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CITY CORPORATIONS

'Criminals' back on scene with hope of running in polls

STAR REPORT

Many grassroots level political leaders of major parties including incumbent ward commissioners, who were allegedly involved in criminal activities, are preparing to contest in the August 4 polls to four city corporations.

Many of them already collected application forms for candidacy, although all major political parties have yet to announce their acquiescence to the local government polls before the parliamentary one.

A total of 921 persons picked up application forms for candidacies in the polls to the city corporations of Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet till yesterday, for the posts of mayors and councillors including the reserved seats for women.

Most of the incumbent ward commissioners of the city corporations who were absconding since

the state of emergency had been promulgated on January 11 last year, are back in their areas with door-to-door electoral campaigns already, even before selections.

In Khulna at least 12 to 13 and in Barisal at least 10 incumbent commissioners, most of whom are involved in BNP politics and were absconding to avoid arrest on charges of involvement in criminal activities, are back in their wards campaigning unofficially for votes.

The scenarios are the same in Sylhet and Rajshahi.

Out of the 921 application forms 165 were distributed in Rajshahi, while 11 in Khulna, 516 in Barisal, and 129 in Sylhet were distributed.

BARISAL

Some of the 10 incumbent ward commissioners of Barisal City Corporation are accused in more than one criminal cases including for murder, extortion, and illegal

possession of arms and government properties.

Application forms were disbursed against the names of at least five such incumbent ward commissioners there, reported our Barisal correspondent.

Sources said some of the commissioners, under whose names forms were picked up, had earlier surrendered to courts and after getting released on bail are now planning to contest in the city corporation poll, to which end they already started campaigning.

Commissioners who are already on campaign trails with their criminal records still effective include Ziauddin Sikder, commissioner of ward no 25 who was absconding for a long time, and Firoj Ahmed, commissioner of ward no 24 who was arrested by the joint forces and is currently being tried in three

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Political transition must be smooth to save economy

Says WB vice president

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank (WB) yesterday said Bangladesh's economy would be affected unless a smooth political transition takes place through election, but it would continue to support the country's development agendas.

"If the political transition does not happen as predicted, any uncertainty is going to affect the economy, private sector and investor confidence," said Praful Patel, WB vice-president for South Asia.

Patel was speaking at a press conference yesterday at the end of his two-day visit to Dhaka.

During his visit, Patel met with Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed and other advisers to discuss the government's wide-ranging governance and economic policy reform agendas including holding of a general election.

The WB official also met with the Chief of Army Staff General Moeen U Ahmed.

"A smooth political transition would be good for all," he said, adding that everybody would



prefer not to go back to the pre-1/11 situation.

Referring to his talks with the "key players" of the caretaker government, Patel said the electoral roadmap is on track as voter registration and reforms in election rules by the Election Commission have been put in place for a better election.

"We are in the business of continuing our support to developmental agenda of Bangladesh. We did it before. We did it during the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

RENTAL POWER PURCHASE

PDB to face Tk 112cr loss a month

SHARIER KHAN

The monthly loss of Power Development Board (PDB) will shoot up to Tk 112 crore from the present Tk 70 crore when it starts purchasing 300MW power from eight rental power plants.

In the light of this loss increase, the PDB submitted a proposal to the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) last month to enhance the present power tariff by 41 percent, which, if done, will help it reach a break-even point.

"The ERC might adjust the tariff considering the economic realities of the country," said a top official of the PDB.

Side by side, the board is seeking subsidy from the finance ministry through the power ministry to offset the loss caused by the government-controlled low power sales tariff over a higher production rate, said a competent source.

The finance ministry is already giving the PDB a Tk 50 crore monthly loan to minimise the impact of its losses.

Entities like the Rural Electrification Board are making profits just because the PDB is

subsidising their power purchase rates and swallowing the losses.

Legally set up like an autonomous body, all the major decisions of the PDB is actually controlled by the administration, which has deeply affected its financial health.

The PDB earned Tk 5,200 crore during the last fiscal year, which is 19 percent higher than that of the previous fiscal year.

But PDB's average billing is Tk 2.37 per kilowatt-hour (or an unit) against an average supply cost of Tk 2.82 a unit, which forces it to incur a loss of 45 paisa per unit. The loss totals up to Tk 70 crore a month now.

When the eight rental power plants come into operation, the PDB will incur an additional loss of Tk 42 crore because of these plants' high cost of per unit electricity.

Despite such loss projections, the government was willing to take the rental power only on the ground that seven of these would start generating power from May 15. The cost of not having power is many times higher," said a top power ministry official.

However, six of these eight costly plants have miserably failed to meet the launching deadline of

May 15 as three of the contractors, which were awarded seven of these projects by the Power Cell, are inexperienced.

Only Aggreko, a real rental power company of the UK, started pumping 40MW power from Khulna to the national grid from early this month. Aggreko was supposed to launch operation from May 28 but started it from June 4. The oil-fired plant was officially inaugurated on Monday.

On January 15, the Power Cell awarded four contracts to Energy Prima, a shell company of Hosaf Group. Owned by Moazzem Hossain, brother of former BNP lawmaker Mosharraf Hossain from Feni, Energy Prima claimed that it had partnership with a Russian company. But that Russian company never appeared in the field. Sources said accused of corruption in a graft case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission, Moazzem bagged the deal using his political connections.

Failing to run its power plant from May 15, Energy Prima promised to launch its 50MW Kumargaon plant in late May.

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NCC legally not valid

Says its chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Coordination Committee (NCC), formed to deal with serious crimes, will no longer handle corruption cases as the body has no legal validity, its chairman yesterday said.

"If necessary, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) will deal with corruption allegations because the NCC has no legal validity," NCC Chairman and Home Adviser MA Matin told reporters at the secretariat.

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Detained Nasim suffers stroke, taken to hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained former home minister Mohammad Nasim was admitted to city's Labaid Specialised Hospital (LSH) yesterday, after suffering a stroke.

He is not out of danger until 72 hours pass by, the hospital authorities said adding that the left side of Nasim's body has become 'weak' due to the stroke.

A seven-member medical board headed by Dr MH Shahriar Sabat, a neurosurgery consultant, submitted a report to the jail authorities about Nasim's condition in the evening where it also placed their recommendations about his treatment.

However, the medical board and the hospital authorities refused to disclose anything about the report.

Mohammad Nasim, who had been serving a 13-year jail term in a graft case at the Kashimpur prison, suffered stroke at about 8:45am, DIG (Prisons) Major Shamsul Haider Siddique said.

The DIG Prisons was talking to the reporters on the LSH premises.

The senior Awami League (AL) leader was rushed to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) Hospital at first, but due to seat crisis, he was admitted to Labaid at about 12:30pm in an unconscious state, Shamsul Haider said.

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At a press briefing at the hospital conference room at about 5:00pm, the LSH authorities told reporters that Nasim suffered brain stroke, which they term 'hemorrhagic stroke.'

"His (Nasim) left side became weak, not paralysed, and he is conscious and oriented," Maj (ret'd) Dr AKM Mahbubul Hoque, co-ordinator and head of medical services, LSH, said.

"He is undergoing 'conservative treatment,'" Dr Mahbub said adding that it cannot be said if the AL leader is out of danger before 72 hours have passed.

Replying a query, Dr Mahbub said that the patient's treatment can be continued here if his condition does not deteriorate further.

Turbulent Jamuna causes massive erosion

GOLAM MOSTAFA JIBON, Sirajganj

River erosion has taken a turn for the worse in five upazilas of Sirajganj on the western bank of the Jamuna devouring large areas and making people homeless.

The erosion devoured around 450 homesteads and 270 acres of cropland in the last seven days and rising water inundated many low-lying char areas.

Many people of the area have moved to safer places like roads, higher lands, embankments and in different educational institutions.

The affected areas are Jorgtola, Kaizuri, Jamirta, Benotia, Porzona, Bagporzona, Gudhibari and Daya in Shahzadpur upazila, Maizbari, Shubhogachha, Natuarpara, Meghai, Bilchetol, Khudbandhi and Baoikhola in Kazipur upazila, Char Mesta, Kawakhola and Gutbari in Sirajganj Sadar upazila, Char Delua and Operchar in Belkuchi upazila, Enayetpur, Sthal, Umorpur, Char Umorpur, Jalalpur and Billahchar in Chowhali upazila.

The erosion has put several hundred structures and establishments including schools, colleges, madrasas and bazaars under threat, sources said.

Natuarpara High School in its bid to reduce losses in river erosion recently sold a two-storied building of the school for Tk 7.21 lakh in an auction. The Natuarpara Degree College is also under threat, Water Development Board (WDB) sources said.

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Devastated by the erosion of the Jamuna, an elderly man watches as the river approaches the Natuarpara embankment in Kazipur upazila of Sirajganj where he has taken refuge recently.

Star Business

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The Editor



Banana traders in Hazrat Shah Ali market of Mirpur in the capital yesterday leave green bananas in the sun after soaking them in chemicals to ripen them.

Khaleda to endorse 4-party decision on local polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said she would go by whatever decision the four-party alliance should take regarding the local elections scheduled for August 4.

Queried whether BNP would boycott the polls, she said, "Our secretary general has already talked about this and I would comply with decisions of the four-party alliance."

A day before the Election Commission (EC) announced schedules for polls to four city corporations and nine municipalities, BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain said the four-party alliance would resist the elections.

Speaking to the newsmen after hearing on charge framing in Gatco graft case at a special court, the former prime minister also reiterated her call for holding the parliamentary election before any other polls.

She said, "All major political

parties want the national election first. Besides, the present government has no mandate to hold local government polls."

Earlier, Judge Shahed Noor Uddin of Special Court-3 set June 30 for the next hearing on charge framing in the high-profile graft case against Khaleda and 23 others including her younger son Arifat Rahman Koko.

The BNP chief was produced before the court on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises at 10:32am.

She said the local elections must be held under an elected government. The interim administration should rather concentrate on preparations for the national election as not much time is left.

She observed that corruption has increased during the present regime that took power by promising to curb the menace.

"They have failed in every aspect and should quit without delay," she added.

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ASIA CUP Tigers see off UAE

AGENCIES, Lahore

Bangladesh put an end to their seven-match losing streak when they scored a comfortable 96-run win against United Arab Emirates in their opening match of the Asia Cup at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore yesterday.

Set to topple a massive Bangladesh total of 300-8, the ICC associate member-nation managed

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EC to warn candidates to abide by code of conduct

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission (EC) will issue a circular by tomorrow, instructing prospective candidates for the August 4 polls to four city corporations and nine municipalities to abide by the electoral code of conduct.

The circular will also warn the

Morshed Khan, wife charged with amassing Tk 1.67cr illegal wealth

Ex-MP Milon to be quizzed

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday pressed charges against former foreign minister M Morshed Khan and his wife Nasrin Khan in a case filed for amassing Tk 1.67 crore wealth illegally and giving false wealth information to the commission.

Meantime, a Dhaka court directed the authorities concerned to publish an advertisement in two national Bangla dailies asking Morshed Khan's son Foyzal Morshed Khan and his wife Shyama Shezan Khan to appear before it by June 29 in a graft case.

Another Dhaka court yesterday allowed the ACC to interrogate detained former BNP lawmaker AKM Fazlul Haque Milon at the jail

gate about his ill-gotten wealth.

MORSHED KHAN CASE
ACC Assistant Director Talebur Rahman, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet against the couple to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka showing 24 people as prosecution witnesses.

The IO prayed for issuance of arrest warrants against them and the order to attach their properties, as they have been absconding since the case was filed.

In the charge sheet, the IO mentioned that Morshed Khan had submitted his wealth statements of Tk 17.41 crore to the commission on July 10 last year.

But they found that the senior BNP leader had amassed wealth

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