

AL prepares

FROM PAGE 1
Syed Ashrafur Islam said they are also working on amendments to the party constitution to get registered with the EC.

They would start talks with allies in the 14-party combine soon, and have started selecting candidates for the parliamentary election, he said.

AL Publicity Secretary Asaduzzaman Noor said they are now preparing leaflets and posters and audio-video programmes for electoral campaign.

While exchanging greetings with party leaders at his Gulshan residence they would go for agitation programmes if Sheikh Hasina is not released permanently within a short time.

Leaders present on the occasion included Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Mukul Bose, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Abdul Mannan, Sultan Mohammad Mansur Ahmed, Col (ret'd) Faruk Khan, Maj Gen (ret'd) Shubid Ali Bhuiyan, Col (ret'd) Shaikat Ali and Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin.

BNP PREPARATIONS
Despite difference of opinion regarding the party's participation in the upcoming parliamentary election under the state of emergency, BNP high-ups started the groundwork to prepare an election manifesto.

Party leaders hinted that the manifesto prepared for the stalled January 22, 2007 elections would be the base for the new manifesto. They said curbing corruption and a policy to reduce price of essentials will get higher priority.

A senior leader of the party yesterday said all election-related activities including candidate selection will start soon under the supervision of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at her new office in Banani.

The chairperson will also regularly meet district-level leaders, possible candidates, and well-wishers of her party to boost their morale ahead of the general elections, he said.

Asked about election preparations and the manifesto, MK Anwar, vice-president of BNP told The Daily Star last night, "The party manifesto would be made following BNP's 19-point charter prepared by late president Ziaur Rahman."

Party insiders said the BNP chairperson will start her election-related activities by holding a meeting with four-party alliance leaders at her new office. She has already asked party leaders and former lawmakers to prepare for the polls, scheduled for December 18.

A group of party leaders including

Hasina's bail

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favour of former premier Sheikh Hasina in the Niko and barge-mounted power plant corruption cases were filed on September 22 with a HC vacation bench. However, the petitions were sent back since the bench had no jurisdiction to entertain the matter.

On July 7, the HC upon two writ petitions stayed for two months all proceedings of the Niko and barge-mounted power plant cases against Hasina and issued separate rulings asking the government and the ACC to explain why the cases should not be quashed.

In another case, on September 29 the HC rejected a bail petition filed by Sheikh Hasina in an extortion case filed by businessman Noor Ali. The HC bench rejected the bail prayer on grounds that the petitioner (Hasina) must be present in the country to seek bail and she is now abroad on parole for treatment.

Holiday mood

FROM PAGE 1
from Mirpur-12 in half an hour. He however complained that the CNG driver took Tk 20 more than the usual fare.

"Most of the people have gone home and we don't get many passengers during the Eid vacation. So we have no opportunity but to charge a bit higher," argued Alam, the driver.

Important city spots like Farmgate, Shahbagh, Gulshan-1 and Bijoy Sarani intersections, Airport and Mirpur roads and Mohakhali free-and-one had to wait in long queues there.

The people living on city streets were also seen passing times in leisure rather than scavenging in dustbins or begging at traffic signals. Street children were seen attending their roadside chitchat in a festive mood.

The number of public vehicles was very thin, while private vehicles plied in a considerable number full of well-dressed people. Rickshaws were another means of drive, which the young preferred to take as usual.

The rickshaw-pullers demanded more fare than usual. But we paid them in satisfaction as it was really nice having a rickshaw ride on the streets without any stops," said Anjana, who spent yesterday riding rickshaws with her husband.

They however said rickshaws were not always available and they had to walk sometimes to get one.

Most of the food shops remained closed at noon, while most of the city markets remained shut throughout the vacation.

Police constables and traffic men on duty were seen having a comfortable time, as the low traffic flow did not require much effort to keep the city streets going.

Gen Moeen

FROM PAGE 16
reforms aimed at good governance against the backdrop of the January 2007 crisis over election issues that led to the declaration of the state of emergency in the country.

Talking to reporters at the reception, the chief adviser said, "The country is advancing towards the national elections and an environment for the polls has been created."

He hoped that a free, fair, neutral and acceptable election with participation of all political parties would be held to transfer power to an elected government.

He said necessary amendments were made to the electoral laws following the Election Commission's consultation with political parties, journalists and members of the civil society.

The head of the caretaker government said preparations for holding the election are at the final stage, and the election date has already been announced.

The CA and his spouse Neena Ahmed exchanged Eid greetings and pleasantries with the guests from 10:30am to 12:30pm.

Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, advisers, special assistants to the chief adviser, politicians, including leaders of BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, and JAGPA, diplomats, chiefs of the three services, people from different professions and senior civil and military officials attended the reception.

Asked why the elections are being held now, Fakhruddin said soon after he took over as the chief adviser, he announced that they would hand over power to the next elected government as soon as EC completed a proper voter-registration process.

He said his interim government has done some institutional reforms to EC, the Anti-Corruption Commission and other areas to establish good governance. "We've set up a national human rights commission, passed the Right to Information Act, strengthened local governments."

Asked if he is confident that these reforms are irreversible, the chief adviser said he felt quite confident because these reforms were demanded by the civil society and the political parties.

"I do hope that the next government and the governments thereafter will strengthen these reforms."

Asked about the current status of the anti-corruption drive that had landed former ruling politicians in jail after the 1/11 changeover, he said: "People have been convicted by the courts. Cases against others are continuing in the course of law."

Asked how many people have been convicted, he said probably about 70 or 75 people. "But the anti-corruption strategy also has expanded to include preventive measures. So we are building up a campaign against corruption through the independent Anti-Corruption Commission. I believe that this kind of comprehensive approach ultimately will make

the four-party alliance want to take part in the general election in December, but the government will first have to create the proper environment for a free and fair election," he told reporters at his Nam residence in the city.

On the chief election commissioner's recent comment that the Election Commission will not compromise with the BNP further, Delwar said, "We don't want anybody's favour; we just demand a free and fair election."

He said there is still confusion among the people as to the polls. "They're afraid to cast their vote amid the emergency rules," he said.

The BNP secretary general said only an elected government can resolve the crisis the country has been in.

He again called for keeping a "rational span of time" between holding the general election and the upazila-parishad polls.

Barapukuria

FROM PAGE 1
in connection with awarding illegally the Barapukuria coalmine operation contract to a Chinese company.

ACC Deputy Director Abul Kashem Fakir, who conducted the reinvestigation following an investigation by Deputy Director Monirul Huq, submitted his report to ACC on September 16.

The former ten ministers are M Saifur Rahman, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Khandaker Mosharrar Hossain, M Shamsul Islam, MK Anwar, barrister Aminul Haque, Altaf Hossain Choudhury, and AKM Mosharrar Hossain of BNP and Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed and Motiur Rahman Nizami of Jamaat.

Of them, nine were members of the cabinet purchase committee.

The five other accused are former acting secretary to the energy and mineral resources ministry Nazrul Islam, former Petrobangla chairman SR Osmani, former Petrobangla director Mainul Ahsan, former managing director of Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Ltd (BCMCL) Sariful Islam and Hossain Group Chairman Moazzem Hossain.

In the case filed with Shahbagh Police Station, the 16 were accused of causing a loss of over Tk 158.71 crore to the public exchequer by awarding the production, management and maintenance contract to Chinese company CMC abusing their power.

ACC Assistant Director Shamsul Alam filed the case.

ACC sources say the high-profile politicians are charged with misappropriation of government money and abuse of power for personal gains.

Desco, DPDC

FROM PAGE 16
operating as its distributing outlets in rural areas.

Rural Electrification Board and PDB are also operating as distribution agencies in addition to their main business as power-producing entities.

These distribution agencies purchase electricity from the state-owned PDB at the bulk level of 132kV and 33kV, and then distribute it among the retail consumers at 11kV and 0.44kV level.

According to official sources, the distribution agencies started thinking to raise their tariff at the retail level soon after BERC's approval on September 29 for raising the tariff at bulk-level by 16 percent on average.

The new tariff came into effect on October 1, but it is not applicable for the retail-level consumers or the common consumers.

But, as per BERC Law 2003, if any power distribution agency wants to raise the tariff at the retail level, it has to seek the commission's approval.

When contacted, Desco Managing Director Saleh Ahmed said the company will have to count an additional amount of Tk 108 crore to pay PDB against the power purchase after the increased tariff. "Every month, we've to pay about Tk 9 crore on average in addition to the existing payment to PDB," he told the news agency.

He said Desco's average power demand is about 450MW against its operation in the city of Mirpur, Gulshan and Tongi areas.

Ahmed said a technical committee has been engaged to work out how much it needs to raise the retail tariff against the increased of 16 percent in bulk tariff.

On the other hand, DPDC, which is operating the rest of the areas of Dhaka city and adjoining areas like Narayanganj and Savar, consumes about 1,300 MW an hour.

DPDC Managing Director Ataul Masud said his company will apply to the BERC after discussion with Desco.

Both the Desco and DPDC chiefs hinted that they would try to propose for an identical hike at the retail level as both the agencies are operating in Dhaka city.

Official sources said other agencies are also planning to appeal to the BERC to allow them to raise the tariff at the retail level.

Emergency

FROM PAGE 1
satisfies these conditions is eligible."

When Time World Editor Boby Ghosh, who took the interview, asked if there be an election without them [Khaleda and Hasina] Fakhruddin declined to speculate on that.

Turning to lifting of emergency as demanded by the political parties, he referred to the recently held local body elections and said: "We relaxed the emergency rules to allow normal election campaigning. We haven't heard any complaint from any of the candidates."

On a supplementary question, the CA said: "Yes, but we are explaining that there is no reason elections can't be held free, fair, credible elections with relaxed emergency rules."

Responding to another question, he said: "... there has not been any disruption of normal economic activities during the past 20 months. But we'd like this to continue until the elections."

Asked why the elections are being held now, Fakhruddin said soon after he took over as the chief adviser, he announced that they would hand over power to the next elected government as soon as EC completed a proper voter-registration process.

He said his interim government has done some institutional reforms to EC, the Anti-Corruption Commission and other areas to establish good governance. "We've set up a national human rights commission, passed the Right to Information Act, strengthened local governments."

Asked if he is confident that these reforms are irreversible, the chief adviser said he felt quite confident because these reforms were demanded by the civil society and the political parties.

"I do hope that the next government and the governments thereafter will strengthen these reforms."

Asked about the current status of the anti-corruption drive that had landed former ruling politicians in jail after the 1/11 changeover, he said: "People have been convicted by the courts. Cases against others are continuing in the course of law."

Asked how many people have been convicted, he said probably about 70 or 75 people. "But the anti-corruption strategy also has expanded to include preventive measures. So we are building up a campaign against corruption through the independent Anti-Corruption Commission. I believe that this kind of comprehensive approach ultimately will make

Khaleida

FROM PAGE 1
her family. "But I'm happy in that I can at least celebrate this Eid with my larger family, the countrymen, in a free atmosphere," she said.

The BNP chairperson was behind bars on corruption charges at last year's Eid.

"Pray for me that I can serve you and the country. I was with you, I'm with you at present and I'll be with you in the future," she said.

Khaleida later visited Ziaur Rahman's grave.

Earlier in the morning, she exchanged Eid greetings with her two sons - Tarique Rahman and Arafat Rahman Koko - and their families over the phone.

BNP WON'T CONTEST SO-CALLED POLLS: DELWAR

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday said the BNP-led four-party alliance will not contest any "so-called" election held under the state of emergency.

"The four-party alliance wants to take part in the general election in December, but the government will first have to create the proper environment for a free and fair election," he told reporters at his Nam residence in the city.

On the chief election commissioner's recent comment that the Election Commission will not compromise with the BNP further, Delwar said, "We don't want anybody's favour; we just demand a free and fair election."

He said there is still confusion among the people as to the polls. "They're afraid to cast their vote amid the emergency rules," he said.

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'US' missiles kill 20

FROM PAGE 16
army was still awaiting a detailed report.

There were no reported casualties in the other strike in the village of Khata Kaly.

It Nathan Perry, a spokesman for the US-led coalition in Afghanistan, said he had "no information to give" about the reported attacks. He did not deny US involvement.

Friday's attack appeared to be the deadliest of 11 reported cross-border operations by US-led forces since Aug. 20.

US officials have acknowledged some of the strikes. However, they have provided few details, and casualty reports from the dangerous and remote border region are nearly impossible to verify.

Pakistan's military and civilian leaders have complained that the attacks violate the country's sovereignty, kill civilians and anger the local population, making it harder to crack down on the militants.

Militants on the Pakistan side of the border are blamed for a surge in attacks on US and Nato troops in Afghanistan, where violence is running at its highest level since the 2001 US-led invasion toppled the Taliban.

Extremists based in the border region are also blamed for rising attacks within Pakistan, including the Sept. 20 truck bombing of the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad that

Export

FROM PAGE 1
sectors have become more active," Shahab said.

A sharp rebound in knitwear exports followed by peaceful political environment, currency appreciation against the dollar by major competing countries and aggressive marketing drive helped fuel exports of local products, said people involved in the sector.

Export of woven garment also regained sharply in July fetching \$547.30 million with a 58.55 percent growth while it was \$345.20 million in July 2007. Woven garment export reached \$5.168 billion in FY2007-08.

Export of frozen foods was \$64.06 million in this July, registering a 39.47 percent growth compared to the corresponding period of 2007.

Besides this phenomenal export growth in knitwear and woven sectors—two major sub-sectors of ready-made garment (RMG), exports of home textiles, raw jute, footwear, handicrafts, ceramic products, jute products, petroleum by-products, terry towel and textile fabrics also showed a good growth in July.

Export of home textiles was \$28.99 million with 55.19 percent growth, raw jute \$11.57 million with 78.27 percent growth, footwear \$18.58 million with 75.61 percent growth, handicrafts \$0.46 million with 31.43 percent growth, ceramic products \$4.15 million with 85.27 percent growth, jute products \$30.07 million with 32.70 percent growth, petroleum by-products \$30.20 million with 1425.25 percent growth, terry towel \$11.29 million with 34.40 percent growth and textile fabrics \$7.66 million with 697.92 percent growth, the EPB data showed.

Acting Jatiya Party chairman barrister Anisul Islam Mahmud said the national election would be free, fair and acceptable if the state of emergency is lifted.

He however said political parties should consider whether the government can hold a free election under the emergency rules by lifting every ban on election-related matters.

Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon said the government can keep muscle power and black money from the election by strictly enforcing the existing laws.

He said acceptability of the general elections would come into question if held under the emergency.

2 'criminals'

FROM PAGE 1
Shahidul Islam Shahid, a regional leader of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (ML-Lal Pataka) was killed.

The Rab members recovered four firearms and 20 bullets in the two incidents.

A Rab-10 statement said that Aminul, a listed criminal often operating in Shiddhirganj upazila in Narayanganj and Demra in Dhaka, is wanted in 12 different cases including murders and rapes.

The statement said that Rab apprehended Aminul on Friday morning from Shukushi Graveyard in Demra and took him to Kayetpara in the same area to recover his hidden firearms.

As the Rab team approached Crescent Paper Mill at Kayetpara, Aminul's associates, who were already hiding there, opened fire on them.

As the criminals continued fire on the Rab team, Rab shot back in retaliation prompting a 30-minute battle, the press release said.

Aminul was shot when he tried to escape during the exchange of fire.

The criminals however managed to flee the area and Rab later recovered Aminul's body, one foreign revolver, one pipe gun and bullets from the scene.

Aminul's family own Haji Kafil Uddin market at Shanarpar. His family also runs a transport business.

Aminul was accused in a case filed for killing Sriram Dal Sutrapur thana president and BNP leader Anwar Hossain Anu on July 17 in 2003. He is also accused in the case filed for the rape of four garment workers -- all sisters -- at Shanarpar in Shiddhirganj.

In the other incident in Pabna, a team of Rab-12 rushed to Raghunathpur in Aitaikula at around 2:00 am after receiving information that some extremists were holding a secret meeting there.

The gang opened fire on the Rab team, triggering an exchange of fire between the law enforcers and criminals.

At one stage, the outlawed party members fled the scene. The body of Shahidul Islam Shahid, from Kalibari village in Aitaikula upazila, was discovered from the scene.

Rab also recovered a revolver, one rifle and 10 bullets.

Rab officials said Shahid was wanted in a dozen cases, including seven for murder.

3 Bangladeshis

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Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, prayed for the salvation of the departed souls and expressed sympathy for their bereaved family members.

There was no way to independently verify the toll.

Separately, the local government has ordered Afghan refugees in Bajaur to leave the area within three days, a government official told AFP.

There are an estimated 70,000 Afghan refugees in Bajaur, who have been living there since the late 1970s after fleeing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

The Pakistani military says more than 1,000 militants have been killed since it launched its offensive in Bajaur in early August, including al-Qaeda's operational commander in the region, Egyptian Abu Saeed Al-Masri. (AP, AFP)

Polling stations

FROM PAGE 16
officials to keep the process beyond possible manipulation, and maintain neutrality.

According to the revised Representation of the People Order (RPO), the EC can bring any change in the list of polling stations that it considers necessary, at least 25 days before the polls.

Even after finalisation of candidature, if it is found that any polling station with its name already published in the official gazette belongs to or is under the control of any candidate, the EC may change it.

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