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Top... The file photo taken in January last year shows Suvadda Khal in Keraniganj choked with garbage. The photo on the left shows the canal with signs of life once again after re-excavation recently.

## Born-again canal

HELEMUL ALAM

Suvadda Khal (canal), lifeline of Keraniganj upazila in Dhaka, is now getting back its earlier look as the canal that dried up completely more than three years ago was partly re-excavated by the authorities recently.

Although the 8.5-km canal is far from returning to its state 15 years back, it has now become a channel through which boats ferry people and various goods between the Buriganga and Rajendrapur in Keraniganj. Re-excavation of 2-km stretch of the canal is still to be completed to link the Buriganga with the Dhaleshwari in

the past.

Of the two other canals in Keraniganj -- Char Mirerbagh and Mirerbagh canals-- which had links with the Buriganga and the Dhaleshwari-- one is now non-existent and the other is a dying one.

Char Mirerbagh canal dries up except during monsoon while Mirerbagh canal was filled up four years ago for construction of a road along it.

Sukumar, a shopkeeper at Golam Bazar in the locality, said re-excavation of Suvadda canal has facilitated carrying goods from Sadarghat and Islampur markets in the capital by

boat, reducing transportation cost by 30 to 35 percent.

Delwar, a local boatman, said his earning from carrying people and goods had decreased drastically as the canal became dead three years back. "I am now very happy to get a scope to increase my income."

Another boatman from the area, Ahsan, said, "I can now earn up to Tk 100 a trip by carrying goods to markets, and it was not possible before re-opening of the canal."

Suvadda Khal had a lean flow of water till 2004 but it dried up fully when it was filled up at a point in Kaliganj,

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## Hasina for JS polls first

UNB, Dhaka

Former prime minister and Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina, now in Washington, called for parliament election before other polls to restore democracy in the country.

Addressing a meeting marking the 59th founding anniversary of the Awami League in the US capital, she asked her party men to foil all conspiracies and ensure victory in the parliamentary polls.

Hasina said Awami League was born for establishing democracy and the rights of the people, according to a message received in Dhaka yesterday.

In reply to a question from the workers, she said, "I've no reservation about anyone. I want to work together with all to build Bangladesh so that it can be a

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## Star Business

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The Editor

## AUG 21 GRENADE ATTACK

# Arrest warrant issued against 8 Huji fugitives

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued arrest warrants against eight absconding Harkatul Jihad (Huji) members including Maulana Tajuddin, brother of detained former BNP lawmaker Abdus Salam Pintu, in the August 21 grenade attack case.

Metropolitan Sessions Court Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque accepted the charge sheet of the case and took the charges into cognisance for trial after examining all relevant documents.

The court directed the authorities concerned to send copies of the arrest warrants to the addresses of the absconding accused. It also fixed July 24 for returning the arrest warrants to the court.

Assistant superintendent of

police of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Fazlul Kabir, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, was present at the court.

The court on June 18 found flaws in the investigation of the case and asked the investigation officer (IO) to appear before the court yesterday and give explanation.

The court also asked the IO to explain why he prayed for discharging four accused -- Omar Faruk, Ferdous, Shuvo and Babu -- although the charges brought against them were found to be true.

IO Fazlul Kabir told the court that he found involvement of the four with the grenade attacks on an Awami League rally, but he could not verify their real names and addresses.

He said if he finds out their real names and addresses, he will submit

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