

AL starts talks

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"Awami League will take a firm stand on the issues of complete lifting of the state of emergency ahead of the local government elections, not holding upazila polls before the parliamentary elections and postponement of delimitation of electoral constituencies, among others," AL Acting General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam said.

He was talking to the reporters after a meeting with Workers' Party of Bangladesh at party acting President Zillur Rahman's Gulshan residence in the capital.

Ashraf said the two parties have reached a consensus that the upazila parishad elections will have to be held after the national election.

AL today sits with Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Inu) at 11:00am, Samayabdi Dal at 12:00noon, and Ganotri Party at 1:00pm.

Tomorrow, the party will hold meeting with National Awami Party (Mozaffar) at 11:00am, Ganu Azadi League at 12:00noon and Communist Kendra at 1:00pm.

All the bilateral meetings will be held at Zillur Rahman's residence.

The government will have to face problems if it sticks to its decision to hold upazila polls before the national election, Workers' Party General Secretary Bimal Biswas told

Farm practice change

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while others say the whole country will go under water in the next few decades as a consequence of sea-level rise.

Mitigating or adapting changes requires increase of financial capacity, he said, adding that remittance earned by expatriate workers and ready-made garment sector is saving people. "We need to explore these potentials."

Expressing concern that 600 hectares of cultivable land is reducing each year and that no cultivable land will be left by 2085, the geography professor said it is alarming when increase of food production is must.

Prof Nazrul said urbanisation is an opportunity to accommodate more population, but it must be well-planned. It is possible to house 3 crore people in Dhaka, but that requires very good technology, he noted.

Development and environment have conflicts and therefore the authorities should be very careful to make development sustainable, he said, adding "Good governance is the most important factor for it. Nothing will be successful in absence of good governance."

BGS President Prof AQM Mahbub, who chaired the inaugural session, said vast plain land in the coastal belt may go under water due

reporters.

Ashraf said they will take part in the four city corporation and nine municipality elections as a test case to assess the government's performance and see how the national identity cards are used.

He also observed that holding elections to local government bodies and to 465 upazilas are not same.

AL will nominate candidates for the city corporation and municipality elections scheduled for August 4 from the components in the 14-party, all secular democratic political parties and pro-liberation war forces, solely on the recommendations of the party's grassroots level leaders, Ashraf said.

The central committee would intervene only if any dispute over the candidature arises and would select the best candidate through discussion and negotiation, he added.

Replies to a query, Ashraf categorically said that AL and its allies would not take part in the national and upazila elections if the state of emergency is not lifted.

Saying that the government has been moving away from its main goal of holding parliamentary polls first, Bimal Biswas observed that the national election would be hampered if the upazila elections are held before it.

Oil prices

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Pressure mounted Monday for a response to ease the pain of consumers suffering from high fuel costs and a general increase in the cost of living as crude prices breached 143 dollars a barrel for the first time.

One of the main points of contention is the role of speculators, blamed consistently by producer countries for the doubling of crude prices over the last 12 months.

Western oil chiefs, backing the view of governments in consumer countries, insisted on Monday that speculators were the wrong target and that the failure of supply to match rising demand was the real cause.

"This is a fundamental thing. It's not about speculation," the chief executive of British oil group BP, Tony Hayward, told delegates at the four-day gathering, adding that it was a "myth" that speculators were to blame.

Demanding the national elections ahead of any other polls, he said the government is not sincere in holding the national elections, but it wants to hold the local body polls -- which would be a violation of the constitution.

"Investors is a better word than speculators. They are investing in the oil market because they believe prices will go up."

Jeroen van der Veer, head of British-Dutch oil group Shell, also said blaming speculators was wrong, adding that the role of the market was "the translation of things that might happen in the future into the price."

The four-day World Petroleum Congress runs from Monday to Thursday after an official opening reception on Sunday.

"There's probably no better time for the WPC to be meeting," said Hayward.

The president of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, the head of the International Energy Agency and ministers from Nigeria, Russia, Venezuela, India, France and the Netherlands are expected to be present.

Saudi Arabia held a hastily arranged meeting of consumers and producers in Jeddah eight days ago to tackle the problem of record oil prices, which were forecast by OPEC's president last week to touch 150-170 dollars per barrel in the coming months.

Most experts agreed afterwards that the only concrete result from the summit was Saudi Arabia's announcement that it would increase daily production by more than 200,000 barrels to 9.7 million.

The gathering pitted consumer nations, which are calling for an increase in production, against producers.

Most OPEC members remain firmly against any increase in their production and blame speculators and the fall in the dollar for the remarkable run up in prices, which have doubled in the last 12 months.

Western oil bosses are keen to pin the blame for high oil prices on a lack of supply. They are excluded from many countries by governments anxious to see their national oil companies retain a monopoly on oil and gas production.

CA calls

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innovative ideas in population control and holding international ulama conference on birth control were, among other matters, discussed in the meeting.

A multimedia presentation on Population Control in Bangladesh was made at the meeting, which showed country's current population growth at 1.41 percent.

The slogan of national population policy is 'Not more than two children and one is better'.

Fakhrudin said supply of contraceptives should be ensured in remote areas like chars, haors and other regions of the country where population growth is high.

Supply of birth-control materials should be ensured where users' demand prevails.

The chief adviser, who is the chairperson of the National Population Council, asked for enhanced cooperation between the health ministry and other ministries concerned for successful implementation of the programmes of health, nutrition and population sectors.

He also said, "Adjustment of manpower in health and population sectors should be made for successful implementation of various programmes, and all logical steps should be taken in a coordinated way."

Health and Family Welfare Adviser AMM Shawkat Ali made introductory speech at the meeting.

Advisers, secretaries, religious personalities, educationists and high officials were, among others, present at the meeting.

Morshed Khan

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comply with the court order, the trial would continue.

Meanwhile, several BNP workers, mostly women led by BNP chairperson's adviser Brig Gen (retd) ASM Hannan Shah, formed a human chain near the parliament building in the heavy downpour demanding the release of Khaleda and her two sons.

The IO prayed for issuing arrest warrants against them and the order to attach their properties as they have been absconding since the case was filed with the Gulshan Police Station on December 10 last year.

In the charge sheet, the IO said Morshed Khan had submitted his wealth statement to the ACC on July 10 last year saying that he has properties worth Tk 17.41 crore.

"Kick out the journalists one after another," an angry police officer was heard shouting to his force in the courtroom.

The journalists protested this misbehaviour. ACC public prosecutors Mosharraf Hossain Kajal and Golam Hafiz sought apology on behalf of the police later.

The ACC filed the case with

Delwar asks govt

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while speaking at a discussion held at Diploma Engineers' Institution in the capital.

The BNP secretary general during the discussion also said the BNP-led four-party alliance will observe 'demand day' on July 9 to press home their demand of withdrawal of state of emergency, release of the BNP chairperson and sending her two sons abroad for treatment.

Hinting at the activities of intelligence agencies, Delwar said, "Special agencies are now picking out candidates. But is it their duty? ... They are holding meetings. Who are using the money? They are using the tax-payers' money."

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Among others, Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) chairman Andaleeb Rahman Partho, Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahid, BNP leaders RA Gani and Tanveer

Party politics

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commissioner to conduct the ninth parliamentary polls first.

Voter lists for around 200 upazilas are expected to be ready by the third week of July and that will help the EC's plan to announce schedule for the upazila polls next month.

If everything goes according to EC plan, around 200 upazilas might be going to polls in the first phase.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday said the commission would finalise its decision on the upazila elections within the next two to four days.

The EC does not want to hold polls during the Ramadan that begins early September. It also does not want any local body polls in October since it will have to start preparations on full throttle for conducting the all-important parliamentary polls in the third week of December.

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Psychologists are also concerned about the growing cruelty among juveniles as is very evident from recent incidents. Such children do not show any remorse after committing serious offences. Sometimes they even kill the victim to hide evidence of their crime.

Investigations into five murders in their capital city by juveniles, committed over six months from April last year, show the cruel nature of such offenders. The youngsters killed their victims over trivial matters like alteration during games, or snatching cell phones or disagreements over sharing of booty after selling stolen goods.

In the probe it was found that the senior BNP leader had amassed wealth worth about Tk 1.67 crore illegally and concealed information about his wealth worth Tk 91 lakh in the statement.

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