

BNP waits on talk

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deadline then we will apply for registration within the time limit," Barrister Abdur Razzak, assistant secretary general of Jamaat, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Secretary General Abdul Latif Nezami of Islami Oikyo Jote, another component of BNP-led four-party alliance, said they will follow the alliance's decision, which is scheduled to meet this evening to finalise its position regarding party registration.

Meanwhile, the alliance will hold rallies across the country today in an effort to mount pressure on the government for meeting its five-point charter of demands.

Alliance sources said now the main aim of demonstrations will be to force the government to lift the state of emergency, and it will take a firm position on the issue during the talks.

BNP and its allies took preparations to gather a huge number of people in their rallies to show off their strength and popularity.

Delwar told the reporters that they will demonstrate today to realise their five-point demands, but there is no link between the demonstrations and the upcoming dialogues with the government.

Later at a discussion meeting organised by Jatiyatabadi Krishok

Dal, the BNP secretary general said the people will not tolerate any plan to exclude BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia from the election and politics.

"If there is any plan to exclude her from the election process, that should be dropped," he said adding that they want a free and fair election with participation of all political leaders.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed will sit with BNP at 11:00am on Tuesday followed by his dialogue with Jamaat at 3:00pm.

The dialogues will be the first among the chief adviser, BNP, and Jamaat.

To finalise its dialogue strategy, BNP's dialogue preparation committee met yesterday in the office of its Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan in Dhamondi, with Vice-chairperson MK Anwar, former lawmaker Abdul Mannan, and Office Secretary Rizvi Ahmed attending.

MK Anwar later told journalists that they will submit a report about the outcome of the meeting to the secretary general.

The issues that are likely to be discussed in Tuesday's dialogues include lifting of the emergency, deferment of the upazila polls, release of all detained political leaders, and ensuring a level playing field for all parties to participate in the election, Anwar said.

Oram-inspired

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defeat. This makes Tuesday's last game in Chittagong a series-decider.

Oram stood tall to rescue his side as the left-hander, who also smashed a half-century in the first game, gave his side an impetus in the second session.

The mighty man however was lucky not to return to the pavilion when he was on 26 as Zunaed Siddiqui and Razzak collided at cover to spill the easy catch. The southpaw celebrated his 'life' with a huge six over mid-wicket with Shahadat Hossain being the unlucky bowler.

It could have even been possible for the Tigers to wrap up their opponents below the 200-run margin if they had been alert enough to appeal for a run out against last man Jeetan Patel as the TV reply clearly showed that the direct throw of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza from mid-off knocked out the batsman before the batsman entered into the crease. The score-board then read 176-9.

Man-of-the-match Oram also captured two wickets including Ashraf, who played a patient knock of 40 off 86 balls, after Kyle Mills had taken two early wickets to get his team back into the contest.

Chasing 213, the home side had desperately needed a positive start to secure consecutive ODI wins against a Test nation other than Zimbabwe but Tamim Iqbal again failed with a second-ball duck while Mushfiqur Rahim failed to deliver this time being bowled by Mills with the score on 18.

Ashraf joined first match hero Zunaed and it was fantastic to watch the right-hander batting with responsibility for the second consecutive game.

The two batsmen were however too slow and soon fell well behind the run-rate as the team's fifty came in 20 overs.

The Tigers might have compensated for their start but Vettori took a spectacular one-hand catch at mid-off to send Zunaed (32) back to the dressing room to break the 53-run third-wicket stand.

It was all but over for the home team when Shakib Al Hasan and Nayeem Islam were dismissed in consecutive deliveries as Bangladesh were reduced to 86 for 5. With a target of scoring nearly seven runs in an over Shakib swept Vettori only to reach at the safe hands of Oram at mid-wicket while Nayeem didn't get the opportunity to even get strike when he fell short of returning to the crease after his skipper wrongly called him for a run.

The remaining batsmen walked in under pressure and cracked at a time when runs were needed and only the small 27-run-a-ball cameo of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza entertained the local crowd.

Earlier, New Zealand's top order flopped once again after being put in as the local spinners did a good job after Rasel caused the initial damage.

Shakib was most economical conceding 20 runs in his ten-over spell to claim two wickets while off-spinner Nayeem captured two wickets for 20 runs in 4 overs.

SC reopens

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that denied her bail.

Hasina filed the petition, as she prefers leave to appeal against the HC order in the extortion case.

Noor Ali, managing director of Unique Group, filed the case on June 13 last year.

In the case, he accused the former prime minister and her cousin and former Awami League MP Sheikh Helal and his wife Rupa Chowdhury, now absconding, of taking Tk 5 crore in bribe for allowing his company to set up a powerplant.

Meanwhile, barrister Mahub Uddin Khokon, a counsel for BNP Chairperson and ex-prime minister Khaleda Zia, now freed on bail in all the four corruption cases against her, told the news agency that he planned to file petitions Sunday with the High Court either for quashing the Barapukuria coalmine graft case or challenging the validity of taking into cognisance of the case through accepting the charge-sheet submitted to the trial court by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

On February 26, the ACC filed the case with Shahbagh Police Station in the capital on charge of taking kickbacks amounting to about Tk 159 crore in awarding the Barapukuria coalmine deal to the highest bidder instead of the lowest.

On October 5, the principal accused, Khaleda Zia, and 10 powerful ministers of her cabinet and five others were charge-sheeted in the Barapukuria coalmine graft case.

IMF

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Washington, says there is some disappointment that the G7 plan lacks detail.

Meanwhile, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel said there would be no common financial rescue fund for Europe, like the US bail-out of Wall Street.

The two leaders said a common approach to the financial crisis would emerge from a Paris summit on Sunday of 15 eurozone leaders.

UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown will hold talks with Sarkozy in the French capital before the meeting.

Graft trials stuck

Status of graft cases in ten special courts (Till October 6)

Special Court	Number of cases	Verdict Delivered	Number of Cases Stayed	Number of Cases Pending
1	23	10	13	0
2	24	14	8	2
3	32	8	22	2
4	33	23	10	0
5	31	18	12	1
6	17	10	4	3
7	33	17	4	12
8	11	1	4	6
9	25	14	6	5
10	15	7	6	2
Total	244	122	89	33

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has only one case pending, while the special court-1 and 4 don't have any case proceedings because of HC stay.

Though there are two cases pending with the special court-2, proceedings of one of those remained stalled as the accused, Awami League former minister Mohammad Nasim, is abroad for treatment.

Besides, three and two cases in special courts-4 and 6 respectively have been quashed by the higher court.

Of the quashed cases from special court-4, one was against former ward commissioner Chowdhury Alam, another against Swechhasheboek League general secretary Pankaj Debnath, while the other was against former BNP lawmaker Harunur Rashid, Enayetur Rahman and Istiaque Sadek.

The cases quashed from the special court-6 were against Janakantha editor Atiqullah Khan Masud and several others.

Court officials say they have heard some of the pending cases have been stayed by the HC but cannot enlist those as stayed unless they get the official copy of the stay order.

Now it has become very hard for them to pass the office time from 9:00am to 4:00pm. Some of them chat, some read books, while some others even sleep on their chair.

"We had to work on the week-ends even in the beginning of this year. But now the pressure has been eased and we can think of going on vacation besides enjoying the holidays," says a court staff speaking anonymously.

Against this backdrop, the special courts were empowered to hear criminal cases a few months ago. But except two criminal cases -- one against former premier Sheikh Hasina involving bribery and the other regarding Bashundhara group director Sabir killing -- no criminal case was sent to these courts.

Three cases against Hasina and two cases against another former premier Khaleda Zia were sent to the special courts. But all the cases have been stayed.

The national parliament complex turned into a hotspot after the special courts began functioning in May last year. Law-enforcers used to produce high-profile graft-accused before the courts every day with relatives of the accused, lawyers and journalists thronging the court premises.

Once the busy court premises now look almost abandoned and deserted.

A number of prosecution lawyers, however, say the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) will initiate its move soon to vacate the stay orders and the cases will be back on trial again.

The situation has changed so much that many of the court-rooms were found locked during a

visit to the court premises. Several makeshift tea stalls set up on the premises centring the special courts are now experiencing downfall in daily sale.

"My daily income has gone down to Tk 1,200 from over Tk 2,000," said Delwar Hossain, a shopkeeper on the court premises.

"The number of visitors has been reduced significantly and my present income ranges between Tk 700 to Tk 800 instead of earlier income of Tk 1,500 a day," said another shopkeeper who did not open his shop after Eid till Monday.

People related to the courts are now discussing possible shift of the special courts as the government has already declared parliamentary elections on December 18.

"If the election is held as per the declared date, the newly elected lawmakers will be allotted rooms at the MP Hostel. So the courts will have to be shifted either before or immediately after the election," a court staff speculates.

Politicians point

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held at China-Bangladesh Friendship Conference Centre in the capital and would be aired by BBC radio service in the evening today and by Channel 1 tomorrow.

The advisers to the caretaker government had several times said the emergency will be withdrawn completely before the general elections. But now they are saying the election will be held under emergency like the polls to city corporations," Mofiz said.

She added the election to the four city corporations was held at a controlled and limited atmosphere where all the media was alert. "This example won't be applicable to the parliamentary polls, which will be held in 300 constituencies across the country."

"It will be impossible for the media to watch the parliament polls like the election to the local government bodies."

Hannan said fair election will not be possible under the emergency because human rights would be violated for it and in future it would be used as a tool to abuse power.

However, the other panel members at the Sanglap -- Jatia Party presidium member Ziauddin Bablu and Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (Fema) President Feroze M Hasan -- expressed different views.

They said the parliament election should be held under the emergency so that people can cast their vote without fear.

They suggest that the caretaker government curtail some of the rules of the emergency during the election period.

Masud Hasan Khan conducted the Sanglap where a large number of audience was present.

Private sector

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making use of almost every bale of raw jute grown in the country if all the mills were running.

But the massive Tk 5,500 crore debts owed by some big mills, frequent power cuts, rusted machinery and sloppy management gummed up the BJMC mills and many privatised in 1982-83.

The industry has still upped production in the past few years thanks to ingenuity of the private sector. 5.23 lakh tonnes in 2004-05, 5.43 lakh tonnes in 2005-06, 5.73 lakh tonnes in 2006-07 and 5.84 lakh tonnes in 2007-08.

Nasim Akhter Mollah set up the NN Jute Fibre and Industries Ltd in Pabna's Ishwardi, snapping up 31 looms from the dismantled Adamjee Jute Mills.

"We buy raw jute when the prices are low...continue seamless production. If there are any mechanical glitches, we fix them immediately," he described his recipe for success.

His mill needs around 400 tonnes of raw jute a month, producing mostly sackcloth for local and overseas markets, especially India. He said net profit is over 5 percent on a conservative calculation.

Nasim plans to diversify products and has already sought out technical know-how from the Jute Diversification Promotion Centre in Dhaka.

The government-owned jute mills incur losses mostly for corruption in raw-jute purchases and repair of machinery, he said. "The jute that we buy, let's say, at Tk 600 will be Tk 900 for the BJMC mills."

"What the government needs to do is encourage these mills and help them diversify," BJMA Secretary Abdul Barik Khan said.

2 robbers die

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DM College at around 2:00am, the gang opened fire, prompting the law enforcers to retaliate.

Police said two gang members received bullets during the shootout while others escaped unhurt. The bullet-hit bandits were taken to Shaiklupa Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared them dead, they added.

The officer-in-charge (OC) of Shaiklupa Police Station said two constables - Faruk and Saidul received injuries during the gunfight.

Police recovered a foreign made gun, two light guns and 19 bullets from the scene.

US, India strike

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extraordinary effort by both our governments."

The deal offers India access to US technology and cheap atomic energy in return for allowing UN inspections of some of its civilian nuclear facilities -- but not military nuclear sites.

The signing here comes after US President George W. Bush signed legislation to enact the landmark agreement on Wednesday. Rice had planned to sign the deal with Mukherjee during a visit to New Delhi on October 4 but US officials said it was delayed for "administrative" reasons.

Bush and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh signed the deal in July 2005, touching off a difficult battle with wary lawmakers on either side and critics who warn it undermines global efforts to curb the spread of nuclear know-how.

Further steps must be taken to open up nuclear trade.

Analysts say US firms cannot do business until Delhi signs a safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN nuclear watchdog, and the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), which controls global atomic trade.

India last month wrote a letter of intent to sign up to the convention, which analysts say US businesses want in order to reduce their liability in the event of a catastrophe.

Rice has called the accord "a recognition of India's emergence on the global stage" while Mukherjee cited improved relations since the Cold War era, when New Delhi steered an independent course from Washington.

Rice and others had to lobby hard to win approval for the deal from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN nuclear watchdog, and the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), which controls global atomic trade.

She also pushed hard for the agreement to be approved by both Houses of Congress.

US lawmakers attached safeguards on preventing the spread of nuclear weapons technology before passing it overwhelmingly earlier this month and handing Bush a foreign policy success.

But critics say it still undermines global efforts to curb the spread of nuclear weapons, because India has refused to sign the international non-proliferation treaty (NPT).

N Korea off

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North Korea has agreed to all US nuclear inspection demands, allowing the Bush administration to remove the communist country from a US terrorism blacklist, The Associated Press has learned.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity, not wanted to pre-empt Saturday's announcement of the agreement, which is aimed at salvaging a faltering nuclear disarmament accord in the short time before President Bush leaves office in January.

"Every element that we sought in the verification discussions is part of this package," the official said.

Removing North Korea from the blacklist was immediately criticised by conservatives. The broader accord had been threatened by North Korea's refusal to accept such nuclear inspections because Washington had refused to drop the North from the list of state sponsors of terrorism.

That designation now shared only by Cuba, Iran, Syria and Sudan carries severe penalties, but US officials said North Korea would not see any immediate benefit because it is punished penalized under other programs.

Still, critics jumped on the move saying it rewards the North for bad behavior and sends a bad signal to other US adversaries, notably Iran. US officials stressed that the North would be placed back on the list if it fails to comply with the plan to verify it has held the truth about its nuclear activities.

The US action came as North Korea has moved to restart a disabled nuclear reactor and takes other provocative steps, including expelling UN inspectors and test-firing missiles. Those steps in recent weeks have heightened tensions in the region and place the shaky disarmament deal in peril.

It also followed days of intense internal debate in Washington and consultations with US negotiating partners China, South Korea, Russia and Japan. Tokyo had balked at the move because North Korea has not resolved issues related to its abduction of Japanese citizens.

The decision had been in the works since chief US negotiator Christopher Hill returned from a trip to North Korea last week. On his visit, he proposed a face-saving compromise under which the North would accept the verification plan after the delisting was announced.

Previously, the US had insisted that the North agree to end its support for conservative hawks, was not expected to attend the State Department announcement. Critics pilloried it in part because it addresses only the North's plutonium program and does not deal with its involvement in spreading nuclear weapons technology or alleged uranium enrichment activities.

"With today's action, the administration has given up a critical instrument of leverage," said Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Fla., the top Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. "By rewarding

North Korea before the regime has carried out its commitments, we are encouraging this regime to continue its illicit nuclear program and violate its pledge to no longer provide nuclear assistance to extremist regimes."

"We are also sending a strong message to other rogue nations, such as Iran and Syria, that we will not hold them to their commitments, even as we give in to their demands," she said.

Republican presidential candidate John McCain said he would not support the step unless it is clear North Korea will accept intrusive inspections of its nuclear sites.

"I expect the administration to explain exactly how this new verification agreement advances American interests and those of our allies before I will be able to support any decision to remove North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism," he said in a statement late Friday.

In addition, he expressed concern that US allies in Asia, particularly Japan, had not been properly consulted.

Khaleda asks

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"The country went close to a great disaster in the last two years and now you have to go forward with the slogan 'save the people, save the country,'" the former premier said, adding that the country has to be saved from the ongoing food crisis.

"No one will be able to destroy the BNP or the nationalistic forces through conspiracy. The people are with us," she told Krishak Dal leaders at the brief meeting.

BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain and Krishak Dal General Secretary Shamsuzzaman Dudu, among others, were present at the meeting chaired by Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, acting president of Krishak Dal.

Earlier, Khaleda exchanged views with party leaders of various levels from across the country for about four hours. She instructed them to work in unison for the coming election.

"We are in favour of election and we want to participate in it," former BNP lawmaker Rahimuddin Bharasha quoted Khaleda as saying.

Replying to a question, Nazrul Islam Khan, BNP joint secretary general, said agenda of the party's dialogue with the government is yet to be finalised.

Meanwhile, Khandaker Delwar and Nazrul Islam Khan held a closed door meeting with the party chief yesterday afternoon, sources said.

Details could not be known. Others who met Khaleda on the day included former BNP lawmaker Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury, former state minister Mahmudur Rahman, party leaders Selima Rahman and senior journalist Shafigh Rahman.

Obama expands lead

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With voters preoccupied by the faltering economy, Obama has broadened his base of support. According to the survey, he now leads McCain among men 54 percent to 40 percent and women 50 percent to 41 percent.

Even those aged over 65, a formerly solid Republican constituency, now back Obama over McCain 49 to 43 percent.

The numbers are set against President George W. Bush's job approval rating dropping to just 25 percent, a record low for any modern president, the Newsweek poll showed.

Meanwhile, in a long-awaited 263-page report released by Alaska's Legislative Council, investigator Steve Branchflower said on Friday that Republican vice presidential pick Sarah Palin was guilty of violating ethics rules for public officials.

He said Palin had allowed her husband Todd Palin to use the Alaska governor's office and its resources to pressure officials to fire her former brother-in-law, state trooper Mike Wooten.

"Governor Palin knowingly permitted a situation to continue where impermissible pressure was placed on several subordinates in order to advance a personal agenda...to get Trooper Michael Wooten fired," the report said.

"She had the authority and power to require Mr Palin to cease contacting subordinates, but she failed to act," the report added.

A Republican-dominated bipartisan committee had launched the investigation following Palin's decision to sack Alaska public safety commissioner Walt Monegan in July.

Monegan claimed he was fired because of his refusal to sack Wooten, who had been involved in an acrimonious divorce with Palin's younger sister in 2005.

McCain-Palin spokeswoman Meg Stapleton said the report showed Palin had acted "properly and lawfully" in axing Monegan, dismissing the investigation as politically motivated.

Palin, the first woman to be selected on a Republican ticket, was plucked from political obscurity in Alaska by the Arizona senator in late August to be his running mate in the November 4 elections.

A devout Christian mother-of-five who is pro-life and a committed hunter, she fired up the party's conservative base, which had not fully embraced McCain.

But a series of negatives ads casting doubt on Obama's character and his past associations whipped up anger at the Republican rallies.

After the US Secret Service said Thursday it was investigating an alleged death threat shouted at a Florida rally, McCain was forced to tone down the attacks.

"We want to fight, and I will fight, but we will be respectful. I admire Senator Obama and his accomplishments and I will respect him," McCain, 72, told a Minnesota rally Friday.

Obama, who has kept his campaign focused on the country's worst economic crisis since the Great Depression in the 1930s, on Friday rebuked McCain for preaching a politics of "anger and division."

"In the last couple of days we have seen a barrage of nasty insinuations and attacks and I am sure we will see much more over the next 25 days," he told an Ohio rally.

"It's easy to rile up a crowd by stoking anger and division. But that is not what we need now in the United States, the times are too serious."

McCain, however, vowed to come up from behind. "How many times, my friends, have the pundits written off the McCain campaign?" he told the cheering crowd. "We're going to fool 'em again, my friend!"

Bombs left

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Daily Star. "Justice Sharif Uddin found the bombs lying on the lawn of his house as he was about to go out at around 4:00pm."

"At his directive, one of his domestic servants threw one of the bombs against a wall and the bomb exploded," the OC added.

Chakladar then informed the police, he said.

A large contingent of police and members of intelligence agencies rushed to the Justice's house and recovered the other unexploded bomb. They also searched the residence and adjacent areas but no other suspicious items or clues were found.

Both bombs were hand made, comprising of explosive filled bottles sealed with red scotch tape.

AL's MP aspirants

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regarding amendments to the party constitution to get registered with the EC.

AL demanded cancellation of the provisions that empower the EC to cancel candidatures for violation of electoral laws and debar utility bill defaulters from parliamentary polls.

It reiterated calls for unconditional release of its chief and withdrawal of all charges against her, lifting of the state of emergency, steps to contain price hike of essentials, and a reasonable gap between upazila and national polls.

DRAFT COMMITTEE FORMED
At yesterday's meeting, AL formed a committee headed by presidium member Tofail Ahmed to prepare by today draft proposals for changes in its constitution.

The other members are all available members of the presidium, advisory council members HT Imam and AMA Muhith, organising secretaries Abdul Mannan and Mahmudur Rahman Manna and central leaders Nuh-ul-Alam Lenin, Latif Siddiqui, Prof Abu Sayeed and AKM Jahangir Hossain.

Earlier, the meeting rejected the suggestion by the committee of HT Imam, AMA Muhith and Nuh-ul-Alam Lenin for dispensing with the overseas chapters. It also did not accept their recommendation for dropping the names of associates from the party constitution.

As Latif Siddiqui questioned the legality of the three-member committee recommending constitutional changes, the ALWC decided to form the high-powered committee with Tofail at its helm.

Sources said AL took the latest stance on its associated organisations and overseas chapters following instructions from Hasina, who is now in London.