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Local observers have to get registered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) plans to ask in a day or two local organisations willing to observe the upcoming parliamentary polls to apply to it for registration to ensure impartiality and transparency in their task.

Any unregistered organisation will not be allowed to observe the polls, according to fresh EC guidelines about polls observation.

Registration of the organisations will be completed within this month, sources in the EC Secretariat said.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda has already announced that after receiving applications for registration, the EC would issue public notice inviting claims and objections, if any, about them.

Besides, Returning Officers (RO) will disclose the list of local polls observers in their respective areas to check their neutrality. If objection is raised against any observer

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Grassroots to pick AL's MP aspirants

Move to curb 'nomination business' at the centre; the party opposes constituency re-demarcation bid

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

In line with the recently revised electoral laws, Awami League (AL) yesterday decided to pick its parliamentary candidates from panels the grassroots will elect by secret ballots.

The party will soon include in its constitution a provision to that effect.

The decision came at a meeting of the AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC), highest decision-making body of the organisation.

The new provision would require the AL parliamentary board to choose a candidate from a panel of five to be sent by the grassroots.

This way it would clip the board's absolute authority to nominate polls candidates.

It is also expected to check business over nominations.

According to the amended Representation of the People Order (RPO), the parties seeking registration with the Election Commission (EC) must empower their rank and file to have say in settling on candidates in general election.

The working committee yesterday resolved not to participate in any election without Sheikh Hasina.

It also decided to continue with associated organisations and chapters abroad. However, there will be some changes in wordings

in this regard in the AL constitution. Besides, the party will work to have 33 percent positions reserved for women in committees at all levels.

The four-hour meeting chaired by presidium member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury called for the EC to cancel re-demarcation of the constituencies and hold the upcoming polls as per the previous boundaries.

Held at the AL president's political office in Dhanmondi, it has been adjourned till 11:00am tomorrow.

Before the next sitting, a committee will finalise draft proposals

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Khaleda asks party men to do constructive politics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

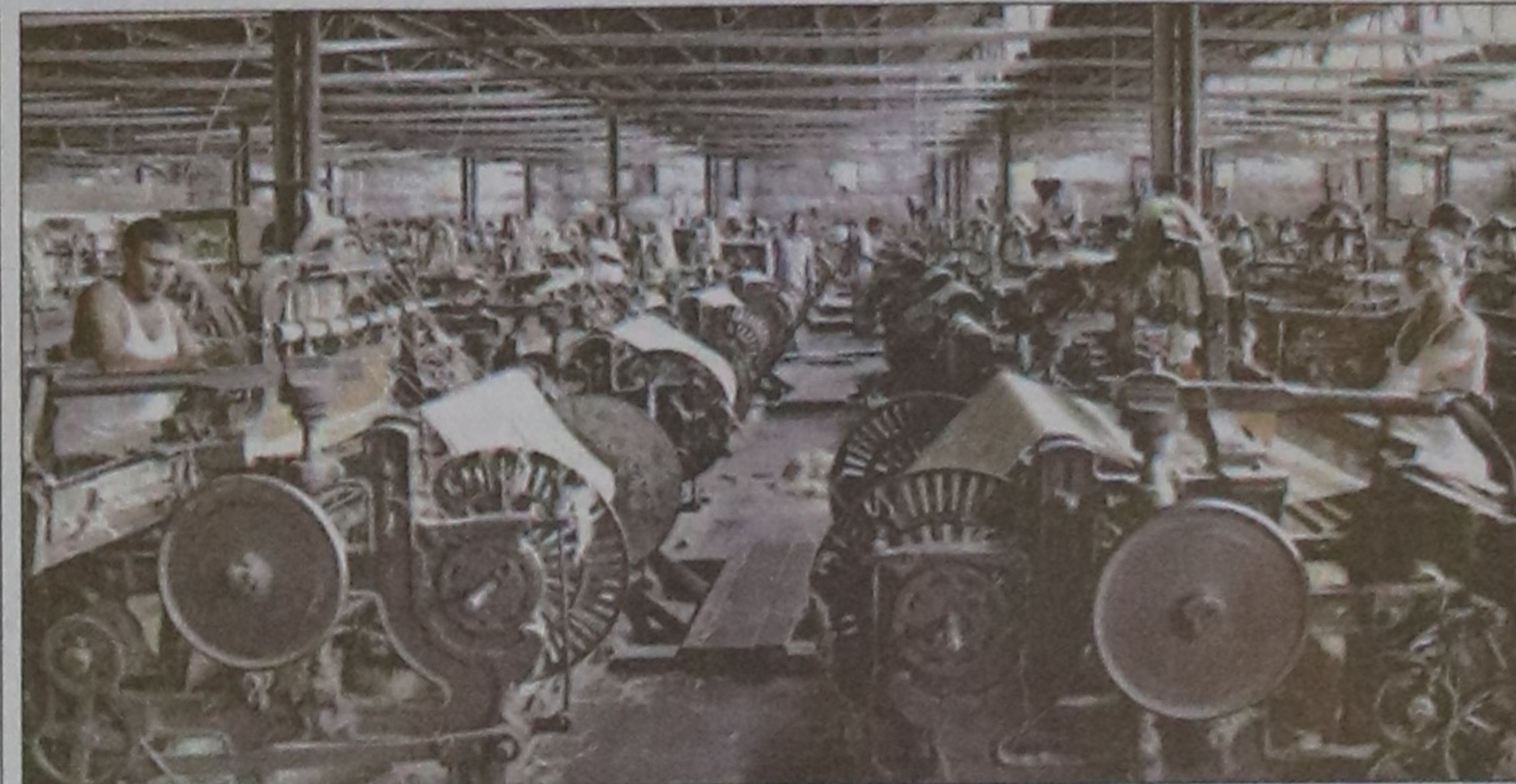
BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said party leaders have been assigned to draw up the polls strategy, and taskforce-like sub-committees have been formed to prepare party plans for building the country.

Urging leaders and workers to do constructive politics, she said she and her party would work for the people after winning the election.

"We have to do a lot of work and we all have to do constructive politics for the welfare of the people and the party," Khaleda told leaders and workers of Jatiyatabadi Krishak Dal, a front organisation of the BNP.

She was addressing a meeting of Krishak Dal at her Gulshan office, her first address to a party meeting after being released from jail on September 11.

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Workers seen hardly busy at the state-owned Amin Jute Mills in Chittagong. While massive debts and corruption hamstringing the public sector, lean private-sector mills are thriving amid global rush for green products.

Revival hope revolves round private sector

PORIMOL PALMA

Against the backdrop of a general bleakness in the jute industry, small mills in the private sector hold out hope for the nation.

"We see light at the end of the tunnel. Environment and health awareness is pushing the demand for jute products. More and more entrepreneurs are now showing interests in jute mills," said Najmul Huq, chairman of Bangladesh Jute Mills Association (BJMA).

The price of jute products was \$58 per hundred bags a few years back; it now stands at \$72.

According to the BJMA, the dismantled public-sector behemoth Adamjee Jute Mills spun off about 50 profit-making jute mills in

GLOOM OVER GOLDEN FIBRE-2



the private sector in the past few years.

"These mills have driven the production binge over the few years, with good profit margins," BJMA Secretary Abdul Barik Khan said.

Of the 5.84 lakh tonnes of jute products manufactured in the country last year, private-sector mills under the Bangladesh Jute Spinners Association (BJSA)

churned out around three lakh tonnes while those belonging to the semi-public BJMA produced 1,66,265 tonnes.

The state-owned Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) factories came in last with only 1,26,726 tonnes.

"Diversification of products in line with global demand is a must" for the private sector, Najmul Huq, the BJMA chairman, said.

The BJSA's 51 mills produce jute yarn. The BJMA and BJMC factories mostly make hessian, sackcloth, carpet-backing cloth and, on a small scale, carpets.

Experts and officials said the industry could produce over eight lakh tonnes of products every year

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PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

The bustling special court area near Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan suddenly turns barren with the High Court staying most of the corruption cases against mostly political leaders.

Graft trials stuck in stay

10 fast-track courts go into hibernation as most cases stayed by HC

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK and EMRAN HOSSAIN

It was late in the morning. Some people were having chitchat over the dos and don'ts of a trip to the riverside, forest or the hilly areas where the indigenous people live.

"You better go to the Gazni forest in Sherpur or Birisiri in Netrakona. From Gazni you can have a look at the faraway hills and you'll see the marvellous beauty of the Kangso river and the Garo Pahar in Birisiri," suggested one of them.

"Try to grab an opportunity to see the ghost in Gazni forest," one

passed the comment, while another protested, "Don't waste your time! There is no ghost there! You can find countless such stories. But that place is really beautiful and worth going on a trip."

This was the scenario of a special court office room on Monday where staffs from different courts gathered and were guiding a colleague for the next vacation.

But the irony is that even a few months ago the same staffs could not have a minute to relax due to excess pressure of graft cases. Most of them had to work even in holidays.

The scene at the special courts

has just altered with everyone having plenty of leisure and almost nothing to do. This is because all the 10 special courts have only 33 cases pending with 89 cases already stayed by the High Court.

Though the courts had 122 cases till Monday for disposal, most of those have been stalled following HC stay orders.

The caretaker government set up the ten special courts after the launch of the anti-graft drive in February last year.

As many as 244 cases were sent to the courts for trial. Of those, verdict has been delivered in 122 cases, while most of the rest were

stayed at different stages -- some before charge framing, some after charge framing and others just before delivery of verdict.

The work pressure has been reduced so much that all the ten courts and their several hundred staffs now stay almost idle except for doing some routine work like signing daily attendance sheet and maintaining some documents and records.

Proceedings of 12 cases are on in the special court-7, while special court-8 has six, special court-9 has five, and special courts-2, 3 and 10 have two each. The special court-5

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SC reopens today, hears Hasina's bail petition

UNB, Dhaka

The Supreme Court reopens today after a long 42-day annual vacation.

On the opening day, the court will hear a pending bail petition of Awami League President and former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, now abroad on parole for treatment of her eyes and ears, in an extortion case filed by businessman Noor Ali.

On October 6, SC chamber court, following a move, set Sunday for hearing Hasina's plea in the regular bench of the Appellate Division for staying operation of the September 29 High Court order

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5 killed in truck crash in Bogra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Five persons died and around 95 others were injured as a truck carrying over 100 people turned turtle on the Bogra-Jaipurhat highway at Nimtali area under Khetlal upazila on Friday at 9:00pm.

The deceased were identified as Mahfuzul, 27, Mannan, 26, Sirazul, 18, Rashedul, 25, and Manik, 26.

Of the injured 38 were admitted to the Shahid Ziaur Rahman Medical College and Hospital, 15 were admitted to upazilla health complex of Kalai under Jaipurhat district and 27 to Jaipurhat sadar hospital.

The deceased and injured are all chefs who were on their way back from a wedding ceremony in Pachbibi upazilla under Jaipurhat.

Witnesses said the truck fell into a roadside ditch while it was trying to make way for another truck.

Meanwhile, a woman died as a microbus hit a three-wheeler at Chhillimpur at Shahortoli in Bogra at around 12 pm yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Momtaj Begum, 40.

BNP waits on talks result for registration

Dialogue with govt brought forward to Oct 14

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP and its major partner in the four-party alliance Jamaat-e-Islami will sit with the chief adviser to the caretaker government for dialogues on Tuesday, and they will also register with the Election Commission (EC) if the talks bear fruits.

BNP, which has been strongly opposing the amendments brought to the Representation of People Order (RPO) demanding total scrapping of them, came to the decision to register with the EC following Friday night's exclusive one-on-one between its Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Commerce Adviser Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman.

Talking to reporters in his Nam flat in the capital, BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain yesterday said if necessary they will formally request the EC to extend the deadline for party registration, but will take a decision about their own registration after Tuesday's talks with the government.

Sources within the government and BNP said the party's previous

hardline stance softened up after the commerce adviser had apprised Khaleda of the current political scenario in its entirety and categorically told her that it will not be possible for any party to participate in the December 18 general election without being registered with the EC.

The government led by the chief adviser will have separate talks with BNP and Jamaat in the Chief Adviser's office, government sources said adding, although BNP and its allies are speaking about 'satisfactory outcome' of the dialogues, they will ultimately register with the EC abiding by the amended RPO.

BNP sources said the party's delegation to the talks will be led by Delwar.

"We will place our demands to the government during the talks and everything including registration will depend on the outcome of the dialogues," Delwar said.

Jamaat however decided to register with the EC within the October 15 deadline to qualify for contesting in the national election.

"If the EC doesn't extend the

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Bombs left in SC judge's residence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two handmade 'bottle bombs' have been found in the residence of Supreme Court Justice Sharif Uddin Chaklader at Judges' Complex at Park Avenue in Kakrail in the capital yesterday afternoon.

The incident occurred only a few weeks after a bomb blast in front of Justice Tariqul Hakim's residence, yards away from Justice Sharif's house.

Doulat Akbar, officer-in-charge of Ramna police station, told The

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20 injured as police, workers clash in Fatullah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Clashes between police and garment workers at Shostapur in Fatullah yesterday left at least 20 people including five law enforcers injured.

Protesting sudden closure of their factory, the workers of Mithu Knitwear rampaged through the industrial area. They ransacked at least six factories nearby.

Locals said around 200 protesters gathered in front of the factory

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IMF in global 'meltdown' warning

BBC ONLINE

The world financial system is teetering on the brink of systemic meltdown," the head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has warned in Washington.

Dominique Strauss-Kahn said the crisis was being fanned by fears over debt-ridden banks but added rich nations had so far failed to restore confidence.

He spoke after talks with US President George W Bush, Group of Seven (G7) finance ministers and the World Bank.

Bush said the global economic crisis needed a united international response.

Speaking in the US capital yesterday, Strauss-Kahn said: "Intensifying solvency concerns about a number of the largest US-based and European financial institutions have pushed the global

financial system to the brink of systemic meltdown."

The IMF chief was joined at the White House by finance ministers from the G7 most-industrialised nations (the US, Canada, France, Germany, Britain, Italy and Japan), as well as World Bank President Robert Zoellick.

Following talks with the economic leaders, Bush said: "We must ensure the actions of one country do not contradict or undermine the actions of another."

"In an interconnected world, no nation will gain by driving down the fortunes of another. We are in this together. We will come through it together."

The meeting came a day after Asian, European and US markets continued to panic sell despite rate cuts and cash injections by central banks, amid widespread fears of a global recession.

Late on Friday, US Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson said the US planned to invest directly in banks for the first since the 1930s, following a similar UK programme of partial bank nationalisation.

The G7 had earlier not ruled out adopting another part of the British plan - to guarantee borrowing between banks - as they issued a five-point communique in Washington.

The finance ministers also pledged to free up the flow of credit, back efforts by banks to raise money and revive the mortgage market.

And the G7 left the door open to further reductions in interest rates, which six central banks this week jointly cut by half a percentage point.

But BBC economics correspondent Andrew Walker, in

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Oram-inspired Kiwis level series

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's hopes of recording a major series triumph for the first time suffered a blow as New Zealand recorded an ultimately routine 75-run victory at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

The Tigers made a brilliant start and had the Kiwis on the ropes for most of the first session like they did in the opening game on Thursday that they won by seven wickets.

But the home side came unstuck while chasing a fairly attainable target of 213 due to some overly cautious batting approach against an spirited Kiwi bowling that received a real fillip after Jacob Oram, who led the late recovery like the first game, clobbered 25 runs in the final over off left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak.

Oram, who smashed three sixes

in that expensive over, struck an unbeaten 75 and the Kiwi bowlers followed his lead and gave nothing away in a sterling performance that saw them bowl Bangladesh out for 137 to level the three-match series 1-1.

Bangladesh were however on top moments after Mohammad Ashraful won a good toss for the second time and invited his opponents to bat first again.

This time it was left-arm seamer Syed Rasel, who was the hero with a three-wicket haul, ripped through the Kiwi top-order with a disciplined attack before Oram hit a match-saving unbeaten 62-ball 75 to take the score to a fighting 212-9 in 50 overs.

On the very tricky pitch, the overcautious Tigers however collapsed to 137 all-out in 42.4 overs as New Zealand bounced back to the series strongly after a shocking

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PHOTO: STAR

New Zealand all-rounder Jacob Oram smashes one of his three sixes against Bangladesh left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak (not in picture) in the final over during the second one-day international at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.