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AL gets toehold in Barisal, Khulna, Rajshahi cities after decades

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After decades of repeated defeats Awami League (AL) finally regained control of Barisal, Khulna and Rajshahi city corporations through Monday's local government elections as its mayoral candidates won defeating the candidates of its archrival BNP which had ruled the cities most of the time during the period.

Shawkat Hossain Hiron is the first mayor-elect with an AL ticket in Barisal City Corporation (BCC) in 35 years. Abul Hasanat Abdullah was the last AL leader to be elected as the chairman of the local government there when it was a municipality in 1973.

Since then Jatiya Party and BNP leaders led that local government as its chairmen or mayors. In 2003

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Winners have to quit party posts

AL decries new laws, fears vacuum in grassroots leaderships

SHAKHAWAT LITON and HASAN AHMED TUSHER

The mayors and councillors elect who hold party posts will have to resign from those posts before taking oath of offices in accordance with the new laws on formation and functions of city corporations and municipalities.

This will create a vacuum in the leadership of the political parties at the grassroots level and the Awami League (AL) which won majority posts in Monday's polls to four city corporations and nine municipalities will be the most affected.

The caretaker government promulgated the laws in May this year with the strict provision in an effort to free the local government institutions from the grips of partisan politics.

Most of the 278 mayors and councillors elected in Monday's polls are actively affiliated with political parties and holding posts of party committees at the grassroots levels.

Senior AL leaders yesterday told The Daily Star that they would ask the government to amend the laws to allow the elected mayors and councillors to hold party posts.

"We will ask the government not to implement the law," AL Presidium member Amir Hossain Amu said, adding that they had already opposed the law and demanded that the government change it.

Talukder Abdul Khaleque, who has been elected Khulna City Corporation (KCC) mayor, holds the post of Khulna city AL chief. Badar Uddin Ahmad Kamran, who won the Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) mayoral polls, is the Sylhet city AL president; AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, the Rajshahi

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NBR asks for Tofail's bank info of 10yrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has asked the commercial banks to submit the statement of last ten years' bank accounts of Awami League Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed.

In a letter issued yesterday, NBR Tax Zone-8 said it needs information about the bank accounts of the AL leader to assess the amount of tax he should pay and to realise the tax.

"The statement should include accounts of savings, current, loan, fixed or term deposits and other debit and credit accounts," the letter said.

It also asked the banks to submit the statement of the bank accounts of Tofail Ahmed's wife Anwara Ahmed as additional information.

POWER PLANT PROJECTS

Lobbying may let 2 rental companies off the hook

SHARIER KHAN

The power ministry is considering extension of project deadlines for two unqualified local rental power companies instead of penalising and cancelling contracts with them for failing to commercially launch five rental power plants with a total capacity of 200 MW even three months behind schedule.

The two companies -- Energy Prima of Hosaf Group and Kaltimax-GBB -- were selected despite their lack of experience. After signing contracts with Power Development Board (PDB) on January 16 and January 24 this year, they were supposed to commercially launch the five plants back in mid May.

But till date the companies failed to launch any power plant commercially. Their failure forced the PDB to serve them with notice of default and intent to terminate the contracts. But at the same time, the power ministry verbally assured the companies that 'nothing will happen', sources said.

They pointed out that failure of the two companies should be penalized with a daily fine of \$ 500 per MW from May 15. "This means till date the companies should pay the government about eight million dollars of liquidated damage," said an official.

The power plant deals will be automatically cancelled if the companies fail to launch at least test operation within a three-

month bank guarantee period against each of the rental power contract. "Some of the bank guarantees will expire this month, some next month," said the official.

The submission dates of bank guarantees by Energy Prima and GBB had stretched between January, February and April though they should have been submitted within a few days of signing of the deals.

"This demonstrates that from the beginning of the tender, the power ministry had been very relaxed with Energy Prima that bagged four of the five deals," said one source.

Energy Prima bagged three 50 MW rental power deals in

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Advisers okay RPO ordinance

UNB, Dhaka

The Council of Advisers last night approved the Representation of People (Amendment) Ordinance 2008.

Draft of the amendment to the existing ordinance was approved in a lengthy six-hour meeting with Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in the chair.

The proposed amendment provides for formation of electoral alliance among the registered and unregistered political parties.

Earlier, on July 13 the draft

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Dhaka asks Kuwait for full probe into workers' incidents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign and Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury yesterday requested Kuwait to conduct a full probe into the recent incidents involving Bangladeshi workers.

In a letter addressed to Kuwait's Interior Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Khalid Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, he said it was a common interest of the two

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PHOTO: STAR

Buses block the entrance to the Mohakhali flyover near Banani before taking a turn to the adjoining bus lane, creating traffic jams in the area every day.

Tac sends back two mercy seekers to ACC

Ill-gotten wealth take-over procedure yet to be finalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Truth and Accountability Commission (Tac) yesterday asked two corruption suspects seeking absolute to apply through Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) as they are being investigated by the latter.

Meanwhile, Tac Chairman Justice Habibur Rahman Khan yesterday said following the Voluntary Disclosure of Information Ordinance 2008, his commission will not look into how big a corruption is or how high-profile a suspect is while considering applications for mercy.

Tac and ACC will work in cooperation with each other and the latter should comply with the ordinance while dealing with issues regarding Tac that has been formed for the welfare of the people and the country, said the Tac boss during a regular news briefing in his office.

Tac however has yet to get direc-

tions regarding the procedure of taking over illegal properties of admitted corruptionists who will seek absolute from the commission by disclosing to it information about their corruption and by surrendering their illegally earned wealth or an equivalent amount of money to the government exchequer.

"Two people came to the commission seeking absolute through voluntary disclosures. But we didn't accept the applications and referred them back to ACC, as it is investigating their corruption," said Habibur Rahman Khan.

No further detail about the two applicants, however, could be known as Tac had decided not to make public any information about absolute seekers, with the objective of encouraging corruption suspects to come forward for making voluntary disclosures about their graft.

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Magistrates yet to work with independence

Says SC Bar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) yesterday urged the chief justice to take action against the judicial magistrates who are allegedly acting on "dictat" from the executive.

Barrister Shafique Ahmed, president of the SCBA, said following the separation of the judiciary from the executive, the judicial

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Sigma Huda freed on bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leading human rights activist Sigma Huda, also the wife of detained former communications minister Nazmul Huda, was released last night after getting a two-month ad interim bail from the High Court on Tuesday.

Deputy Inspector General of Prisons (DIG-Prisons) Maj Shamsul Haider Siddique said, "We received the papers regarding her bail in the evening. She was released from the prison cell of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BBSMU) at

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Wildlife circle sits idle for lack of plan

VANISHING FORESTS-7



PINAKI ROY

Officials of the wildlife circle under the Department of Forest are virtually sitting idle for years as the government does not have any specific plans or budget allocation to save the country's wildlife.

The wildlife section of the forest department is supposed to work to protect, rescue, treat and increase the number of wild animals and birds as well as their habitat. But the officials don't have any such activities so far since launch of the wildlife circle in 2001.

Speaking anonymously, a high official of the section said: "We just do the file work. Since 2006 when I was transferred to this section I didn't have any designated task to do."

"Even the government has yet to establish any wildlife rescue centre, any wildlife hospital or any specific project to save the

wildlife," he added.

Officials concerned say the wildlife section has a 378-strong designated workforce headed by a conservator of forest who has four divisional forest officers in four wildlife divisions -- Dhaka, Khulna, Sylhet and Chittagong.

In Karomjol under the Sundarbans Forest Division there is a wildlife hospital. "The hospital doesn't have any maintenance," said an official asking not to be named.

Sources say the wildlife section gets only Tk 25,000 budget to feed 17 captive deer in Vawal National Park.

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BCL, JCD to lay siege to home ministry today

Fresh violence in demand for release of leaders

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) will lay siege to the home ministry in the capital today demanding immediate release of detained BCL General Secretary Mahfuzul Haider Chowdhury Roton and JCD President Azizul Bari Helal.

Leaders and activists of BCL and JCD will march separately towards the home ministry from Dhaka University (DU) campus at around 12:00 noon.

Violence erupted again on DU campus last night after the activists of both BCL and JCD brought out

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Nasim, Mamun get HC bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday granted ad interim bail to ailing former home minister Mohammad Nasim and controversial businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun in separate cases.

An HC bench of Justice Md Muzammel Hossain and Justice Syed AB Mahmudul Huq granted Nasim ad interim bail for four months in a graft case following a petition filed by Nasim.

The Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) filed the case against Awami League (AL) leader Nasim for accumulating wealth illegally and concealing wealth information from the commission.

Nasim's counsel advocate M Enayetur Rahim told The Daily Star that the HC granted him bail on



Mohammad Nasim

medical grounds.

He also said the HC order cleared the way for release of Nasim, who has been undergoing treatment at the Lab Aid Specialised Hospital in the capital



Giasuddin Al Mamun

after suffering brain haemorrhage.

The joint forces arrested Nasim at midnight on February 4 last year. ACC Deputy Director Akhter Hossain filed a case against Nasim

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Jalil's plea for quashing graft case rejected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday rejected a petition for quashing a corruption case against Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil now in Singapore for treatment.

Judge Firoz Alam of Special Court-1 set up on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises passed the order.

On Tuesday, Jalil's counsels submitted the petition for quashing the corruption case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

ACC Deputy Director Enamul Haque Chowdhury filed the case against Jalil with Ramna Police Station for concealing Tk 65.29 lakh in his health statement submitted to the commission and amassing property worth Tk 63.82 lakh beyond his known sources of income.

Graft charges pressed against Patal

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday pressed charges against detained former state minister for youth and sports Fazlur Rahman Patal in a case filed for amassing wealth worth Tk 2.36 crore illegally and giving false wealth information to the commission.

Meantime, a Dhaka court directed the officer-in-charge (OC) of Dohar Police Station to register the Awami League (AL) leader Khalil Kazi murder case as a regular one against detained former communications minister barrister Nazmul Huda, his brother and 11 others.

ACC Assistant Director Helal Uddin Sharif, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the Chief

Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, showing 29 people as prosecution witnesses.

The IO dropped names of Patal's wife Kamrunnahar and their son Yasir Arshad Rajan from charge sheet and appealed to the court for discharging them from charges.

In the charge sheet, the IO mentioned that Patal amassed wealth worth Tk 2,36,56,653 through illegal means and concealed information of wealth worth Tk 87,63,941 to the commission.

The IO also said the charges brought against Patal were primarily proved and he should be brought under trial.

On April 15 this year, the ACC sued BNP leader Fazlur Rahman Patal and his two family members with Ramna Police Station for

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BNP trying to stigmatise local body polls: AL

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League's acting General Secretary Syed Ashraf Islam yesterday alleged that BNP is trying to jeopardise the environment of parliamentary polls by stigmatising the recently held local body elections as an 'election of entente'.

"BNP has also participated in the city corporation and municipal

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Announcement

Today's issue of The Daily Star contains a two-page supplement on the roundtable on "Future Direction of Bangladesh Foreign Policy" jointly organised by The Daily Star and Center for Foreign Affairs Studies on May 7, 2008.



PHOTO: STAR

The seven children being taken from the house of former DIG of police Anisur Rahman to Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday for DNA tests to determine if they are his children.

Ex-DIG's 7 kids go under DNA test

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A medical board yesterday collected samples for DNA test from seven children of former deputy inspector general (DIG) of police Anisur Rahman following a High Court order to determine whether they are his siblings.

Head of the medical board Prof Mizanul Haque after collecting blood and saliva told reporters it will take a week to complete the test.

Earlier in the morning, Anisur Rahman's lawyer advocate Kazi Sajwar Hossain brought the children to the court amid police escort.

After seeing the children, the HC observed that they are seriously suffering from malnutrition and could even die if they are not given proper treatment.

The court also ordered Bangladesh National Woman

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ANNOUNCEMENT

This Friday, Beijing will be lit up with fireworks set forth from the astounding National Stadium, the "Bird's Nest", heralding the start of the 2008 Olympics. Join the relay of the Olympic torch with The Daily Star Sport as we bring you a 4-page all-colour supplement which highlights the biggest stars, the miraculous venues, the stories of adversity and those of enduring spirit along with trivia and useful snippets of information. Don't forget to ask your hawk for your copy of the Olympic Special on Friday, August 8.