

Parties get into full swing of polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political parties are gearing up for the December 29 elections with full-swing candidate nominations and seat-sharing negotiations by both major alliances despite reservations of the two main parties about electoral rules and upazila polls.

The Awami League (AL) has already nominated candidates for almost 300 constituencies but put a hold on finalising nominations as the party continues seat-sharing negotiations with its alliance partners.

Senior AL leaders told The Daily Star the party also holds back final nomina-

tions in case some candidates are barred from contesting on legal ground.

Meanwhile, the BNP yesterday started sale of nomination forms, with party leaders using preliminary reports from its internal candidate evaluations and independent surveys to vet nominees.

"We'll nominate candidates based on actions (of candidates) before and after the 1/11 changeover," BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain told reporters yesterday.

Negotiations have also started among BNP-led four-party alliance leaders to decide on seat-sharing arrangements.

BNP's largest alliance partner Jamaat-e-Islami has yet to start nomination process

but has collected a list of possible candidates from across the country.

The AL-led grand alliance partners including Jatiya Party (JP) and Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) were negotiating possible seat-sharing with the AL when this report was filed at 8:00 last night.

Both BNP and AL are trying to expand own electoral alliance to ensure victory in the parliamentary polls.

However, despite taking significant steps in nomination process, both the parties have serious reservations about electoral rules and the upazila poll schedule.

The BNP remains steadfast in its demand to repeal the 91(E) clause of the

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UN pre-poll team hopes emergency to go soon

UNB, Dhaka

A UN election assessment team took an overview of election affairs in a meeting with three advisers to the caretaker government yesterday and expressed the hope that the state of emergency would be lifted before the polls now slated for December 29.

Talking to reporters after the meeting with advisers Hossain Zillur Rahman, Hassan Ariff and Maj Gen (ret'd) Ghulam Kader on pre-election situation at the secretariat, leader of the team Francesc Vendrell admitted that the emergency is a

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Convicts, reformists too rush to get BNP ticket

1,800 forms sold on first day of nomination

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Convicts under Emergency Power Rules, so-called reformist leaders of BNP and many fresh faces collected nomination forms from BNP central and city offices in Naya Paltan yesterday, the first day of BNP's nomination process.

The two-day sale of nomination forms began early in the morning with Manzur-e-Elahi buying a form for Laxmipur-2 constituency. A total of 1,800 forms were sold for 263 constituencies in six divisions with Dhaka division getting the highest sale of 905 nomination forms.

BNP Party Chairperson Khaleda Zia and BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain, however, did not collect nomination forms yesterday, party sources said.

Former BNP minister Nazmul Huda, Sabera

Aman (wife of former BNP lawmaker Amanullah Aman), Mir Nasir, Iqbal Hassan Mahmud Tuku, Taimur Alam Khandaker, and Mirza Abbas collected nomination forms yesterday even though they have been convicted.

M Saifur Rahman, Moudud Ahmed, Nasiruddin Pintu, Ruhul Kuddus Talukder Dulu, Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, Fazlur Rahman Patal, Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Tariqul Islam and Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury collected forms. They are all under trial and a number of them are behind bars.

Controversial judge Justice Faisal Mahmud Faizee also bought nomination form for Chittagong-2.

Osman Farruk, Maj (ret'd) Hafizuddin

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AL gambles on seven new faces in Dhaka

HASAN JAHD TUSHER

Awami League (AL) has picked at least seven new faces as its candidates in the capital mainly on grassroots recommendations backed by its President Sheikh Hasina.

Of its nominees for the Dhaka city seats, two are graft suspects and three accused of links to organised crime.

"We could have chosen better candidates, had the parliamentary board been given the free rein. There's no alternative to revising some of the nominations to avert polls debacle in the city," a member of the AL Parliamentary Board told The Daily Star in return for anonymity.

Party leaders fear a dismal show in some of the seats as the candidates there are not much known to the constituents. Besides, some former lawmakers including Hazi Selim, Moqbul Hossain and HBM Iqbal, who have not been given nominations, might work against them.

Against this backdrop, the AL high-ups might bring some changes in its nominations.

Sources said organising secretaries Mahmudur Rahman Manna and



Rashed Khan Menon Fazle Noor Taposh

Akhtaruzzaman who have not been given the nod to run from their own constituencies--Bogra-2 and Gazipur-5--might be chosen for two constituencies in the city as they are considered 'familiar face' here.

Of the AL candidates, Sanjida Khanam stands for Dhaka-4, Habibur Rahman Mollah for Dhaka-5, Mizanur Rahman Khan Dipu Dhaka-6, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin Dhaka-7, Saber Hossain Chowdhury Dhaka-9, AKM Rahmatullah Dhaka-10, Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal Dhaka-11, Barrister Fazle Noor Taposh

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HC stays bar on Khoka to run in JS polls

EC asked to explain its mayor rule

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday stayed for four weeks operation of the Election Commission's (EC) decision banning Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka from running in the parliamentary polls.

It also issued a rule on the EC to explain within four weeks why its debaring the city mayors from contesting the general election while in office should not be declared illegal.

The bench of Justice Tariq ul Hakim and Justice Farah Mahbub came up with the stay and the rule in response to a writ petition filed by Khoka.

Petitioner's counsel

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BNP nomination seekers collect forms from the party's central and city offices in the capital yesterday as BNP formally began its nomination process.

Change of UZ poll schedule not practical

EC thinks it would lead to long delay

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) thinks the upazila election has to be held according to the current schedule since holding it under a fresh schedule could push the election date to the end of 2009.

According to the electoral roll ordinance, the commission is legally bound to start updating the voter list on January 2 every year and this could take at least five to six months to complete. The EC, however, can avoid the update before the upazila polls since the current polls schedule was announced earlier.

"If the upazila election is not held according to the current schedule, the fate of the polls will be uncertain."

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People won't forgive any party if it tries to foil polls

Says Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday said people will not forgive any party if it does not want to participate in the parliamentary polls apprehending defeat.

"If any party tries to foil the election and decides not to take part in it then people will not forgive it," she said while exchanging views with the leaders of Peshajibi Samannay Parishad at her political office at Dhanmondi in the afternoon.

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Emergency to go fully before polls

Assures Adviser Zillur; Moeen to ask govt for lifting it

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government yesterday announced that the state of emergency would be lifted at a 'reasonable time' before the parliamentary polls scheduled for December 29.

"Emergency will be lifted fully in due time before the election following recommendations of the Election Commission (EC)," Commerce and Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman told reporters at the Secretariat after a meeting with three advisers of the government.

Meanwhile, Army Chief General Moeen U Ahmed said he would request the government to lift the state of emergency before the December 29 election.

Zillur, however, refused to give a specific date of withdrawing

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HC RULING 5 powder milk brands won't be advertised until Jan 3

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday ruled that five powdered milk companies in question would not publish any advertisement for their brands until January 3, 2009.

The companies are Dano, Red Cow, Diploma, Nido and Anlene powder milk.

The HC order came upon submissions made by the counsels for the brands during the hearing on an application filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB)

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EC moves to stave off influence by high-ups

Decides to ask advisers, others not to visit constituencies of their relatives; 39 registered parties to be reminded of poll laws

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday decided to formally ask 39 registered political parties and their nominees for the upcoming parliamentary election to abide by the electoral laws and code of conduct.

To keep influence off the election it will also ask the cabinet division to direct advisers and government high officials not to visit parliamentary constituencies where their relatives are contesting the poll, EC sources said.

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At a meeting yesterday the EC also briefly discussed enforcement of the mandatory electoral provision on nominating candidates from panels prepared by party committees at grassroots level. The commission, however, did not decide what to do if any party ignores the laws.

The commission also requested Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar not to use protocol facilities and attend any reception while visiting his constituency for filing nomination, the sources said.

Ministry forms probe body to examine toxic oil tanker

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Ministry of Shipping has formed a committee to investigate the toxicity of oil tanker 'MT Enterprise' blacklisted by environmental group Greenpeace for containing hazardous substances.

Sources said the committee is going to sit today while the importer of the ship has reportedly dismantled a major portion of the ship.

On October 23, a report published in The Daily Star quoting sources said MT Enterprise, which was earlier named Ocean Enterprise, Atlantia, Taiko following each re-registration, is tainted with asbestos, heavy and toxic metals like lead, mercury, cadmium, copper and zinc.

Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA) earlier filed a case in this regard and a court issued a stay order against dismantling the ship on September 17. Later,

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A broken post box in CRB area of Chittagong city has remained in this shape as many people now use SMS and e-mail for communicating with others.

BNP grassroots wait to be asked for nomination

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN and RASHIDUL HASAN

BNP leaders at the grassroots level are still in the dark as they have not yet received any instruction on sending panels of nominees for the December 29 parliamentary election.

But BNP central leaders claimed that the party has already collected names of prospective candidates from the grassroots level through seven organisational teams. These teams submitted their reports to the party secretary general, they said.

The party high-up is still negotiating with the party's reformist leaders and trying to woo some disgruntled leaders of other parties including Awami League and Liberal Democratic Party to meet the candidate crisis.

After receiving forms from the nomination hopefuls, BNP will have only three days before Sunday to collect the panels of prospective candidates from the grassroots level. Sunday is the last date for submitting nomination papers.

Leaders at the grassroots level, however, said they did not get any direction from the high command to send panels of prospective candidates. They said they only know that the party has conducted a survey across the country to collect information about prospective candidates.

"We did not send any name of prospective candidates. A survey team collected names of party leaders and their activities since declaration of the state of emergency," Ghyasuddin Ahmad, president of Shariatpur district BNP, yesterday told The Daily Star.

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BOMB ATTACK Ctg JMB chief, three others get 20yrs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal here yesterday sentenced Chittagong divisional chief of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) Javed Iqbal and three other JMB cadres to 20 years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) each for bomb attack on a judge in 2005.

With this punishment, Javed has so far been awarded 164 years' imprisonment in eight bomb blast and arms cases, according to Public Prosecutor (PP) Qumrul Islam Sajjad.

Javed is an accused in 13 more cases, including one for murder, and was acquitted in another bomb blast case, the PP said.

After pronouncement of the verdict by tribunal judge Md Shafiqul Karim yesterday, Javed told reporters that he has no faith in such trial.

The other convicts are

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