

# Obama seeks to inspire, reassure Americans

Democratic National Convention begins today

AFP, Denver

Barack Obama will seek to bond with Americans still wary of his exotic life story and crusade for change, as he makes history by becoming the first black presidential nominee this week.

The 47-year-old son of a Kenyan goat herder and a white American mother will cap a stratospheric political rise by formally accepting his party's change as millions of voters tune into the Democratic National Convention from Monday.

Amid razamattaz that only a White House race can whip up, Illinois Senator Obama will try to recast the sprint to November's election, after a barrage from his Republican foe John McCain reduced the race to a dead heat.

A compelling subplot will also unfold, as Hillary Clinton, who saw Obama halt her own quest for history and bid to become America's first woman president, is embraced by a party carved in two by their acrimonious duel.

The former first lady, and her still smarting husband ex-president Bill Clinton, usurped after dominating Democratic politics for a generation, will be scrutinised for any sign they are thwarting party unity.

With millions of voters tuning into the race for the first time, Hawaii-born Obama has a priceless chance to flesh out his biography, and to portray his rags to riches story as the very embodiment of the American dream.

"He has to make people more comfortable with him as a person," said Andrew Dowdle, a political science professor at the University of Arkansas.

"This is his real opportunity here."

Obama preaches a post-racial message of unity and hope, but his image and bid to court core blue-collar Democrats was rocked when tirades of his African-American former pastor exploded into public view early this year.

Recent McCain attacks have also set him back, painting his soaring rhetoric as the stuff of a vacuous and hubristic celebrity woefully lacking experience required of a US commander-in-chief.

Julian Zelizer, a history professor at Princeton University, agreed Obama's White House hopes may rest in defining himself, before Republican political shock troops do it for him.

"If he doesn't, he is going to have a big problem," Zelizer said.

"He has had a really difficult month in August, and the Republicans have done a pretty good job in framing him."

The unknown Illinois state lawmaker who took US politics by storm with a stunning speech at the 2004 Democratic convention, preached an end to slash and burn politics.

But the Obama of August 2008 seems to have embraced some of those tactics, fighting Republicans who take a scorched earth path to

## Taliban militants

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said in a telephone call from unknown location.

"The jirga (elders council) insisted that Taliban should stop fighting in the interest of the people of Bajaur."

The jirga has "assured" that troops will also suspend shelling and bombing raids in the area, he said.

"We are ready for talks with the government and the truce is an important development towards dialogue," Omar said.

Pakistan on Sunday rejected a ceasefire offered by Taliban militants in a troubled tribal region near the Afghan border as troops killed seven rebel fighters, officials said.

Pakistani forces moved into Bajaur, a known hub of al-Qaeda and Taliban militants, earlier this month. The government says at least 500 militants have been killed since then.

Troops fired artillery shells and gunship helicopters pounded suspected militant hideouts almost daily since the operation was mounted on August 6.

The offensive displaced nearly 200,000 people in the region.

Pakistan's fragile coalition government, which forced US ally President Pervez Musharraf to resign on August 18, is under heavy international pressure to tackle al-Qaeda and Taliban militants.

US and Afghan officials say the rebels have sanctuaries in the rugged tribal border regions of Pakistan that they use to train, regroup and launch attacks on international troops in Afghanistan.

## Curtain falls

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standing Martin Lel, a triple London marathon winner, faded to fifth and it was half-marathon specialist Wanjiu who pulled through.

China's Zou Shiming had a quick finish to the light-flyweight title for China's first boxing gold when Mongolia's Serdamba Purevdorj hurt his shoulder and his corner threw in the towel 19 seconds into the second.

There was success for Mongolia in the bantamweight final when Badar-Uugan Enkhbat won their first-ever boxing gold beating Cuba's highly fancied Yankiel Leon 15-5.

It was a miserable Games for traditional ring titans Cuba and the United States.

Cuba failed to get a gold despite eight of their boxers reaching the semifinals, while for the first time no USA boxer made the finals and they ended with a solitary boxing bronze.

The United States team of basketball multi-millionaires beat defending champions Spain as expected but the match was closer than the final 118-107 scoreline suggested.

Spain had closed to 89-91 with eight minutes remaining before Kobe Bryant provided a crucial late spark for the all-stars.

The United States picked up further gold beating Brazil 3-1 in the men's volleyball final.

Earlier, Rogge said that overall "the IOC was extremely pleased" with the Games.

"More than 40 world records were set, more than 100 Olympic records, and of course we had the two icons of the Games, Michael Phelps and Usain Bolt."

Rogge pointed to heightened environmental awareness, greater enthusiasm for sport among Chinese and the new stadium in Beijing as the legacies for China.

But he skirted around questions regarding China's response on such issues as human rights and Internet access, and diplomatically refused to be drawn into debate about the medals table.

For China, the investment of more than 40 billion dollars on the Games reaped handsome rewards.

They not only topped the gold medal count, but a near flawless organisation meant the controversies that marred the build-up largely slipped into the background.

Phelps, with his unprecedented eight gold medals and seven world records, and Bolt, the fastest man on earth winning three gold medals with three world records, were the headline stories.

At the end of Sunday's ceremony, the Olympic flag was passed to Johnson while London's position as the new host city was marked by Led Zepplin guitarist Jimmy Page duetting with Leona Lewis on 1970s rock classic Whole Lota Love.

Londoner, and former England football skipper, David Beckham booted a ball off the top of a London bus before the Olympic flame was extinguished.

## ACC chief

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Bandhu Sabhas from across the country attended the festival in the morning.

Welcoming the Sabha members, Editor of Prothom Alo Matru Rahman said, "The members of Bandhu Sabha want to build a strong democracy in the country. They work to help establish rule of law in the country and are always found to be against injustice and they always come forward to help during disasters like acid violence, floods and cyclones."

"I expect this body will become a powerful social organisation and build a new and better Bangladesh," he said adding, "To make the country free from all kinds of corruption, Bandhu Sabha members will march ahead with Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury in the leadership."

The ACC chief said, "The spirit and determination I see in the youth of today gives me the courage to continue my job."

"Together, we will beat corruption," he added.

The festival was inaugurated at 9:45 in the morning by hoisting the national flag and releasing balloons in the air. Among others journalists Anisul Haque, and Saiduzzaman Roushan and singer Mahmuduzzaman Babu attended the event.

Writer Imdadul Haque Milon, actor Afzal Hossain, TV personality Abdun Nur Tusher, singer Fahmida Nabi, psychologist and writer Dr Mohit Kamal greeted all members of Bandhu Sabha on the occasion, a press release from the organisation said.

The festival was arranged in association with Matru, National Aids/STD programme and Save The Children. Earlier, Bandhu Utsab was held in Khulna, Barisal, Chittagong, Dinajpur, Rajshahi, Comilla, Mymensingh, Faridpur, Kushtia and Sylhet.

## BSF kills

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identity of the other could not be known immediately.

The killers took away their bodies.

BSF men fired three rounds at the two Bangladeshis as they were trying to cross the border with cattle, killing them on the spot at about 9:30pm, according to a report received here from across the border.

BDR authorities sent a note to BSF authorities protesting the killings and asked them to return the bodies immediately.

Lt Col Sams, commanding officer of 41 rifles battalion, confirmed the incident.

# 25 spots get waterlogged

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an official of Dhaka Wasa adding that the canal was filled with earth due to unplanned urbanisation.

Waterlogging on the south side of Bir Shrestha Shaheed Mustafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur occurs as a road and floodlights of the stadium fall under the alignment of Segunbagicha canal, the official said. Since the canal has been narrowed down considerably, rainwater recedes slowly, said the official.

The official said an initiative has been taken to acquire land from the National Sports Council and the Public Works Department to make way for water to recede.

To improve waterlogging around Mirpur Road it is necessary to widen the Kalyanpur Ka canal, he said.

The official said drainage pipes need to be installed between Bijoy Sarani-Rokeya Sarani intersection and the Pangu Hospital via the Nam flat buildings on Manik Mia Avenue. The pipes would be connected to the Kalyanpur Cha canal near the hospital, said the official.

Drainage of water around Rokeya Sarani would be improved if a drainage line could be connected to the box culvert of Ebrahimpur canal, he said.

Non-existence of a rainwater outlet at west Monipur is the reason for prolonged waterlogging there, the official said.

Locals said ankle-deep water remains stagnant in the area for weeks after a heavy downpour. The drainage pipes of the area had a

link to the Kalyanpur Ga canal but it has been snapped due to unplanned urbanisation.

The drainage system of the area has been maintained by Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and it has launched a project this fiscal year to improve the situation, said a DCC official.

Since Begunbari canal has been narrowed and a large water body next to Bangladesh Bank in Motijheel has been filled up, waterlogging at Motijheel is a common scene after a downpour, said an Wasa official. The large water body has become almost nonexistent due to unplanned urbanisation after a box culvert was built on Segunbagicha canal in 1992.

This is the main reason behind the waterlogging in Fakirapool, Motijheel and Arambagh areas, the official added. Dhaka Wasa plans to connect a drainage line to the box culvert to reduce waterlogging in Motijheel.

Many residents of Islambagh, especially those in Dokkinpara, have been facing severe waterlogging for about two years as there is no drainage system of Wasa in Islambagh and the DCC surface drains are inadequate.

Mojibur Rahman, a local, blamed the filling up of a large water body in the area two years ago which helped drain out rainwater before. He said now it takes about 2-3 days for water to recede after heavy raining.

As for Islambagh, the Wasa official said they have as yet no plan to solve the problem in that area.

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The residents of Razarbagh, Mouchak, Shantinagar and Siddheswari are facing waterlogging due to the filling up of Shahjahanpur canal, said another official.

The situation in the areas was even worse as rainwater took 3-4 days to drain out and the situation has improved a bit when drainage pipes were installed a few years ago. It now takes 4-5 hours after a heavy downpour, he said.

"To improve the situation even further, we have a plan to set up a drainage line to Begunbari canal from Siddheswari via Moghbazar," he said.

Residents of Shahjadpur Dokkinpara face waterlogging at many spots as there is no drainage network of Wasa. It takes 4-5 hours time for water to recede after a moderate shower, said Khalil, a resident of the area.

The DCC during construction of a road there did not elevate the road and this is the main reason for waterlogging, he claimed.

Executive Officer of DCC Zone-9 Samsuzzaman said the residents of the area did not leave space for water to recede while building their houses and this is one of the major reasons of waterlogging there.

He said water would have gone into people's houses had they made the road higher.

"We have plans to take similar initiatives, after the rainy season is over, to improve waterlogging at many areas in the city," he said.

## Foreign workers

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rights body observed.

On July 27, some 80,000 workers mostly cleaners joined a work stoppage to demand proper wages and respect to their rights.

By and large, the strike was peaceful. Still, the Kuwaiti police attacked the workers at the US military base. They fired teargas shells and kicked and clubbed the workers at their dorms, said the report, the first by an international rights group after the labour strike in late July.

During their five-day detention, the workers were beaten up again. They were deported without \$5,000 or more in arrears.

Over the years, the Kuwaiti government did little to enforce its own labour laws or put an end to rampant abuse and exploitation of hundreds of thousands of guest workers. But its response to the labour unrest was harsh and swift, observed the NLC account.

Kuwait police beat and arrested hundreds of workers while 1,129 were deported to Bangladesh, it added.

"It would be a horrible turn of events if Operation Desert Storm and all the sacrifices made by US troops have in some way freed Kuwait to traffic in hundreds of thousands of foreign guest workers, who are stripped of their passports, forced to work long hours, cheated of their wages, and then beaten and deported when they ask that their most basic rights be respected," NLC Director Charles Kernaghan told English language daily Kuwait Times.

The NLC says the irony is that Bangladesh contributed 2,300 soldiers, who fought as part of the international coalition to liberate Kuwait.

"Now it is time for the full State Department and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as well as the US Military to press Kuwait to immediately take concrete steps to end human trafficking and to guarantee respect for the core internationally recognized labour rights of the foreign guest workers," it concludes.

The BSF DG said, "The BDR and the BSF guard more than 4,000km of border and therefore it would be quite unreasonable to expect that nothing is going to happen on this long border guarded by more than 100,000 armed people on both sides."

"However, as far as this incident is concerned, I can only say that it is highly regrettable, it should not have happened," he added.

On cattle smuggling in border areas, the BSF DG said there is no alternative to legalising cattle trading in border areas.

The conference also agreed to find out ways to stop cattle smuggling which they termed the main reason for most of the shooting incidents.

The BSF DG said, "Movement across the border is not allowed from sunset to sunrise. Curfew-like situation remains at night and if anyone wants to cross the border... will do so at his or her own risk."

He said BDR and BSF would share information on cattle smuggling under a pilot project. He said this would help BDR arrest illegal cattle traders if the BSF failed to arrest them.

About the claim that Bangladesh shelters Indian insurgents, the BDR chief said, "We do not shelter any insurgents in Bangladesh."

BSF also sought permission from BDR to erect fences at 46 places on borders between the two countries.

The two sides also exchanged a list of alleged criminals reportedly hiding in their countries. India handed over a list of 263 people to Bangladesh while Bangladesh handed over a list of 1,464 people to India.

The conference also agreed to have a commandant-level meets once a month.

# BGFCL wants

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to the national exchequer Tk 1,332 crore in fiscal 2002-'03, Tk 1,551 crore in '03-'04, Tk 1,566 crore in '04-'05, Tk 1,566 crore in '05-'06 and Tk 1,587 crore in '06-'07. Its contribution in 07-08 would also be close to Tk 1,600 crore, sources said.

But the company gets only 10 percent of its total earning. "Given the nature of the company, an annual net earning of Tk 150 crore might not be a big deal. Sometimes, development work might need huge investment, forcing the BGFCL to resort to donors," notes a source in Petrobangla, mother organisation of the BGFCL.

After spending a lot of its funds to stop alarming gas leakage from Titas field, the BGFCL is set to spend around Tk 427 crore from its own funds to drill a new well (No-9) and conduct workover of two wells (2 and 5) in Bakhrabad field, drill two new wells in Titas field (17 and 18) and install gas processing plant. It is spending Tk 19 crore for workover of a well in Meghna.

These work will add 120 mcmcf of gas to the national grid. Of this, 30 mcmcf will be transmitted to the national grid from December. This will gradually rise to 150 mcmcf by 2010.

But side by side, the BGFCL is seeking a \$100 million loan from the ADB to completely end the gas leakage from Titas field and to drill four wells there. This will increase gas production by another 120 mcmcf from 2012.

This means BGFCL's total output will go up to 970 mcmcf by 2012.

In addition, the company is jointly developing Begumganj gas field with Bapex and Sylhet gas field with an initial investment of Tk 187 crore. Of this, the BGFCL has committed to pump in around Tk 90 crore.

"This gas company has given so much to the nation, it is time the

nation helps this company grow further," commented a Petrobangla high official.

TITAS FIELD WOES

According to a conservative estimate, Titas field has lost at least one billion cubic feet of gas through the leakage detected in 2003, but was left alone neglected. After a lot of hues and cries by experts, including former Bapex high official Mir Moinul Haque, a project was undertaken.

After a series of events, faulty gas well Number-3 was sealed at a cost of \$10 million several months back.

"But you can still see gas leakage, there are gas bubbles in the Titas river. This time however the emitted gas is nothing but gas that remained charged underground due to the past leakage. Perhaps there are some other undetected problems with the field. We are monitoring all the wells and data shows no anomaly in the producing wells," said a BGFCL official. "I should say the field's condition is not as dangerous as it has been."

He went on, "We believe the three dimensional survey now being undertaken will reveal whatever faults this field has developed. We can take remedial actions after that. Otherwise, it is impossible to address this leakage problem."

Titas field is considered as the lifeline of Bangladesh's energy. Initially assessed to have five trillion cubic feet (tcf) of gas, the field has already produced 3 tcf from the sixties.

Judging from the gas pressure trend, which remains the same as in the sixties, Petrobangla experts believe this field still has four to five tcf of gas.

"There are still parts of this gas field which have not been tapped. For instance, the field extends to the Salda river. There have been no drilling on that side. We are considering drilling of six wells on that side," said the BGFCL official.

# Khaleda's release

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"But such conditions of the government are not acceptable to Khaleda Zia. Even people won't accept those," Delwar said at a news briefing after a two-hour-long meeting of the BNP-led four-party alliance at his Namapartment in the capital.

Various issues including the planned human chain programme and current political scenario were discussed at the meeting that began at 11:00am.

The alliance earlier announced that it would hold a human chain programme on August 27 to press home its demand for immediate release of Khaleda and her ailing elder son Tarique Rahman.

Delwar slammed the Representation of the People (amendment) Ordinance 2008, which bans political parties from having front organisations.

"This (amended) ordinance is unconstitutional," he said.

Delwar also alleged that it has been designed with a motive to hold the next general election according to a blueprint.

The BNP leader said the provision of "no vote" has been inserted into the amended RPO to divert people's attention.

"The amendments have been made to keep the four-party alliance away from the election process," he alleged.

Delwar said the Election Commission and the government have no mandate to make such a law in the absence of parliament. But the government has promulgated the ordinance with the president's signature.

"We (the four-party alliance) reject the ordinance (RPO). The next general election will be illegal if it is held under it," Delwar said.

## Zillur demands

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after offering special prayer at the grave of Ivy Rahman in Banani graveyard. Party leaders, activists and family members joined him.

In a faltering voice he said Ivy sacrificed her life to protect party president Sheikh Hasina.

Leaders of Jatiya Mohila Parishad, Mohila Awami League and Jubo League paid homage to Ivy Rahman at the grave.

Later, a milad mahfil was held at Zillur Rahman's Gulshan house in the afternoon.

AL presidium members Amir Hossain Amu, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Motia Chowdhury, among others, attended the milad.

## AL man killed

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Shamsul and Mokles.

They were admitted to the Jhenidah hospital.

Police and villagers said a clash between the followers of local BNP leader Ishaq and AL leader Nayeab Ali over a ha-du-du match occurred at Jaduria village in the evening leaving Ariful dead on the spot and 10 others wounded.

Superintendent of Police Jahangir Hossain Matabbar said additional policemen had been deployed in the area to avert any untoward incident.

He also accused the government of pursuing a double standard.

"Sheikh Hasina is free but Khaleda Zia is behind bars. Tarique Rahman's condition is deteriorating. He has not been released for medical treatment although many others with minor complications have been freed," he said.

The BNP secretary general also criticised the government for ignoring the suggestions by the medical board, which is treating Tarique at the prison cell of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

"We are worried that he (Tarique) is partially paralysed... the government will have to bear all responsibility," he said.

BNP Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan, Jamaat-e-Islami leaders Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahid, Mohammad Qamaruzzaman, ATM Azaharul Islam and Rafiqul Islam Khan, BIP Chairman Andaleeb Rahman and Secretary General Shamim Al Mamun, IOJ Secretary General Abdul Latif Nejam and Khelafat Majlis Secretary General Ahmed Abdul Quader, among others, were present.

## Hospitals, clinics

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cause a cut or puncture to passers-by, he said.

Waste like used syringes and gloves is picked up by scavengers and sold to unaware patients or their family members at a much lower price, he said.

The DCC as part of medical waste management has constructed a dump on one acre of land in Matuail. Four units -- chemical disinfecting, burial pit, Incinerator and Autoclave -- have been set up there.

All kinds of plastic materials are sliced first and then dumped in the chemical disinfecting unit, said Tarit Kanti Biswas, programme coordinator, hospital waste management of Prism Bangladesh.

Liquid waste is treated in the burial pit unit to make it hazard free and then discharged in drains, he added.

Tarit said infectious plastic waste is burned in the incinerator, while blood bags, gloves and other things are disposed of at the Autoclave unit. Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), which is the major source of waste, is going to come under the waste management by September this year, said Anis.

He said they have already trained up nurses, ward boys, and management staffs of DMCH through a training programme.

A tender process is on to purchase some necessary items including bins and trolleys in this regard by September 30, he said.

"Everything goes well, we'll start our waste collection work at DMCH from October 1," he said. "We keep four buckets of four colours in each hospital and clinic where the waste is dumped."

The yellow-coloured baskets are for dumping hazardous waste, red baskets for sharp waste, green boxes for recyclable waste and black boxes for general waste, he said.

Three vehicles collect the waste in two shifts from the clinics and hospitals every day, he added.