

AL kicks off preparation for JS polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A day after the chief adviser announced the date for the ninth parliamentary election, Awami League (AL) formally began preparing for the election following directives of its chief Sheikh Hasina.

AL Election Conducting Committee, formed ahead of the stalled parliamentary polls of January 22, 2007, sat in Hasina's political office in Dhanmondi to revise its sub-committees created for election preparation.

AL will use the party chief's office as campaign headquarters. Logistic support has already been provided for the purpose.

"With directions of party chief Sheikh Hasina we sat to revise and rearrange our different election related committees so that they can start working for the next election," HT Imam, an AL advisory council member and the head of the committee, told The Daily Star last night.

"As all the election related... SEE PAGE 15 COL 8"

Time running out for 2 vital poll tasks

HC stay on re-demarcation of constituencies throws the spanner

SHAKHWAT LITON

The Election Commission (EC) finds itself in a tight corner in gearing up for the December 18 poll as two of its vital tasks -- preparing the constituency wise electoral rolls and finalising the list of polling stations -- remain suspended because of a High Court (HC) stay on recent re-demarcation of the constituencies.

The stay order will expire on November 6 while the EC must announce the detailed poll schedule in early November in order to allow a required gap of 42 to 45 days between the polling date and the date of announcing the detailed schedule.

And constituency wise voter...

lists are required before announcing the detailed poll schedule.

EC officials said at least a week will be needed to have the constituency wise voter lists ready, which must be available at the offices of returning officers for prospective candidates, as soon as the detailed poll schedule is announced.

Prospective candidates are also not being able to start their election preparations with the uncertainty about the constituencies still dogging the electoral process.

Many of them already communicated with the EC to know about the fate of the recent re-demarcation, the EC officials said.

Following a writ petition filed by former BNP lawmaker Abdul Mannan challenging the EC's July...

10 gazette notification which finalised the re-demarcation of 300 parliamentary constituencies, the HC on August 7 stayed the effectiveness of the notification for three months.

It also issued a ruling on the government and the EC to show cause in two weeks as to why the gazette notification should not be declared unconstitutional and illegal.

Worried by the tight spot it found itself in due to the HC stay order, the EC scrambled to get the matter resolved before the Supreme Court (SC) went into vacation, but it failed.

Now the EC is not being able to... SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

RPO of contention

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Representation of the People Ordinance promulgated on August 19 has already become the centrepiece of a debate about how the parties should behave themselves in elections and how they should reform themselves for fair...

polls. As the political parties are widely divided on changes to the RPO, it is worthwhile to take a look at the basic changes the new rules.

Following are the highlights of the amendments for the readers to understand how relevant the rules are and what their aims:

- Registration of political parties with the Election Commission is made compulsory and a ban is slapped on having front organisations and overseas units of political parties.
- Loan defaulters and war criminals, declared by a local or international court, are made ineligible to run in elections.
- An option to cast no-vote is given to voters and if 50 percent of votes are no-votes then the constituency will have re-election.

- Public or defence officials who have resigned or retired have to wait three years before they can run in elections.
- No candidate will be able to contest in more than three constituencies.
- Candidates must be voters and must submit eight pieces of information in the nomination papers.

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AL's yes to nearly all

HASAN JAHD TUSHER

The Awami League (AL) yesterday categorically demanded that the government and the Election Commission (EC) implement the Representation of the People Ordinance (RPO) except some of the provisions it had opposed.

"We want full implementation of RPO, party registration, and electoral code of conduct," said AL acting general secretary Syed Ashraful Islam at a press conference after a meeting of the AL presidium.

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BNP says no to all

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

BNP and its allies might not even apply for registration with the Election Commission (EC) since they do not accept the new provisions in the Representation of the People Ordinance (RPO).

"They will reconsider their stance only if the EC agrees to relax the criteria for registration," said sources close to the parties.

BNP and its partners in the four-party alliance want the commission to have the new provisions scrapped or suspended till the upcoming polls are over.

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ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH Sajeda's son, ex-Sonali Bank MD jailed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday sentenced Awami League (AL) presidium member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury's son Shahdab Akbar to 12 years' imprisonment for amassing wealth illegally and concealing information in his wealth statement submitted to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

The court ordered confiscation of Shahdab's ill-gotten wealth, and also fined him Tk 10 lakh, in default of which he has to serve jail term for one more year.

Meanwhile, another special court yesterday sentenced former Sonali Bank managing director Tahmidur Rahman to eight years in jail in a similar corruption case. The court ordered confiscation of his ill-gotten assets.

SHAHDAB
Judge Abu Hanif of the Special Court-8 on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises handed down 10 years' imprisonment for Shahdab for acquiring wealth through dishonest means and another two years' jail term for...

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Belal falls asleep while doing design work on a piece of cloth on the first floor of the New Market Kitchen market in Dhaka. The boy came to the city last year with a neighbour and has been working there just for food and shelter. Long working hours of the non-paying job leaves him tired most of the time.

PHOTO: SHAKHWAT JAMIL

al-Qaeda blamed for Pak hotel carnage

Czech envoy killed, Danish diplomat missing as death toll rises to 53

AFP, Islamabad

Rescue teams hunted for survivors yesterday in the ruins of Islamabad's Marriott Hotel, where a massive truck bomb killed at least 53 people in what officials said looked like the work of al-Qaeda.

Around 200 more were wounded in the suicide attack Saturday night in the heart of the capital, which came just hours after Pakistan's new president gave his inaugural address to parliament and vowed to stamp out terrorism.

Pakistan's interior ministry Sunday blamed al-Qaeda linked Taliban militants from tribal areas near the border with Afghanistan for the massive suicide attack on the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad.

Top ministry official Rehman Malik told a news conference that attackers involved in recent bomb-

ings were all from the tribal areas known here by their acronym FATA, and said the militant region was behind the latest carnage.

Rescuers on Sunday retrieved the body of Czech Republic's envoy to Pakistan Ivo Zederek from the wreckage of the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad, officials said.

Ivo Zederek called his embassy moments after Saturday night's bombing from inside the hotel asking to be rescued, but he has not been heard from since, the embassy's number two diplomat Jaroslav Kalfurt told AFP in Islamabad.

Kalfurt said joint efforts with the Pakistani authorities to locate the ambassador had failed.

A Danish diplomat is also missing after Saturday's devastating suicide bomb attack on the Marriott hotel, the Danish foreign ministry said Sunday.

"We are concentrating right now on finding out if the Dane who has been missing since yesterday," Klavs Holm, ambassador for public diplomacy at the Danish foreign ministry, told AFP.

The bombing also came on the one-year anniversary of Osama bin Laden's call for Pakistani Muslims to unleash jihad or holy war against the government, a vital ally in the US-led "war on terror" that has cracked down on militants.

The brazen attack appeared to have been timed to inflict maximum casualties, ripping through the hotel when it was packed with families having dinner to break the daily fast in the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

"It has the hallmarks of al-Qaeda," a senior official involved in the investigation told AFP. "It was an al-Qaeda style bombing."

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TAX EVASION MK Alamgir sued, ex-MP Saidul, Obaidul Karim charged

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) yesterday sued detained former state minister for planning Dr Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir for evading Tk 53.44 lakh in income tax from 2002 to 2007.

Meanwhile, the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) pressed charges against former lawmaker Saidul Haque from Brahmanbaria and Orion Group Chairman Obaidul Karim in a case filed for irregularities in importing a car and...

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'Tk 1cr man' becomes broke in front of Tac

EMRAN HOSSAIN

Younus Ali, a junior-level officer of Titas Gas, is one of 135 employees of the state-owned company found by National Coordination Committee (NCC) on corruption and serious crime to have amassed ill-gotten wealth worth at least Tk 1 crore each.

Interestingly, when NCC sent Younus' name to the Truth and Accountability Commission (Tac) for voluntary disclosure following his application, he rejected outright of having any ill-gotten...

wealth. He rather alleges he was branded as a corruption-suspect because of his involvement in politics since he was an employees' union member in Titas. He claims he has been "honest" throughout his life.

The commission now has no other way to justify the claims of the graft-suspects and no alternative to listening and believing their tales as it doesn't have authority to conduct an investigation into these claims, sources in Tac and the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) observe.

The Tac now believes every word of Younus, feels sympathy for him, and considers pardoning him and others like him out of sympathy, Tac sources add.

The NCC taskforce in February tracked huge anomalies in Titas and found 135 of its staffs are millionaires, each owning at last Tk 1 crore.

Among them, 107 applied through NGC to face Tac and Younus is one of them, the sources say.

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ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH 6 govt officials claim to have only Tk 3 lakh

Another list of 18 sent to Tac

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six more government officials accused in graft cases confessed to having ill-gotten wealth worth only Tk 3 lakh to the Truth and Accountability Commission (Tac) yesterday.

Meanwhile the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday sent another list of 18 persons accused in corruption cases to Tac who had applied to the ACC for disclosing information about their ill-gotten...

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Businesses ask parties to shun vindictive politics to end crisis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI) urged Awami League (AL) and BNP to give up vindictive politics and to resolve the country's prevailing crises through discussions, at an iftar party where senior leaders of both political parties were present.

FBCCI President Anisul Huq urged the parties to announce a charter for building a nation free of confrontational politics, and for accelerating the pace of the coun-

try's economic growth before the national poll on December 18.

The iftar party organised by FBCCI was in Dhaka Sheraton Hotel.

Leaders of the two major parties however did not respond well to the FBCCI call.

"I am short of hearing lately, so I could not understand the speeches of the businessmen. I will be able to respond better, if I get a written proposal," BNP Secretary General Khandker Delwar Hossain quipped to reporters afterwards.

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Govt asks 8,000 to chip in for Zakat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has sent letters to 8,000 affluent individuals including businessmen - the first ever instance in the country - requesting them to contribute to the government Zakat Board as the holy Eid-ul-Fitre approaches.

The letters were sent in a bid to encourage people to donate Zakat in the government fund, as the amount deposited with the board so far is not up to the expectation.

A meager amount of Tk 6.70 crore has been deposited so far as Zakat over the last 26 years since the board was established in 1982.

With a view to increasing Zakat collection, Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNO) were also directed to collect...

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TOXIC CHINESE MILK POWDER 2 companies to lose licence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) will cancel licences of All Way Trading Company and Mou Enterprise for marketing Chinese baby milk formulas before getting clearance they applied for.

Meantime, an inter-ministerial meeting decided to not release any new milk powder consignments from port before the BSTI reports on whether any of the 36 samples it collected Saturday is contaminated with melamine.

BSTI Director General Azmal Hossain said they will publish their findings in a week.

"We hope to find a way to detect the presence of melamine in milk...

in a day or two in association with the chemistry department at Dhaka University," he said.

He said they will cancel licences of the two importers.

The two companies began marketing Yashili 1, Yashili 2 and Sweet Baby 2 brands before getting clearance from the Institute of Public Health and Nutrition (IPHN).

The IPHN has already halted processing the registration applications for Yashili brand and issued a letter on the marketers to withdraw their products from the market.

The inter-ministerial meeting decided to keep people from purchasing, selling and stocking of San...

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Abandoned flyover project structures add to Gulistan woe

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Heaped in the middle on a busy Gulistan road, the dismantled structures of the ditched Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover project only add to the everyday traffic woes in the bustling Gulistan-Fulbaria area.

Bus and rickshaws routinely jostle to make way through the 150-metre squeezed stretch on both sides of the road.

The situation reaches dizzy...

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Abandoned Gulistan-Jatrabari flyover project causes congestion in Gulistan area. The photo was taken at Bangabandhu Square in the capital.

PHOTO: STAR

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Rajshahi Hizb ut-Tahrir men denied bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A Rajshahi court yesterday rejected bail prayers of the 10 Hizb ut-Tahrir leaders and activists who were arrested September 18 on suspicion of their involvement in militancy and anti-state activities.

The Court of Rajshahi Metropolitan Magistrate BM Tarikul Kabir denied the bail prayers after police claimed that investigation was still going on against the accused.

The arrestees were not produced before the court and only their prayers were sent to the court. They are detained under section 54 of the CrPC.

"We also said verification of their previous criminal records, if any, is yet to be completed in police stations concerned," said Court Inspector Mahbubul Kuddus Siddiki.

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