

Candidates changed

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several years while services like road communications, water and power supply and drainage system remain as poor as ever, they said.

RAJSHAHI
Ahead of the election to Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC), most electorate have observed that they have been cheated in the last five years as the city has remained underdeveloped, reports our correspondent in Rajshahi.

BNP lawmaker Mizanur Rahman Minu, now convicted in an extortion case, never paid heed to people's reminders of his mayoral election pledges including bringing natural gas supply to the city, industrial boost, not increasing taxes, building educational institutes, constructing new roads and expanding the existing ones.

City dwellers alleged that the RCC itself was made the centre of corruption and crime although Minu's main electoral pledge was to eliminate them.

He also pledged to make Rajshahi a drug-free city but at least 60,000 bottles of banned phenisidyl used to enter the frontier city every day, said a businessman.

Government land was grabbed while extortion by ruling party men was common.

The present mayoral candidates and also those who contested last time also did little to force the authorities to follow these pledges during the last five years, many city dwellers alleged, expressing pessimism about any positive change in case politicians who become active only during elections come out successful this time.

Mayoral candidate AHM Khairuzzaman Liton declared a 23-point election pledge that includes taking initiatives for producing 50-60MW electricity to solve power crisis, establishing a silk-based industry and an industry-based export processing zone (EPZ) and adopting a master plan for the development of greater Rajshahi, reports our Rajshahi University correspondent.

Enamul Haque declared a 21-point election pledge including establishing a centre to build skilled manpower; Dural Huda announced a 15-point election pledge including reducing unemployment; Mosaddek Hossain Bulbul unofficially announced a 10-point pledge; Masudul Haque Dulu announced a 20-point pledge; and Raihanur Rahman announced an 18-point pledge including establishing transparency in the RCC.

BARISAL
BNP district unit President Mujibur Rahman Sarwar, who committed to curb criminal activities, was elected the mayor of Barisal City Corporation (BCC). However, the mayor himself allegedly had criminals around him who resorted to different criminal activities including manipulating tenders.

Sarwar allegedly took percentage from each development work. He turned the BCC office into a political hub of the BNP-Jamaat coalition, appointing a large number of men at the BCC office from the parties.

He has been charged with corruption, killing, extortion and illegal arms possession, among others.

The present mayoral candidates are now going door to door with the same pledges giving priority to carrying out development work and curbing criminal activities and corruption, reports our correspondent in the city.

Advocate Enayet Pir Khan has pledged to curb criminal activities. "There would be no political influence on the city corporation if I am elected," he said.

Shawkat Hossain Hiron said he does not want to cheat by placing unreal pledges. "If I am elected, I will do what is necessary, especially development of the city," he said.

Ebadul Haque Chan said he would form a nagork committee in every ward comprising non-political persons and would carry out development work recommended by elected ward councillors.

"Former mayor Ahsan Habib Kamal who is accused of several corruption charges has pledged to curb corruption from the city corporation," he said.

SYLHET
The mayoral candidates of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) polls have pledged to eliminate corruption from the corporation.

ACC to quiz

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Ltd, a bridge maintenance firm.

But details of the statements, however, could not be known immediately.

On June 18, the ACC filed the case with Motijheel Police Station accusing the two of taking Tk 6 lakh in bribe from the owner of Marganet One Ltd.

In the case, the complainant stated that Nazmul Huda demanded bribe from the owner of the firm in exchange for a work order for the maintenance of Jamuna Bridge.

As per his demand, the owner of the firm deposited Tk 6 lakh to the account of Weekly Khobor Atonale at 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 and the firm got the work order, the complainant said.

Earlier, separate special courts set up on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises acquitted Sigma Huda in two extortion cases and sentenced her to three years imprisonment in a case on charges of abetting her husband in taking Tk 2.4 crore in bribe from the proprietor of a construction firm.

On the other hand, Huda was sentenced to different terms of imprisonment in bribery and extortion cases.

Detained SCC Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran, a candidate of the SCC polls, had pledged to curb corruption in SCC ahead of the 2003 elections. He is now detained in the Kitchen Market scam case filed in connection with illegally awarding the work order for a kitchen market to serve his interest.

His plans for the city's overall development and making it a city that draws tourists have not materialised yet.

As he is detained since May last year, Nagork Committee is running his campaign pledging to make the SCC free from political influence and continue the development works in the city.

All most other mayoral candidates have made curbing corruption their prime electoral pledge.

Mayoral candidate MA Haque, defeated in the first SCC polls by Kamran, is repeatedly talking about eliminating corruption and criminal activities in the SCC and making it an organisation accountable to the people.

AFM Kamal, also in the mayoral race, has stressed the need for making the SCC an "affective organisation in the real sense".

Candidates Babarul Hossain Babul and Abidul Mukit Khan pledged that if elected, their first job would be to make the SCC free from corrupt people and corruption. Their pledges also include eliminating the water crisis and recovering occupied land of water bodies.

KHULNA
Curbing corruption and making the Khulna City Corporation (KCC) a public welfare body are the prime electoral pledges of mayoral candidates in the KCC polls.

KCC Mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman was convicted and sentenced to 17 years imprisonment in two separate extortion cases. He had pledged to curb corruption and develop the city in 2003 elections.

This time, the mayoral candidates are making similar commitments along with serving the people with utmost sincerity, honesty and diligence.

Five mayoral candidates sat together yesterday at "Face-the-People" dialogue at Zia Hall in the city and pledged to work together for the welfare of the city people no matter what the outcome of KCC elections.

They also pledged to shun nepotism and politicisation, make KCC accountable to the people, make the best use of KCC resources and increase revenue earnings.

The five candidates are: Talukder Abdul Khaleque, Feroze Ahmed, Moslem Uddin, Prof Taibur Rahman and Enayet Ali.

Shushashoner Janney Nagorki (Shujan) organised the programme. Shujan Khulna district committee President Prof Mohammad Zafar Imam chaired the programme and Channel 1, The Daily Star and Prothom Alo were the media partners of the event.

Manmohan govt

FROM PAGE 1
government's ambitious agenda to modernise and reform India.

"Now we have crossed a major bridge that is the Indo-US civilian nuclear deal. Now, we will move ahead on economic and social reforms."

Government officials gave an impassioned defence of the deal during two days of special debate, arguing that the country's 1.1 billion people badly need alternative sources of energy to avert an impending fuel crunch.

"I am not interested in whether we won or lost. I think what is important here is what is right for India," said Rahul Gandhi, the son of Congress leader Sonia and her apparent of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty.

However, the White House warned that time may be running out for Washington to ratify the pact.

"We think that we can move forward with this," said spokeswoman Dana Perino, but "there aren't that many days left where Congress is going to be in session."

Left-wingers—who triggered the vote by withdrawing their support for Singh earlier this month—and the main opposition Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had argued the deal would be traditionally neutral India too closely with the United States.

They also argued it would compromise the country's nuclear weapons programme and the ability to keep ahead of main regional rival Pakistan, also an atomic weapons state.

In what was seen as a last-ditch attempt to bring down the government, three BJP MPs took to the floor waving bundles of cash worth 30 million rupees (715,000 dollars) that they said they had been paid for their votes.

Manmohan Singh's office has turned into a mart of corruption, where MPs are bought and sold. So much money has changed hands that it's reached a new level of corruption in India, senior BJP official Vijay Kumar Malhotra told AFP.

But ultimately we are the gainers, and we will win the next general election," which is due by May 2009 at the latest, he said.

The Revolutionary Socialist Party, one of the four left-wing parties that forced the vote, said the government's win had "blackened" the face of Indian democracy.

"We do not recognise this as a victory. They won because of intense horse-trading," fumed party leader TJ Chandrachud.

Officials in parliament said Chatterjee had called in New Delhi's police chief to investigate the bribery claims. The speaker also said the furore was a "sad day in the history of parliament".

Govt cancels

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In Kurigram, Kazipara High School, Khamarbari High School, Burarpath Girls' High School, Kalihath High School, Rabaitari High School, Sardarpara Adarsha Biddyalaya, Bhogdanga Girls' High School, Bhimsharma High School, Najimkha Girls' High School, Sardab Adarsha High School, Uttar Dhaldanga High School, Kodalkati Girls' High School, Char Shoilmar Girls' High School, Dantbhanga Girls' High School, Chaktabari High School, and Nayabari Bhatia Girls' High School are on the list.

MPO for Ebatunnechha Girls' High School in Lalmonirhat has been cancelled.

ADB

FROM PAGE 16
This was worsened by the rapid rise in food prices that mainly affected the poor and fixed income earners.

Along with the loan, the ADB is also issuing a 600,000-dollar grant to help the government improve its ability to plan and undertake medium- and long-term programmes to improve food security.

AL calls

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Total demanded lifting of the state of emergency to create atmosphere for the general election. "Awami League is no rival to the caretaker government. Since the caretaker government is running the country as per constitution, there is no need for the emergency," he said.

UZ polls

FROM PAGE 1
an on-party election.

Polls to the remaining 182 upazila parishes will be held immediately after the ninth parliamentary election, which is supposed to be held on the third week of December.

The CEC said the commission has yet to fix any tentative date for the parliamentary polls.

The EC sits today again to discuss the draft rules and code of conduct for the upazila parish polls. It plans to finalise the draft rules next week and then send it to the law ministry for vetting, sources in the EC Secretariat said.

According to the draft electoral rules and code of conduct, polls to upazila parishes are totally non-partisan and the candidates will not be allowed to use their political identities, party name or symbols during their campaign. If a candidate violates this rule, he or she can lose the candidature, be fined and jailed, the draft says.

The Upazila Parishad Ordinance promulgated by the caretaker government in June says that if an individual is elected upazila chairman, he or she will have to resign from the post of his or her political party before taking oath for the new job.

The EC has made plans to publish the draft voter list for DCC areas later this month allowing people to check the authenticity of the voter list with photographs.

According to the plan, the final voter list for the DCC areas will be ready by the first week of September and it will require a few days to complete its printing.

Politicians

FROM PAGE 1
invitation "but we could not invite them due to space constraints at the celebration venue."

Of its own employees, the EC Secretariat invited only the first class officials to the programme. Employees, who worked for the voter listing from the very beginning, tried to communicate with the CEC on Monday to express their desire to participate in the celebration but failed to draw his attention.

The EC invited 500 guests including civil and military bureaucrats, civil society personalities, diplomats and leaders of professional bodies to the celebration, held yesterday afternoon.

Representatives from all communities were supposed to be invited to the programme.

Putting to rest all scepticism about the project's success, the EC completed the field level task of voter registration in the first week of this month, registering 8.05 crore voters.

It has also had ready the electronic database of the voters, perhaps one of the largest electronic databases of electoral rolls in the world and definitely the largest in developing countries.

The project's senior official said all preparations were made to invite politicians to the programme as they were invited to celebrate the halfway mark of voter registration at the same venue earlier on March 2 this year.

But the decision on not inviting the politicians was taken on the eve of sending the invitation letters, he added.

He said intelligence agencies objected to inviting Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka and Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahid to the programme as both of them are facing corruption charges.

Besides, presence of a political leader in the March 2 celebration created controversy. "So, we finally decided not to invite any politician," the senior official said.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed attended the function as chief guest while Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed and UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Representative Renata Dessalieux were present as special guests.

Asked about the hassle people have been suffering every day, the deputy director said it is not the BRTA's doing.

Upon every payment of fees or tax, the post office makes three money receipts—gives one to the owner of the vehicle, sends one to BRTA and keeps one for itself.

The government had earlier detected several cases of money embezzlement by the postal department.

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Now 94 post offices including 18 in the capital are attached to BRTA where motor vehicle owners can deposit their taxes.

A number of vehicle owners said BRTA takes cash while other post

Babar charged

FROM PAGE 1
Rupak Kumar Saha, deputy assistant director of the ACC and investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet to Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, showing nine people as prosecution witnesses.

The charge sheet was prepared under sections 26 (1) and 27 (1) of the Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2004 and Section 15 of the Emergency Power Rules 2007.

The IO in his charge sheet maintained that Babar should be brought to trial as charges against him were primarily proved to be true.

He said the former state minister had amassed assets worth over Tk 6.79 crore through illegal means and hid information on wealth amounting to more than Tk 7 crore from the commission.

On January 13, ACC Assistant Director Mirza Zahidul Alam filed the case with Ramna Police Station accusing that Babar made a fortune of about Tk 6.74 crore through illegal means and hid information about Tk 7.6 crore of his assets.

Babar reported his wealth to the ACC on July 7 last year through the Dhaka Central Jail authorities.

He had claimed in his wealth statement that he and his family own about Tk 6.77 crore in moveable and immovable property.

He showed construction costs of his 5,938sq-foot under-construction building in Netrakona's, Madan upazila at Tk 8 lakh. But the Public Works Department later determined the costs to be around Tk 34.43 lakh, the case statement said.

It said the former state minister did not mention about Tk 6.79 lakh deposited in his savings account with Prime Bank's Gulshan branch.

Moreover, information collected from the bank shows that US\$1 million was wired to Babar's bank account in Singapore on June 20 last year.

He could not give any explanation as to the source of this money which

Bahrain

FROM PAGE 16
Bangladeshis living in Bahrain, he added.

Bahrain suspended work visas for Bangladeshis toward the end of May after the mechanic was accused of killing a Bahraini man, newspapers reported at the time.

A Bahraini Islamist lawmaker had called for the expulsion of all Bangladeshi workers from the Gulf country amid outrage over the murder.

"The mechanic was charged with premeditated murder after he was allegedly slit the victim's throat with a hacksaw during an argument over payment for work on the victim's car."

Like other Arab states in the Gulf, Bahrain relies heavily on unskilled Asian workers in low-paid jobs such as construction and domestic help.

In June, a Bangladeshi cook was executed after he was convicted of killing his female employer in August 2006.

The tiny Gulf archipelago applies the death penalty but executions are rarely carried out.

Hasina

FROM PAGE 1
constitutional responsibility of the caretaker government to hold the general election. "Upazila elections are to be held after the national polls."

Hasina said it is a good sign that the caretaker government has started realising that there is no alternative to elections and transfer of power to an elected government.

AL Acting General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam, UK chapter AL leaders Syed Ferooz and Mustaque Qureshi and Jubo League President Anwaruzzaman Chowdhury and General Secretary Tariq Ahmed also spoke at the meeting.

He said it is the pride of Bangladesh that it has registered more than 80 million voters within a short time, adding that very few countries have achieved such a feat.

Post office hassle

FROM PAGE 16
"Frustrated, I came out of the post office when a broker asked me to wait and he went inside the post office. Minutes later he returned and said he could manage a receipt if I pay him Tk 500," Anisur said. When he agreed the broker managed a money receipt from inside and all his work done within half an hour.

A deputy director of BRTA unwilling to be named said motor vehicle owners sometimes have to wait for a long time to get tax tokens or other papers. This happens because the post office often takes even up to a week to provide one of the three money receipts to the BRTA.

As per the rules, the post office should provide the receipts to BRTA the same day, the deputy director said.

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suggest that he stashed away the money in a foreign bank account as it was not earned through legal sources, said the case statement.

Babar was arrested at his Gulshan residence on May 28 last year. The law enforcement agencies also recovered four firearms—a shotgun, a rifle, a pistol and a revolver, two magazines and 297 rounds of ammunition.

He has already been sentenced to 17 years' rigorous imprisonment for illegally keeping the arms and ammunition.

The law enforcers also recovered Tk 20 crore he received from the Bashundhara Group in exchange for allegedly sparing the son of the group's chairman from murder charges.

Shafiat Sobhan, son of Bashundhara chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan, was the prime suspect of the July 2006 murder of Bashundhara director Humayun Kabir Sabbir.

POWER PLANT CASE

Trial adjourned until Sep 8

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
The trial proceedings of the barge-mounted power plant graft case against former premier Sheikh Hasina and seven others were adjourned yesterday till September 8.

Judge Firoz Alam of Special Court-1 located on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises adjourned the proceedings upon receiving the copy of the HC order that stayed the case proceedings for two months.

The HC had issued the stay order on July 7.

The counsel for former energy and power secretary Dr Towfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury, one of the co-accused in the case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), yesterday pleaded to the special court for the release of his client since he was arrested again despite being awarded bail by the HC.

The court, in response, said it could not issue such order since the HC had already stayed all proceedings of the case.

Advocate Sahara Khatun represented Hasina during the proceedings as the former premier had been exempted from appearing personally at trial proceedings in the court during her stay overseas for medical treatment.

ACC Deputy Director Sabbir Hasan filed the case with Tejgaon Police Station on September 2 last year accusing Hasina and six others of using their influence to help a foreign company and its local partners win a deal for setting up 100-megawatt barge-mount power plants in Haripur, Khulna and Shikabaha, depriving the lowest bidder.

Other accused in the case are former Power Development Board (PDB) chairman Noor Uddin Mahmud Kamal, Managing Director of Summit Industries and Mercantile Corporation Private Ltd Aziz Khan, its Director Farid Khan, United Group Chairman Hasan Mahmud Raja and its Director Abul Kalam Azad.

Elect honest

FROM PAGE 1
The Bangladesh Army would complete the work at an estimated cost of Tk 446 crore, he said.

The army chief said despite strong opposition from various quarters, the task was taken as a challenge and was successfully completed by the armed forces in cooperation with all sections of people.

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Salam Pintu

FROM PAGE 16
confessional statement regarding the attacks.

Judge KM Rasheduzzaman Raja of the Second Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court adjourned the hearing following petitions submitted by defence lawyers.

The court fixed August 3 for next hearing on charge-framing and directed the jail authorities to produce all the arrested accused on that day.

The case was filed for the grenade attacks on an Awami League (AL) rally on August 21, 2004 that left 23 people dead and around 200 injured.

REJECTION OF BAILS
The court rejected the bail petitions of Pintu, Arif Hasan and Jahangir Alam following arguments from the defence and the prosecution on the issue.

Moving the bail petitions, lawyers told the court that their clients were implicated in the case as part of a conspiracy to harass them. Their clients were not named in the FIR but included in the charge sheet, they argued.

The prosecution opposed the petitions saying that they had earlier confessed to the killings and their petitions should be rejected.

SHOW RESPECT TO COURT
The judge asked the former BNP lawmaker Pintu to show respect to the court order during the hearing of the case. The judge's comment came as the defence and the prosecution argued on whether Pintu should stand in the dock or not.

BAIL OF JEWEL
The same court granted bail to Jewel upon a bond of Tk 20,000 with two guarantors following a HC order. The HC on April 7 granted bail to Jewel for six months.

Delwar

FROM PAGE 16
Khaleda Zia for the validity," Delwar also said.

Delwar made the comments at a meeting organised by four-party alliance at Engineers Institution in the capital, demanding the release of political leaders including BNP chief Khaleda.

Accusing the Awami League (AL) of hatching conspiracies, the BNP secretary general said, "The Awami League has announced that they will boycott the upazila elections. They however are hatching conspiracies in London and a foreign diplomat was present at the meeting between Hasina and Ershad."

This government does not want to hold the elections as it intends to stay in power for a longer period, Delwar alleged saying, "When will it be a good time for them to withdraw the emergency?"

"In fact, it [government] is in search of its own candidates who will win the elections under the emergency," he said demanding that the government make public the names of the candidates it endorses.

Implying that the Election Commission (EC) is playing along with the government scheme, Delwar said even though all political parties demanded national elections first, the EC maintains that it will hold the upazila polls before the parliamentary polls.

Pointing to the chief election commissioner, the BNP leader said, "Please resign if you have any respect for the people. You made yourself controversial. Everything you did is illegal."

Other BNP leaders who spoke at the meeting said the present government will be held accountable for its corruption. The future elected government will conduct investigation into the corruption committed by the present government and a fair trial would be conducted under existing laws of the land.

Jamaat-e-Islami Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahid said the AL is hatching a conspiracy and they are using Ershad for it. "You have to come to Khaleda Zia for assistance. The handover of power following the elections would be possible with her assistance."

BNP-led four-party alliance leaders including Shamim Al Mamun, Abdul Latif Nezami, Nazrul Islam Khan, Muhammad Qamaruzzaman, among others, spoke at the meeting.

1.2 lakh MT rice

FROM PAGE 16
Chittagong, Salahuddin Ahmad, said around 40,000 tonnes of rice have already been unloaded and transported to different food warehouses in Chittagong and Dhaka divisions.

BRTA sources said they have already