

Some AL leaders

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however would be changed in the event of a grand electoral alliance with Jatiya Party (JP) and Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

Joint General Secretary Mukul Bose, organising secretaries Mahmudur Rahman, Akhtaruzzaman, Sultan Mohammad Mansur Ahmed and Abdur Rahman, Health and Population Affairs Secretary Dr. Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Youth and Sports Secretary Dewan Shaiful Arefin Tutul, and central committee members Prof Abu Sayeed and AKM Jahangir Hossain are among the high-profile nomination seekers who did not yet get the nod from the parliamentary board.

AL will sit today with its partners in the 14-party combine and allies in the proposed grand alliance to finalise its strategy.

Components of the 14-party are scheduled to meet at 10:30am. Meetings with JP and LDP were not fixed as of filing this report at 8:00pm yesterday.

LDP Secretary General Iahanara Begum and JP Presidium Member Zauddin Ahmed Bablu told The Daily Star that they will meet sometime today to discuss the overall situation including seat sharing for the upcoming election.

AL yesterday met its 14-party partners except Gono Forum to discuss national and upazila polls, the state of emergency, and the economic situation including price hike of essentials.

Asked if Gono Forum had left the coalition, AL Spokesman Syed Ashraf Islam said his party does not have anything against Gono Forum except one of its leaders.

From yesterday's meeting, 14-party put out a call to the caretaker government not to defer the parliamentary election even by a day, and urged all political parties to contest the much-awaited polls.

The election must be held on December 18. The people are eagerly waiting to elect their representatives," Ashraf told reporters after the meeting.

Saying the country has been experiencing manifold crises, the AL leader said only an elected government can bring relief to the people.

MILK RETEST Petitions filed for stay on HC orders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two petitions were filed yesterday with the Supreme Court to stay the High Court (HC) order that directed the government to retest samples of eight brands of powdered milk and submit the results within 21 days.

The petitions, filed by advocate Mahmudul Islam for Nido and barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud for Red Cow, were brought before the court of Appellate Division Chamber Judge MA Matin, who sent the matters to the full bench of the Division for hearing today.

Following a petition of the Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh, the HC on November 10 ordered the health ministry to send samples of the eight brands to the chemistry department of Dhaka University, Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission, and Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution for further testing.

The court also ordered the government to publish in newspapers the results of all the tests done so far by these designated laboratories in order to inform people.

It also lifted its 21-day ban on sale and display of five of the eight popular brands—Dano, Red Cow, Diploma, Nido and Anlene, and ordered to continue the ban on Chinese brands Yashili 1, Yashili 2, and Sweet Baby 2.

The HC earlier directed the government to collect samples and test all brands of powdered milk available in the market in the three laboratories and submit the test reports to the court soon.

Govt to provide

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the help of World Bank-Commonwealth Journalists' Association (CJA), Bangladesh Chapter organised the discussion.

The speakers at the discussion made an urge to intensify media coverage on climate change in the commonwealth countries.

"We feel that more attention of journalists to the issue is needed as the devastating impact of climate change will be on all aspects of human life across the globe," said Raja Debashish.

He hoped that the country's next elected government will play a vital role in combating climate change.

Environmentalist Dr. Atiq Rahman, the winner of the Champions of Earth Award 2008, said, "The impacts of climate change can be felt here now."

He said icebergs in the Arctic are melting under the impact of global warming resulting in a rise in sea level.

About 17 percent lands in Bangladesh might get submerged if the sea level rises by only one metre, he said, adding that about 20 to 30 lakh people will be displaced if it happens.

The speakers said climate change can cause a shortage of freshwater, frequent floods, tropical cyclones and a significant change in the ecosystem and biodiversity of the country.

CJA Global President Hassan Shahriar, Chairman of Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad (BUP) Kazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmed, eminent journalist Farid Ahmed and Jagul Ahmed Chowdhury, among others, spoke.

Held in AL President Sheikh Hasina's political office in Dhanmondi with her in the chair, the meeting demanded that the military backed caretaker government lifts the state of emergency ahead of the national election, and announces a new schedule for upazila polls after the parliamentary election.

The meeting also put out a call to the people to be united in favour of having the parliamentary poll on its scheduled date of December 18.

Earlier, Swiss Ambassador Dora Rapold met Sheikh Hasina in the latter's Sudha Sadan residence, and discussed bilateral matters and the upcoming election.

ERSHAD EYES 60 SEATS
JP Chairman HM Ershad yesterday said his party expects more than 60 seats from the 14-party alliance.

Talking to reporters after a meeting with British High Commissioner Stephen Evans at his Baridhara residence, he said they will sit with AL today to finalise seat sharing of the grand alliance for the polls.

Replying to a query, the JP chairman said it is good if BNP takes part in the polls. However, the election must be held on December 18 even if BNP opts to boycott.

He said in the event of BNP boycotting the election, Jatiya Party would contest from all 300 seats.

Stephen Evans said international community hopes that all political parties including BNP would participate in the polls.

"We want to see elections go ahead and elections to be free and fair with full participation (of the political parties) for producing an outcome which is acceptable to this country," he said replying to a query.

OBAMA ELECTION Race crimes go up in US

AP, Washington

Cross burnings. Schoolchildren chanting "Assassinate Obama." Black figures hung from nooses. Racial epithets scrawled on homes and cars.

Incidents around the country referring to President-elect Barack Obama are dampening the postelection glow of racial progress and harmony, highlighting the stubborn racism that remains in America.

From California to Maine, police have documented a range of alleged crimes, from vandalism and vague threats to at least one physical attack. Insults and taunts have been delivered by adults, college students and second-graders.

There have been "hundreds" of incidents since the election, many more than usual, said Mark Potok, director of the Intelligence Project at the Southern Poverty Law Centre, which monitors hate crimes.

One was in Snellville, Georgia, where Denene Miller said a boy on the school bus told her 9-year-old daughter the day after the election: "I hope Obama gets assassinated." That night, someone trashed her sister-in-law's front lawn, mangled the Obama lawn signs, and left two pizza boxes filled with human feces outside the front door, Miller said.

She described her emotions as a combination of anger and fear.

"I can't say that every white person in Snellville is evil and anti-Obama and willing to desecrate my property because one or two idiots did it," said Miller, who is black.

"But it definitely makes you look a little different at the people who you live with, and makes you wonder what they're capable of and what they're really thinking."

Potok, who is white, said he believes there is "a large subset of white people in this country who feel that they are losing everything they know, that the country their forefathers built has somehow been stolen from them."

Grant Griffin, a 46-year-old white Georgia native, expressed similar sentiments: "I believe our nation is ruined and has been for several decades and the election of Obama is merely the culmination of the change."

"If you had real change it would involve all the members of (Obama's) church being deported," he said.

Change in whatever form does not come easy, and a black president is "the most profound change in the field of race this country has experienced since the Civil War," said William Ferris, senior associate director of the Centre for the Study of the American South at the University of North Carolina. "It's shaking the foundations on which the country has existed for centuries."

"Someone once said racism is like cancer," Ferris said. "It's never totally wiped out, it's in remission."

If so, America's remission lasted until the morning of Nov. 5.

The day after the vote he hailed as a sign of a nation changing, black high school student Barbara Tyler of Marietta, Georgia, said she heard hateful Obama comments from white students, and that teachers cut off discussion about Obama's victory.

Three Bangladeshis

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Daily Star, "A BSF member in uniform intruded into Bangladesh territory at about 10:00pm and attacked the house of Shahidul Islam. He started firing indiscriminately killing Majeda, her son Mamun and their neighbour Mostafa on the spot."

Shahidul received two bullets during the attack, the OC said.

At one stage, the villagers caught the BSF member and beat him up.

Quoting the villagers, the OC said the BSF member was drunk.

On information, BDR members rushed to the scene and took the BSF member into their custody.

Sources said tension ran high in the area after the incident.

Tariqul sued for graft

UNB, Dhaka

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday filed a case against former BNP Minister Tariqul Islam, sitting Planning Division Secretary Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury and former chief conservator of forests Anwarul Islam for causing huge loss to the government.

A first information report (FIR) was lodged with Shahbagh police station accusing the three of causing the loss through irregularities in selling timber collected from the government's reserve forests.

Tariqul, a former forests and environment minister, Zafar, former secretary of forest and environment ministry, and Anwarul Islam were accused of causing a loss of Tk 3.21 crore to the national exchequer and abusing power.

ACC Assistant Director SM Shahidur Rahman filed the case.

Koko's parole extended by 2 months

UNB, Dhaka

The government has extended the parole of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's younger son Arafat Rahman Koko, who is undergoing treatment abroad, by two more months until January 16, 2009.

A home ministry order yesterday said Koko's parole had been extended after his lawyer AM Mahubuddin Khokan prayed for it on Monday. Terms and conditions of the parole will remain the same.

Detained in the Dhaka Central Jail and then at the Prison Cell of BSMU Hospital since his arrest on September 3, 2007, Koko is now undergoing treatment in a Bangkok Hospital.

He was originally given two months' parole from July 17, 2008.

Shafique Ahmed

FROM PAGE 1
The senior lawyer of the Appellate Division said the 1/11 changeover must bring some changes in the attitudes of the politicians.

"A jolt like that of 1/11 was necessary and I believe politicians will now do politics for the welfare and betterment of the people and for governing the country properly, not for making their own fortune," he said.

Shafique praised the caretaker government's anti-corruption drive but said it has been done hastily which has weakened trials of a few corruption cases.

He urged political parties to forget all their differences and participate in the upcoming polls to restore democracy. They should also accept the election results, he added.

Tac set free

FROM PAGE 1
Chairman not attending office. Other officials passed their day by receiving phone calls from journalists and graft-accused, who mainly enquired if the commission was functioning.

As office activities remained suspended yesterday, the last date for submitting applications seeking clemency, the Tac boss said they would extend the deadline till November 19.

Earlier on October 29, Tac extended the same deadline for 15 days for the third time.

The commission today announces a fresh date for holding hearing on the appeals, which were supposed to be heard yesterday.

Mentioning article 112 of the Constitution, the commission chief said, "Tacs is not parallel to the court. It's helpful to the courts. Helpful in the sense that it lessens burden of other courts."

Referring to article 35 (4) of the Constitution he added, "We're not compelling anybody to confess to their ill-gotten wealth; rather the graft-accused are coming voluntarily. And we're not punishing anybody either, the graft-accused are being relieved instead."

SC PROCEEDINGS
The government yesterday filed a petition with the chamber judge's court of the SC seeking a stay on the HC order.

The court also asked the government to file a regular leave to appeal with the SC against the HC order.

Chamber Judge of the Appellate Division Justice MA Matin passed the order upon holding hearing on a stay petition filed by the government.

Attorney General Salauddin Ahmed told newsmen following the chamber judge's order there is no legal bar to resuming functions of Tac.

"After the High Court declared illegal the Truth and Accountability Commission Ordinance 2008, I advised the commission to stop their functions unless the Supreme Court stays the High Court order. Since the High Court judgement has been stayed, the commission can now resume its functions," he said.

He added a regular leave to appeal would be lodged with the SC after his office receives the certified copy of the HC judgement.

Disputed waters

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ration for hydrocarbon in the contested area.

MAK Mahmood, additional foreign secretary, who leads the Bangladesh side, made the opening remarks at the talks.

He said, "We would like to clarify that our maritime zone as declared in 1974 along the 092 degree 17 minute 30 second line is the line we are bound to follow until a final delimitation is attained between the two states on the basis of equity principle."

Approached by this correspondent during the tea breaks, none of Myanmar's delegation agreed to talk.

"Their delegation is maintaining what they said in 1974 which is not at all acceptable to us," said a member of Bangladesh side.

Dhaka categorically stated that until an agreement is reached, Yangon should restrict its survey and exploratory activities to the East of 180 degree line, said the meeting sources.

Myanmar's Deputy Foreign Minister Maug Myint is leading an 11 member expert team at the two-day dialogue that is fourth of its kind. The first-round talks were held on March 30 this year.

The maritime issues between the countries have remained unresolved for 22 years.

Lately, tension flared up when the Myanmar government engaged South Korean Daewoo International Corp in drilling for hydrocarbon reserves in the disputed territory.

The Myanmar ships entered Bangladesh territory marked as deep sea blocks 8-13 early this month ignoring warnings from the Bangladesh navy who soon moved to regain control over the area.

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Huge explosive

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Saider Rahman took over as the new chief of JMB after JMB chief Abdur Rahman, second-man Siddiqul Islam alias Bangla Bhai and four other top JMB leaders were executed.

The matter was finally settled at the house of Union Parishad Chairman Delwar Hossain on November 12.

But then Mehedi, Mithun and others started slandering Chan Banu, which the girl could not bear anymore and committed suicide.

Mithun, Kayes, Sohel and his uncle Jahangir claimed that Chan Banu had an affair with Mehedi.

AL, BNP want

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Earlier, the EC had primarily selected 138 organisations and asked the political parties to register formal objections, if any, by November 16.

The opposition from AL and BNP came on the last day.

After submitting the letter to EC Secretary Humayun Kabir, an AL delegation team disclosed names of the 20 organisations they do not want as election observers.

However, BNP that has yet to announce if it would participate in the polls did not divulge the names.

AL raised objection also to a foreign observer body-Bangkok-based Asian Network for Free Elections Foundations.

EC Secretariat officials said the commission will soon hold hearings to decide on the observers in question.

In response to widespread allegations of biased election observation, the EC this time has laid down new guidelines for domestic observers. To monitor the parliamentary polls, an organisation must be accredited by the commission.

The observers that AL disapproves of include Bangladesh Centre for Development, Journalism and Communication (BCDJC), Democracywatch, Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (Fema), Khan Foundation, Jagarani Chakra, Light House, Noakhali Rural Development Society (NRDS), Shariatpur Development Society, Sriajpur Bangladesh, Bangladesh Manabdhikar

Commission, Association of Muslim Welfare of Bangladesh, National Youth Forum of Bangladesh, Hijful, Fujul, Samajik Sangstha, Jugayan Samajik Unnayan Sangstha, Unit of Social Advancement, BRAVE, COAST Trust, Development Organisation for the Poor, and Nari Udyog Kendra.

In the letter, AL alleged that the organisations are biased towards BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, and so should not be allowed to observe the upcoming general election, AL sources said.

BNP Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan met the commission secretary in the afternoon.

Afterwards, he told journalists that his party has strong reservations about four organisations. He however declined to mention any names.

PARTY REGISTRATION
So far 32 organisations have been registered as political parties, while applications of 10 remain under consideration, said NI Khan, chief of the EC's technical committee to scrutinise the applications for registration.

Talking to reporters yesterday, Khan said the commission would not take any more application before the December 18 polls.

Asked about the allegation of shortage of CDs containing voter rolls in many areas, Election Commissioner Muhammed Sohul Hussain said they have sent the CDs to all district election offices and anyone can buy those.

Rohingya repatriation

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positively as human rights situation is not good across the border.

Now 23,695 Rohingyas reside at two camps in Kutupalong in Ukhiya and Nayapara under Teknaf.

Their number is increasing every year due to their high birth rate, the sources say. In 2004 the number of Rohingyas at the refugee camps were 19,841 in 2,976 families. Only 92 refugees were sent back in 2005.

As many as 9,616 refugees in 1,255 families are waiting for repatriation and had once been cleared by the Myanmar government. But diplomatic tangles reportedly stall the process.

Allegations are rife many refugees who were repatriated over the years came back crossing the border and are now living with the local community as unregistered Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar, Bandarban and Chittagong.

Many of them have allegedly secured Bangladeshi citizenship as they managed to enrol themselves on the voter list.

"It's easier for them as both local people and Rohingyas talk almost the same dialect and have similar complexion, said a local journalist, who is working on Rohingyas for over a decade.

Rohingyas are a Muslim ethnic

Proshika chief, son charged with money laundering

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday pressed charges against Proshika chief Kazi Faruque Ahmed and his son Kazi Rubayat Ahmed, chief executive officer of Computer Systems Trust of Proshika, in a Tk 1.03-crore money laundering case.

ACC Assistant Director Jahangir Alamgir, the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka showing 23 people as prosecution witnesses.

Jahangir said the two accused misappropriated Tk 1,03,67,624 from Computer Systems Trust.

The IO, however, appealed to the court to discharge Motiur Rahman—a member of the trust—from the case as accusations brought against him could not be proved.

On June 22 this year, ACC Deputy Director Syed Iqbal Hossain filed the case against Faruque, Rubayat and Motiur with Pallabi Police Station in the city in connection with taking the money in cash and bank cheques between March 23, 2007 and December 28 last year.

Earlier, the High Court, granting anticipatory bail to Faruque and his son, directed law enforcement agencies not to arrest or harass them in this connection for six months from September 14.

Saifur, Nizami

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Meanwhile, Jamaat Secretary General Mojahid said the party as well as the alliance will decide on contesting the national elections slated for December 18.

He demanded withdrawal of the state of emergency and also deferment of upazila elections.

The three politicians, accused in Barapukuria coalmine graft case filed by Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), surrendered before a special court on November 10 seeking bail. The court sent them to jail rejecting their bail prayers.

The commission filed the case against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and 15 others including 10 former ministers from BNP and Jamaat on February 26 this year on charges of causing a loss of Tk 159 crore to the state exchequer by awarding a contract for Barapukuria coalmine operation to a Chinese company through abuse of power.

Other accused include former BNP ministers Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, M Shamsul Islam, MK Anwar, Aminul Haque, Altaf Hossain Choudhury and AKM Mosharraf Hossain, former acting secretary to energy and mineral resources Nazrul Islam, former Petrobangla chairman SR Osmani, his former Petrobangla director Mainul Ahsan, former managing director of Barapukuria Coal Mining Company Ltd (BCMCL) Sirajul Islam and Hossaf Group Chairman Moazzem Hossain.

Acid-burnt
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Highway in Comilla on November 6.

His whole body was burnt by the corrosive chemical. His face, eyes and head were burnt and doctors on the first day of his admission said he may not survive.

His passing away puts the death toll of the accident to 15 with 17 others injured. His mother Shirin Akhter, 25, and father Ashraf Ali, 30, are also suffering from burn injuries.

Ashraf is in grave condition and Shirin is in a critical condition, doctors said. They are at the burn unit along with five other critically injured in the accident.

The parents have not been told that their dear child is no more.

"Will you just keep on writing? Won't you do anything to help us? How can we manage the expensive treatment for the three of us?" said the poor mother talking to The Daily Star.

Relatives of the three have appealed for financial assistance to be deposited in Ahnaf's grandfather Abdur Rashid's Agrani Bank Dhaka Air Force Base branch savings account No 131437.

"Why these innocent people have to suffer in such a way? How would these poor people bear the expensive treatment cost," questioned Shamantlal Sen, project director of the burn unit.

He assured the parents of all possible help from the social welfare department of the hospital.

The patients stressed the need for stern actions of the authorities concerned so that no one dares to handle corrosive chemicals callously. They said the government should pay for their treatment costs. They said there should be stronger vigilance on acid and its transportation.

The other judges are deputy attorney generals Delwar Hossain and Syeda Afzar Jaha, Supreme Court lawyers Abdul Hakim and Borhan Uddin, Rangpur District and Sessions Judge Abdus Samad and Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge M Azizul Haque.

Now the number of High Court judges stands at 67, said sources at the Supreme Court Registrar office.

Kashmir votes

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government to run the state," says Omar Abdullah, head of the pro-India National Conference.

Voters turfed out the National Conference in 2002 after it had ruled the state for decades, in favour of a coalition of the Congress party, which governs at the national level, and the regional Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

"It's not going to be a cakewalk this time. First we'll have to convince people to vote and then motivate them to vote in our favour," says another pro-India leader Mehbooba Mufti of the PDP.

India regards staging polls in Kashmir as enhancing the legitimacy of its rule in its only Muslim-majority state and has traditionally viewed a good turnout as signalling a victory of "the bullet over the ballot."

"The boycott call will have a significant impact in urban areas of the valley but in rural areas the impact will be less," said Tahir Mohiuddin, a Kashmir analyst and editor of the influential Urdu weekly, Chattan, or Rock.

"India will definitely sell a good turnout as its victory in Kashmir. A lower turnout would be a major victory for the separatists," he said.

The seven-stage polls to the 87-member assembly are slated to wind up December 24 when Srinagar votes. The staggered voting allows authorities in the heavily militarised state to shift security forces around in a bid to ensure there is no violence during the polling.

Security forces say they are taking no chances, despite the rebels' pledges of non-violence in the state where many favour independence from mainly Hindu, officially secular India or a merger with predominantly Muslim Pakistan.

"We're ready for the elections."

CA's meeting

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On November 2, the commission announced detailed schedules for the stalled ninth parliamentary and third upazila polls.

The EC then appointed 66 returning officers (RO) and 538 assistant returning officers (ARO) for parliamentary polls and 64 ROs and 481 AROs for conducting elections to 481 upazilas.

Sixty-four DCs of as many districts and two divisional commissioners were made ROs on deputa-tion for the polls while additional deputy commissioners will work as ROs in the upazila polls.

The alliance, insiders said, Jamaat and IOJ are mounting