

AL grassroots

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But how many constituencies will be conceded to them is not yet finalised, with JP demanding 60 seats and LDP demanding 40.

Sources said components of AL-led 14-party coalition will seek more constituencies than they had sought earlier.

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) gave a list of 18 JSD nominees to AL's Ashraful Islam.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon also talked to Hasina during her stay abroad urging her to concede 15 constituencies to his party.

But, AL is likely to share a lesser number of seats with its allies this time around compared to what it was ready to share prior to the stalling of the January 22, 2007 election, party sources said.

The party yesterday, from a meeting of its central working committee (ALCWC), sent directives to its grassroots level committees to send names of five possible nominees for respective constituencies.

At the meeting held in AL president's political office in Dhanmondi, some leaders said it will not be possible to bring major changes to the nomination process in such a short time.

They also wondered if it will be possible to coordinate the mammoth task of getting the nomination suggestions from the grassroots levels across the country and to finalise a list of nominees by sifting through those in only a week, since November 13 is the last date for submitting party nominations to the EC.

The ALCWC meeting was adjourned till Hasina's return, so she can preside over it on November 7, when the formation of the grand electoral alliance and the issue of sharing seats with the allies will be finalised, sources in AL said adding that the party will nominate candidates based on acceptability and their abilities to win the election.

The sources said AL might change its earlier nominations in at least 25 to 30 constituencies.

The party also decided primarily that no leader will be given nomination in more than one constituency.

Some of the former lawmakers of the party died, while there are at least 11 leaders are convicted under emergency powers rules, and the party broke its alliance

Melamine-free

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Bangkok and at the laboratories of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission and Bangladesh Council for Scientific and Industrial Research.

Three brands -- Yashili-1, Yashili-2 and Sweet Baby-2 -- were found contaminated with melamine. These Chinese brands were earlier banned because these had no registration with the Institute of Public Health and Nutrition.

Meanwhile, following a writ petition by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh, an NGO, the HC on October 23 ordered stopping sales and display of all the eight brands until receipt of the test results from Bangkok.

Later, the law enforcers seized and destroyed a substantial quantity of these powdered milk from shops for not complying the HC order.

"Distributors have asked us not to sell these brands because of the court order," said Nazrul Islam, a retailer at Karwan Bazar in the capital.

Health Adviser AMM Shawkat Ali on Monday said the government would now inform the court about the test results. An official of the commerce ministry yesterday said the test results were not submitted to the court until yesterday.

4-party

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organisational strength compounded by a good number of influential leaders being convicted and detained should discourage the top brass from deciding to join the December 18 race.

"We are indeed faced with a dilemma here," said a top BNP leader. "We are always an election-oriented party, but we are wary of how this government and the Election Commission (EC) are biased against us."

Meanwhile, Majlis-e-Shura, the highest policy-making body of Jamaat-e-Islami, has decided in favour of participating in the polls, and will place their arguments at today's crucial meeting of the alliance, said party sources.

BJP leaders said they think it would not be wise for the alliance to take part in the election under the present EC.

"This commission has failed to maintain neutrality. Besides, a free and fair election is not possible under the state of emergency," Andaleeb Rahman Partho, BJP chairman, told The Daily Star after a meeting of party presidium.

Islami Oikya Jote (Aminee) however decided in favour of polls participation.

"We think this election won't bring any good to us. On the other hand, if we stay off the polls Awami League will win almost uncontested," Abdul Latif Nezami, secretary general of IOJ, told The Daily Star.

with Islamist fundamentalist Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, with which it had been ready to share five seats for the stalled January 22, 2007 election.

The party will start selling nomination forms for 300 constituencies from 10:00am today.

Nomination aspirants must buy the forms for Tk 7,500 each and submit them to the party's central office on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital by 5:00pm on November 7, after filling them up.

After submitting the nomination forms to the central party office the nomination seekers will also have to submit copies of them to the presidents and general secretaries of respective upazila or thana units of respective constituencies, who will later prepare a panel of maximum five prospective nominees in extended unit meetings, to send the panel of names to the AL parliamentary board by November 9.

"Although time is very short, we have no alternative to completing the process by November 9," Ashraful Islam said.

Briefing reporters after the three and a half hour long ALCWC meeting, Ashraful said the process of forming the electoral grand alliance with all forces except BNP-Jamaat-led alliance and anti-liberation war forces is on, and will be finalised after Hasina's return.

HASINA HEADING HOME
At the time of filing this report late last night, Sheikh Hasina was already in London en route to Bangladesh.

She is scheduled to reach Zia International Airport at 8:15am tomorrow on board a flight of Emirates, confirmed Hasina's Special Aide Dr Hasan Mahmud.

AL is planning to accord a massive reception to Hasina from Zia to her Sudha Sadan residence in Dhanmondi, lining up a large number of party workers and supporters on both sides of the road.

AL top leadership yesterday also held a meeting with assistant secretaries of the party's sub-committees, and with the presidents and general secretaries of Dhaka city unit, the units of adjacent districts, and of all associated organisations to mobilise the newcomers.

14 killed in Baghdad attacks

AFP, Baghdad

Insurgents killed at least 14 people and wounded dozens more in the Iraqi capital on Tuesday, including seven who lost their lives in a bomb attack on a bus depot, security officials said.

Seven people were killed and 18 wounded when a bomb exploded in the depot in the eastern Baghdad neighbourhood of Al-Mashda, the officials said.

In a similar attack, four people were killed and eight wounded when a roadside bomb went off in Al-Qahira in the north of the capital, they said.

One person was killed and seven wounded when a bomb planted in their car, part of a government convoy, exploded in the central Karrada district.

A civilian was killed and five wounded when a bomb blew up in a car near the University of Technology in Baghdad, the security officials said.

In another attack, a policeman was killed and three others wounded when they were shot at by gunmen driving in a vehicle in the south-eastern Baghdad district of Al-Gadhi.

An Iraqi police major was also wounded along with his two sons when a bomb planted in their car exploded in Al-Wahda in the centre of the capital.

Iraqi security officials claim that insurgents are now resorting to using smaller bombs and planting them in vehicles.

Prothom Alo

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The board of directors Shahnaz Rahman, Atikur Rahman, Saifur Rahman, Arshad Waliur Rahman, Simin Hossain, Shezri Haque, Prothom Alo Editor Matiuur Rahman and Publisher Mahfuz Anam, among others, were present.

Kuldip Nayar said, "Journalists should have the power of building up a society. If journalists fail, the society will fail."

The readers expect standard writings from the Prothom Alo and their expectations have to be met every day, he said.

He expressed his gratitude to the Prothom Alo, saying the daily has done a great job in the 10 years.

"The future of Bangladesh and Prothom Alo are linked together. And the future is of happiness, enlightenment and prosperity. Our success is professional and institutional... We must not deviate from our values," said Mahfuz Anam.

Matiuur Rahman said Prothom Alo will try to remain in touch with people through objective journalism, creativity and cooperation.

The newspaper also accorded reception to 10 staffs for their performance.

Mamun sent to jail for Tk 8cr swindling

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Detained businessman Giasuddin Al Mamun was sent to jail yesterday by a Dhaka court on completion of a three-day police remand in connection with a case filed for swindling Tk 8.4 crore out of a businessman.

Metropolitan Magistrate Rashed Kabir passed the order after Sub-inspector Mohammad Moinsul Islam, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, produced Mamun before the court on completion of his police remand and did not seek further remand.

In the forwarding report, the IO mentioned that Mamun gave important information about the fraud and the information extracted from him was being verified. So, Mamun needs to be kept in jail custody until the investigation of the case completes, the IO added.

Following a petition on October 30, the court allowed the IO to take Mamun in his custody even though the remand order was granted on December 3 last year.

But police could not take the accused into their custody because of a stay order by the High Court. The Supreme Court (SC) vacated the stay order on the proceedings of the case on October 19 this year.

The joint forces arrested Mamun from his Gulshan residence in the capital on March 26 last year. He was later remanded for possessing illegal firearms at his residence.

He was placed on a five-day remand last time on June 6, 2007 in a cheating case. He had earlier been remanded for 56 days in different cases.

A number of cases were filed against him on charges of extortion, possessing arms and graft linkage after his arrest.

In all the extortion cases, Mamun has mentioned the name of Tarique Rahman, elder son of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, as his business partner. He has given confessional statements to magistrates in this regard implicating Tarique with different extortion charges.

Selim Prodhan, chairman of Japan Bangladesh Group, filed the case with Gulshan police station against Mamun and his two associates on May 31, 2007 on charge of swindling Tk 8.4 crore out of him between December 8, 2001 and December 20, 2006.

The two other accused -- Rajib Siraj Apu, son of former BNP lawmaker Shahjahan Siraj, and Kawsar Zaman Bappi -- are on the run.

CONVICTION OF THREE CASES
A special court on June 7 last year jailed Mamun, who was on the first list of 50 graft suspects of the Anti-corruption Commission, for three years in connection with a case filed by ACC on April 5 for not submitting his wealth statement.

On July 3, 2007 he was sentenced to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment for possessing illegal firearms at his residence.

Mamun was sentenced to 13 years' imprisonment on March 27 this year for amassing wealth worth Tk 111.1 crore illegally and concealing information of his wealth from the ACC.

12 VIP prisoners

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"The list was provided to the BSMU authorities formally with a request to send them back," the IG-Prisons added.

Contacted, Prof M Tahir, vice-chancellor of BSMU, admitted receiving a list of detainees and said he has asked all concerned to take proper steps.

"Being a doctor, I can't issue an administrative order forcing other doctors to release their patients if they are really sick," he said. "The jail authorities have made the request so that they can provide treatment facilities to other prisoners."

Asked, the IG-Prisons said, "We would discuss with the home ministry about the allegation of submitting fake medical certificate to the court and measures would be taken according to its suggestion and the jail code."

Replying to a query he said, "We were not informed of the fake medical certificate as it was submitted averting us. Besides, the medical board was also not approved by the government."

Prof M Tahir also said, "We don't know how did they submit the report to the court. After the court found it false we have provided all the information it wanted."

Falu had earlier obtained bail from the High Court submitting a fake medical certificate. The Appellate Division cancelled the bail order on Monday.

The sources say most of over 150 bigwigs, detained after the 1/11 changeover and freed on bail and parole, spent a large part of their detention at different hospitals in jail custody.

Jail and hospital sources say most of the high-profile prisoners overstayed at the hospitals in order to enjoy better facilities and avoid prison life. In most cases unethical favour by the doctors concerned helped them prolong their stay, the sources add.

At present, 20 detained bigwigs are receiving 'treatment' at BSMU alone. Around 100 high-profile corruption suspects had treatment at the hospital.

High turnout

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confident that new voters and young voters would fuel an enormous turnout to benefit the Illinois senator.

"We just want to make sure people turn out," Plouffe told "Today" on NBC. "We think we have enough votes around the country."

Standing in line in one of the battleground states, Ahmed Bowling of Alexandria, Virginia, said the election "will mark a significant change in the lives of all Americans, and so we do have to come out as early as possible to cast our votes."

In Brooklyn, New York, 49-year-old Venus Kevin said the line at her precinct was "already down the block and around the corner" when she arrived shortly before 6 am EST.

"Obama is the man," said Kevin, who is black. "His message and his vision has reached a lot of people, not just African-Americans."

The contest pitted the 47-year-old Obama, a first-term Illinois senator who rocketed to stardom on the power of his oratory and a call for change, against the 72-year-old McCain, a 26-year lawmaker whose mettle was tested during 5 1/2 years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam.

"I'm feeling kind of fired up. I'm feeling like I'm ready to go," Obama told nearly 100,000 people gathered for his final rally Monday night in Virginia.

"At this defining moment in history, Virginia, you can give this country the change it needs," Obama said to voters in a state that hasn't voted for a Democratic presidential nominee in 44 years.

McCain completed a cross-country trek through seven battleground states before arriving at home in Phoenix early Tuesday morning.

"This momentum, this enthusiasm convinces me we're going to win tomorrow," McCain told a raucous evening rally in Henderson, Nev. It was the fifth campaign stop in an 18-hour odyssey that took him across three time zones.

Obama planned a quick campaign stop in Indiana on Election Day before a massive outdoor rally in front of the skyline in his adopted hometown of Chicago. The day's forecast was for an unseasonably warm 70 degrees.

McCain planned events in Colorado and New Mexico, then a party at the Biltmore Hotel in Phoenix.

Obama urged his supporters to resist overconfidence. "Even if it rains tomorrow, you can't let that stop you. You've got to wait in line. You've got to vote," he said.

OBAMA WINS IN EARLIEST VOTE IN TINY DIXVILLE NOTCH
Barack Obama came up a big winner in the presidential race in Dixville Notch and Hart's Location, New Hampshire, where tradition of having the first Election Day ballots

tallied lives on.

Democrat Obama defeated Republican John McCain by a count of 15 to 6 in Dixville Notch, where a loud whoop accompanied the announcement in Tuesday's first minutes. The town of Hart's Location reported 17 votes for Obama, 10 for McCain and two for write-in Ron Paul. Independent Ralph Nader was on both towns' ballots but got no votes.

"I'm not going to say I wasn't surprised," said Obama supporter Tanner Nelson Tillotson, whose name was drawn from a bowl to make him Dixville Notch's first voter.

With 115 residents between them, Dixville Notch and Hart's Location get every eligible voter to the polls beginning at midnight on Election Day. Between them, the towns have been enjoying their first-vote status since 1948.

Being first means something to residents of the Granite State, home of the nation's earliest presidential primary and the central focus "however briefly" of the vote-watching nation's attention every four years.

Town Clerk Rick Erwin said Dixville Notch is proud of its tradition, but added, "The most important thing is that we exemplify a 100 percent vote."

Dixville Notch resident Peter Johnson said the early bird electoral exercise "is fun." A former naval aviator, Johnson said he was voting for McCain, but added, "I think both candidates are excellent people."

GRANDMOTHER DIES
The Illinois senator's final day of campaigning was bittersweet: He was mourning the loss of his grandmother, Madelyn Dunham, who helped raise him. She died of cancer Sunday night, never to see the results of the historic election.

A tearful Obama, who stands on the historic threshold of becoming the first black US president, told 25,000 supporters here that Madelyn Dunham had passed away in her sleep at her Hawaii home after a long battle with cancer.

She was 86. The Democrat lauded Dunham, who raised him when his anthropologist mother was studying in Indonesia, as one of America's "quiet heroes," and delivered an impassioned vow to work for all such heroes if elected to the White House.

The news broke on the campaign's final day as Obama blitzed through Florida and North Carolina before a concluding late-night rally in Virginia -- all Republican states that he is bidding to flip into his column.

Obama had dashed to his grandmother's side in Hawaii two weeks ago, fearing she would not live to see what polls suggest may be his triumph against Republican John McCain in Tuesday's election. (AP, AFP)

BNP weighs Jamaat

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regarding whether it is at all beneficial for BNP to have an electoral alliance with Jamaat has resurfaced again among the ranks of BNP with much prominence, according to the insiders.

Some BNP leaders with enough following among the rank and file think that it has never been that beneficial for their party to have an electoral alliance with Jamaat since BNP always won enough seats to form a government alone, with the only exception of the 1996 election when it failed to win a majority of seats required to form a government, but an alliance with Jamaat back then would not make a difference since it won only 3 seats.

But some other leaders of BNP with equal followings do not even want to think along those lines, as they feel breaking their alliance with Jamaat is not an option their party should even ponder.

When asked about their gains from the alliance with BNP, Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Muhammad Kamaruzzaman told The Daily Star, "We formed the alliance with BNP to serve the national interest."

He, however, did not clarify what those national interests are or whether his party was benefited from the alliance.

JP (Ershad) won 35 seats in the fifth parliament, 32 seats in the seventh, and 14 seats in the eighth parliament.

According to BNP leaders who are involved in the task of assessing Jamaat's past electoral performance, they will prepare a complete report on parliamentary constituencies with details of BNP's position in those, Jamaat's activities and position in those, and on whether BNP would be affected if AL is to form an alliance with JP.

They said they are also working on seventeen specific constituencies where BNP-led four party alliance candidates' electoral deposits for 2001 election were forfeited for getting too little votes.

the areas," a BNP leader said adding that they are now trying to find out the reasons behind that.

According to the sources, a complete report of the assessment will be submitted to the party chairperson.

Four-party alliance will finalise its nominees for the upcoming poll after reviewing the report.

BNP is also conducting a different survey through professional researchers to find out prospective competent nominees.

Moreover, Khaleda Zia assigned some of her close associates to carry out the same survey separately in order to get a clear composite idea about the party's and the alliance's positions in all constituencies.

After getting all reports, the BNP chairperson will start seat sharing negotiations with her alliance partners.

Country saved

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issues has hampered the main task of this caretaker government--to help the Election Commission hold the general elections.

About formation of the Truth Commission, Shahjahan said it came into being after a few people were convicted on corruption charges. "Isn't it a double standard if you now say you would free some people if they submit their ill-gotten money?" he said.

Asked about arrests of Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, filing of cases against them and then releasing them, he said, "I think it is questionable how essential their arrest was. They could be arrested later. Now the government is bowing down and sending advisers to their houses and trying to please them. Does it look good in the eyes of the law? Does it look good when the government is compelled to sit with a 'wanted' Jamaat leader?"

Shahjahan alleged that the government has "mixed up" legislature with the executive. "They have introduced so many laws and ordinances. By blocking bail, it is exercising judicial power," he added.

Sector commanders

FROM PAGE 16
Abdus Sobhan, Captain (ret'd) Abdul Bachhed, Abdul Matin Bhuiyan, Md Abdul Kashem, Obayedullah Majumder, engineer Abdul Zabar, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Md Abdul Hannan, barrister Qurban Ali, Ashraf Hossain, advocate Ansar Ali, Md Kaiser, Abdul Majid Talukder, Nawajes Ahmed, Ak Mosharraf Hossain.

Coordinator of the forum Sarwar Aliread told the list at the conference.

The forum chief coordinator Lt Gen (ret'd) Harun-ur Rashid said they published the list based on the information given by witnesses, newspaper clippings and other documents.

He told The Daily Star that they could all testify against war crimes if the trial process started.

The forum also urged all political parties not to have ties with war criminals and urged people not to let them participate in the forthcoming elections and even if they did, not to vote for them.

It again urged the government to seek United Nation's help to try war criminals.

Sector Commanders Forum Chairman and deputy commander-in-chief of the Liberation War Air Vice-Marshal (ret'd) AK Khandaker said, "We asked the government to try war criminals but it did not listen to us."

He urged people to be aware so that not even a single war criminal can enter the parliament.

Khandaker said, "War criminals are being tried in Cambodia with the help of United Nations and they had to seek the UN help several times. In our case, the UN secretary general himself said they would help if Bangladesh sought help."

The speakers at the conference urged freedom fighters to be united and press home the demand for trials of war criminals.

They also stated the Election Commission (EC) for registering Jamaat with the EC even though the party did not attend the EC hearing on the allegations brought by the forum. Forum leaders said they had specific proof of their involvement in war crimes.

They also said if the EC had followed the constitution then they would not have registered Jamaat as a political party.

The meeting was addressed by sector commanders Maj Gen (ret'd) KM Shafulul, Lt Gen (ret'd) Mir Shawkat Ali, Maj Gen (ret'd) CR Dutta, Lt Col (ret'd) Kazi Nuruzzaman, Lt Col (ret'd) Abu Osman Chowdhury, representatives of freedom fighters from across the country, representatives from cultural organisation, women's right organisation, professionals' organisation and freedom fighters' children's organisation.

Petrobangla signs

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In September 2006, Kores seconded Luxon's proposal specifically proposing that it was interested in Dighipara coal zone. In response, Petrobangla sent letters in December and in January and February 2007. But there had been no response. Rather, the last letter bounced back with the remark "unknown". Petrobangla sent the last mail to Kores in March with no response to it.

Both Luxon and Kores categorically sought stake in Dighipara coal zone from 2006. Though follow up correspondence by the government revealed that these are 'shell' companies, it had been entertaining their proposals all along.

In July 2007, Luxon submitted to Petrobangla a data sheet for joint work proposal saying that it has formed a consortium of companies. The consortium has designated Luxon as the communication channel.

Meanwhile, the Korean government also expressed interest in a government-to-government understanding on energy sector cooperation. A draft MoU sent by the Korean government specifically referred to Dighipara and coal mining exploration licence. Bangladesh however suggested that the MoU would not specify any licence or coal zone as it would cover a broad spectrum of energy cooperation.

The energy ministry on February 10 this year, January 9 and December 19 last year wrote to Petrobangla asking for its opinion on the Korean proposal for the joint venture. The latest Petrobangla reply to these letters was given on February 25 and its subject was "Draft MoU between Petrobangla and the Korean Consortiums". Petrobangla responded to this suggestion negatively.

A source quoting his business connections in South Korea said Luxon is a one-man show where a handful of people are trying to build a business using their high connections in the Korean government. The Luxon chief apparently used his connections to obtain courtesy letter of interest from some reputed Korean companies and submitted those to Bangladesh government to create a positive impression.

Luxon is not the only obscure company that made proposals for massive investments in Bangladesh. In May 2005, one Vulcan Energy, USA, proposed to invest \$1.6 billion in fertiliser, coal and power sectors. In 2004, US-Irish joint venture Cadogan-Manning proposed to build 450 MW Meghnaghat-3 power project. None of these companies has any experience in energy sector and they did not follow up their proposals.

BNP, Jamaat get

FROM PAGE 1
(ret'd) Oli Ahmed was the first to get EC registration on October 20.

"We are very happy. We knew we would get registered," BNP Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam told reporters after receiving the party's registration certificate from the EC Secretariat.

But he refused to make any comment when asked if the BNP would take part in the parliamentary election.

The EC Secretariat allocated the sheaf of paddy to BNP as its election symbol, plough to JP-Ershad, winnower (kula) to Bikalpadhara, hammer to Workers Party, sickle to CPB and torch to JSD-Inu. The LDP was earlier allocated umbrella as its election symbol.

The AL will have its symbol of boat, EC officials said.

They said registration certificates are ready for Jatiya Party led by Anwar Hossain Manju with election symbol bicycle, Bangladesh Samyabadi Dal with wheel, Krishak Samik Janata League with gamchha, Bangladesh National Awami Party with hut, and Gonotantri Party with pigeon.

EC sources meanwhile said a budget of Tk 2 crore has been finalised for the upcoming parliamentary election slated for December 18 and the following upazila polls, Tk 1 crore for each.

As of yesterday the EC finalised

registration of 21 parties. Commission officials said four to five more parties might be added to the list.

"A total of 107 parties applied for registration but not more than 25 will get registration," EC Joint Secretary Nurul Islam Khan told reporters at his office yesterday. He added that the commission would hand over certificates to all qualified parties within this week.

HC judges

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judge, four deputy attorney generals, a former additional attorney general and seven SC lawyers, the sources said.

The commission earlier decided to appoint at least 10 new judges to the HC division and to recommend