

Relatives of convicts

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Nomination forms for five constituencies were bought on behalf of party Chairperson Khaleda Zia and two on behalf of Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain.

Party men engaged in selling nomination forms told reporters that Khaleda submitted forms for Bogra-6 and Dinajpur-3. She had also bought forms for Feni-1, Comilla-6 and Bogra-7.

Many convicted and arrested leaders and their relatives as well as controversial persons submitted nomination forms yesterday to get party ticket.

The BNP parliamentary board headed by Chairperson Khaleda Zia will interview the aspirants from 10:00am today at Khaleda's Gulshan office to select the party nominees.

Representatives submitted the forms for convicted BNP leaders Nazmul Huda, Mirza Abbas and Salahuddin Ahmed and detained Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu.

Afroza Abbas, wife of Mirza Abbas, Sabera Aman, wife of Aman Ullah Aman, Antara Huda, daughter of Nazmul Huda, and a sister of fugitive convict M Morshed Khan also submitted nomination forms to contest the polls.

Controversial teachers' leader Selim Bhuiyan and Justice Faisal Mahmud Faizee are also vying for party ticket.

Many fresh faces and a few senior leaders of BNP are trying to get party nomination in the 15 seats in the capital as the party is facing a severe crisis of candidates.

Apart from them, BNP leaders including standing committee members, former ministers and lawmakers, leaders known as reformists, former student leaders, businessmen, former bureaucrats, lawyers and woman leaders collected and submitted nomination forms.

Meanwhile, Khandaker Delwar yesterday held a crucial meeting with Dhaka city Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka to discuss strategies for contesting the general election in the city constituencies.

The BNP earned about Tk 4.43 crore from the sale and submission of nomination papers.

Sources said leaders of Islami Oikya Jote and Khelafat Majlish, two of the four-party alliance, handed over the lists of their nomination seekers to Khaleda.

Thousands of supporters of the nomination hopefuls gathered in front of the party office and chanted slogans in favour of their leaders.

Supporters of the "reformist" leaders faced the wrath of BNP leaders and activists present at the party office.

Sources at the BNP central and city offices said highest 1,800 nomination papers were sold just for the constituencies in Dhaka division while 1,200 of them were submitted; the lowest number of forms sold was 55 in Sylhet division, 40 of which were submitted.

Above 500 nomination papers were sold for Chittagong division, of which 275 were submitted; for Rajshahi 370 nomination papers were sold while more than 276 were submitted; for Barisal about 300 forms were sold and about 150 were submitted while 155 forms were sold for Khulna division and 128 were submitted.

World gathers

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violence against women and children act was passed and also amended in 2003, he said.

"Among many other initiatives the commendable one is forming a national anti-trafficking monitoring cell under the Ministry of Home Affairs which is providing necessary support to repatriation and reintegration of trafficked children and working for preventing trafficking in Bangladesh," he highlighted in his speech.

However, unaddressed concerns for Bangladesh include identifying sexual offenders against children within the family and community, the issue of homosexuality and bisexuality among children, use of children in pornography and sexual abuse of boys. While the emerging concerns remain with mainstreaming the abused survivors because of strong social stigma, absence of a national database on Children at Risk, and adopting minimum standards of care and services in the institutions like shelter homes and orphanages.

However a good number of NGOs are also working to provide support for psychosocial care and support in shelter homes, case management system, and minimum standards for institutional care.

On the opening night, UNICEF Executive Director Ann M Veneman in her speech stressed on few important

About 55 nomination hopefuls submitted forms against the 15 parliamentary constituencies in Dhaka division.

Sadeque Hossain Khoka submitted his nomination form for Dhaka-6 constituency. Former Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) president Habibunnabi Khan Sohel and former Dhaka city unit general secretary of BNP Abdus Salam submitted their forms for Dhaka-8 seat.

Barrister Nasiruddin Asim, BNP chairperson's counsel and former JCD leader, filed his nomination forms for Dhaka-11 and 12.

Of the former lawmakers elected in the 2001 election, Mosaddek Ali Falu and Maj (ret) Kamrul Islam did not buy party nomination forms.

Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmad and SA Khaleque are also in the race to secure party nomination.

Party standing committee member Chowdhury Tanvir Ahmed Siddiki submitted forms for Dhaka-7 and chairperson's adviser Brig Gen (ret) ASM Hannan Shah for Dhaka-17. They have also sought party nomination from their own constituencies in Gazipur.

City corporation councillors Abdul Quayyum, Kazi Abul Bashar, Kazi Hazrat Ali, Bazul Basit Anju, Abu Sayeed Bepari and Shamim Parvez, among others, submitted forms for getting party ticket.

Party sources said no forms were for 37 seats, which have been kept for the components of the four-party alliance.

UN team

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reporters after their meeting with Foreign Adviser Iftakhar Ahmed Chowdhury at the foreign ministry.

The panel reiterated that the UN wants to see the parliamentary poll now slated for December 29 without the state of emergency "not because this emergency now appears to be very strong or very tough".

Vendrell, Bhojraj Pokharel, chief election commissioner of Nepal, and Aracelly Santana, former deputy director of the UN's electoral assistance division, arrived in Dhaka on November 23 to assess the political situation in Bangladesh on behalf of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

During his November 1 visit to Dhaka, Ban Ki-moon announced to send the UN panel.

"We, the UN, are not here to observe the elections. We are here to assess the climate. We will come back when the elections take place," Vendrell said. "Things are very much on track. But, of course, if the state of emergency is lifted, it will be all to the better."

While talking to reporters about his meeting with the UN panel, Foreign Adviser Iftakhar Chowdhury said the election would not take place under the state of emergency. "The state of emergency will be lifted before the election," he said.

The UN panel had talks with the officials of the Election Commission, leaders of major political parties and government representatives. It will prepare a report on Bangladesh's political situation and submit it to the UN secretary-general.

issues that are also relevant to our Bangladesh context.

"Sexual exploitation on children is an assault on the world's conscience. Over nine percent of such abuse starts in the family space, young brides are more vulnerable to domestic violence. Poor girls are sent to live with wealthy families and become prone to such crime. It is a gross crime and there are no innocent bystanders," he said.

These important issues are still taboo in Bangladesh's social context where we cannot accept a child being sexually abused, boys being violated or talking about these things at family level. But now is the time to deal with these issues and create awareness among all and help put a stop to such heinous acts.

Dhaka's 400 years

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On November 29, a daylong programme includes area and ward-based processions with elephants and horses, boat race, kite flying, Dhakaia food and Bakarkhwa festival, old car display, children's painting exhibition, puppet show and cultural function.

Besides, the chief adviser will release commemorative postage stamp on the inaugural day. Different socio-cultural organisations will also organise their respective programmes.

Bangladesh Television (BTV) and private TV channels will telecast live the inaugural function.

AL asks govt

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Order and announce a fresh upazila polls schedule cancelling the present one.

The alliance made the demands at a meeting at AL President Sheikh Hasina's political office in the capital's Dhanmondi with party president member Amir Hossain Amu in the chair.

The BNP-led four-party combine had earlier made similar demands as preconditions for taking part in the general elections now scheduled for December 29.

"One of our main demands has been the withdrawal of the state of emergency, but the government is yet to meet the demand," Amu said while briefing journalists after the meeting.

Referring to the comments of Education Adviser Hossain Zillur and Army Chief Gen Moeen U Ahmed over lifting of emergency, Amu said, "We do not see any sign of withdrawing emergency."

Commenting on upazila polls schedule, the AL leader said the upazila elections must be deferred for at least a month since the holding of the parliamentary elections.

The leaders of the AL-led alliance discussed various issues including the coalition's prospective candidates and seat sharing but failed to reach a final decision.

Amu said the matter of seat sharing between AL and its allies would be finalised within a 'very short time'. He said his party's nominations would also be revised after sharing seats with its allies.

He also expressed concern over holding of the December 29 parliamentary polls following changes in its schedule several times.

The meeting asked the government to ensure holding of the national elections on December 29.

Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Abdul Jalil, Suranjit Sengupta, Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haque Inu, Nurul Islam, Dilip Barua, Abdus Samad, Asit Baran Roy, among others, were present.

Bangladeshi

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publisher should pay a total of 2.2 million yen to Islam Mohamed Himu for damaging his reputation.

"It's as if he said, since I did nothing wrong," said the 38-year-old businessman, who lives in Japan and had sued the newspaper for a total of 3.3 million yen.

"God sees through every human being, and if I had committed a crime, I would have accepted the punishment," he told AFP.

"I think that the Yomiuri kept appealing to the court because they probably thought that since I'm a foreigner, they could easily win."

Himu, who has lived in Japan since 1995 with his Japanese wife and two children, was arrested in 2004 along with four other Bangladeshis, an Indian, a Mali national and a woman from the Philippines.

Japanese media, citing unnamed police sources, prominently reported the arrests as being linked to an al-Qaeda probe, although police said at the time that the detentions were for visa violations.

The reports also said Himu, who managed a telecommunications company in Japan, possibly used his firm as an underground financial source for al-Qaeda.

While other media companies have either paid compensation or individually apologised to Himu since then, the Yomiuri continued to assert its position.

"We are extremely regretful that our company's position was not accepted," the company said in a statement.

A spokesman for the newspaper said the company stood by its report.

Zahir

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earlier than December 29, preferably on December 18 or 20.

"It is because the foreign observers will go back to their countries for Christmas and we will not have many foreign observers by December 29," he said.

Dr Zahir urged the two top leaders of the country to appear in televised debates on their programmes. He encouraged the media to initiate such debates.

Evaluating the caretaker government's performance during the past two years, he said the preparation of the voter list and bringing back the culture of candidate nomination from the bottom were its major achievements while not finishing the anti-corruption drive is one of its major failures.

Dr Zahir identified frequent walkouts from parliament and its long boycotts by political parties as the main obstacles to making parliament effective.

"We vote them [parliamentarians] to go to parliament and participate in discussions. Coming out, they attend parliamentary committee meetings and say they are attending parliament," he said.

Judicial magistrates

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also government officials, have no authority to try parliamentary polls offences.

The law ministry's action might put the Election Commission (EC) in an awkward position since it has already planned to assign judicial magistrates to try offences in the upcoming parliamentary election, EC officials said.

On November 16, the law ministry amended the schedule of the Mobile Court Ordinance 2007, inserting the Representation of People Order (RPO) in it. And this empowered executive magistrates to try electoral offences.

But according to the ordinance, a mobile court has the authority only to fine individuals for offences, and no authority to award imprisonment to those committing offences.

But an individual may be sentenced to imprisonment for two to seven years, and also fined for committing electoral offences on the polling day, legal experts noted.

The amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) that separated the judiciary from the executive last year empowered only judicial magistrates to try parliamentary polls offences.

Contacted, Justice Ghulam Rabbani said electoral offences are grave in nature because these might jeopardise the process of election to parliament which greatly determines the fate of the nation for long five years.

GDP growth

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the relevant information and briefing to be able to quickly move and take relevant policy actions."

WB senior economist Zahid Hossain said if the garment industry is affected, the government would have to consider some kind of safety net system.

Xian Zhu said developing countries like Bangladesh are most likely to be affected by the global crisis through exports and remittances.

"These countries may suffer from decline in trade, especially in terms of commodity exports. Furthermore, as labour markets slacken, foreign workers are likely to suffer disproportionate impacts on their earnings, which may reduce remittances."

Swaroop said, "Bangladesh did not have any impact on the first round of the global financial crisis because of lack of integration." But it is integrated with the world economy in exports and remittance.

He projected two possible scenarios on GDP growth in the current fiscal year -- one is 5.4 per cent and in the worst case 4.8 per cent.

Last year, GDP growth was 6.2 per cent.

The WB economist said "In two months time, there may be some orders for garments from China to Bangladesh. There is likely to be a 500 million dollar export from leather industry, we don't know whether it will be maintained or not. In post-Christmas -- in January -- the situation will be much clearer. These are export

Ex-CEC Hena

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Commission, political parties must also be very alert," he said.

He was speaking at the inauguration of a training programme on Election Violence Monitoring launched yesterday by human rights organisation Odhikar in association with Washington-based International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) with support from The Asia Foundation and DFID at Caritas Development Institute in the capital.

A fair election requires a fair environment and therefore it is important for the government to withdraw the state of emergency, Hena said. He suggests that the government take measures to ensure law and order instead of keeping emergency.

Referring to the national elections in 1996 when he was CEC, Hena said, "We made arrangements in a manner so that criminals could not create anarchy. We even stopped plying of vehicles to check wrongdoings like polls rigging."

The authorities should think whether they would allow use of mobile phones on the election day, he said,

"So, these offences should not be tried by executive magistrates, who have no power to award imprisonment under the electoral laws," said Rabbani, a former judge of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

Moreover, the CrPC provides that electoral offences should be tried by judicial magistrates, he said. "Probably this aspect has not been noticed by the law ministry."

Eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik said the change in the schedule of the mobile court ordinance has been made without lawful authority.

"Any rule made by the government cannot contradict an act of parliament or other laws. But the amendment to the schedule of the mobile court ordinance override the ordinance," he told The Daily Star.

The amendment to the schedule also overrode the amendment to the CrPC, he said.

According to the RPO, magistrates are assigned on polling day to hold summary trial of electoral offences under sections 73, 78, 79, 80, 81 (1) and 82 of it.

EC officials said around 300 magistrates will be assigned to try parliamentary polls offences.

They noted that executive magistrates cannot poll offences as they have jurisdiction only to fine the offenders. But punishment for polls offences includes both fine and imprisonment.

orders, remittances in the 2nd quarter. But we don't know what actually would happen."

He added, "Big economies are reeling under the impact of the global financial crisis. What is happening in China? Manufacturing industries are collapsing. In the USA, three Automakers -- General Motors, Chrysler and Ford -- are collapsing. Further deterioration in economy may have major adverse implications."

Zahid Hossain said, in a year when the global economy is facing serious crisis like the great depression, 5.4 per cent GDP growth is not a bleak situation.

The government has to take much more tougher policy actions. The challenge three months ago was high pricing. Bangladesh Bank should be watching private credit growth. But the quality of credit is not good. Contingency planning by the government is needed.

MIRZA AZIZ On the WB projection on GDP, Mirza Aziz said, "I don't know how they made the estimate. However, I do not agree with them in any way."

Talking to reporters after a meeting of three state-owned banks (SOBs) yesterday at his planning ministry office, the adviser said, "Till now the indicators -- export, remittance, inflation, credit growth -- all are positive. Therefore, there is no probability of GDP growth being as low as 4.8 per cent. Even recently, IMF projected GDP growth to be 5.5 per cent."

Liakat held

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seven plain-clothes armed Rab members stormed into their house on the third floor at about 5:45am and took away Liakat.

When contacted, Colonel Gulzar Uddin Ahmed, additional director general of Rab, denied the allegation, saying that the elite force members did not make such arrest.

Farhana said, "They reached the third floor along with the caretaker of the building and knocked at the door. As my father opened the door, the plain-clothes men identifying themselves as Rab members picked up Liakat."

Liakat was arrested on October 1, 2003 and under detention for five years. He was released on bail granted by the High Court on September 4 this year.

Contacted, Mohammadpur police could not confirm the arrest of Liakat. Police said Liakat is an accused in nine cases including four for murder. Four general diaries were also filed against him.

On December 25, 2001, the government declared Tk one lakh reward for information leading to his arrest.

After the caretaker government assumed power in 2001, Liakat fled to India. He was arrested there on November 19, 2002 and later freed on bail from Indian jail.

Tigers defy

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brilliant sixes against danger man Steyn and a few eye-catching boundaries that forced rival skipper Grime Smith to withdraw his champion bowler from the attack.

The crowd at the beautiful grassy embankments went wild when the Bogra-lad hooked brilliantly over backward square-boundary and then nicely swung the ball over midwicket.

Monde Zondeki finally stopped the flurry as Mushfiq went for another big pull-shot but top-edged to AB de Villiers at square leg to end the entertaining 86-ball 65 featuring nine fours, and two sixes.

Steyn, however, had a chance to take revenge but Makhaya Ntini dropped the Bangladesh wicketkeeper at mid-off on 45.

Although Steyn got only one wicket, the Tigers' only time succumbed to Makhaya Ntini and Morne Morkel who equally shared eight wickets after visiting captain Mohammad Ashraful had taken a bold decision to bat first against an all-seam attack on a quick pitch.

15 injured

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speeding bus when the students wanted to pay half fare on the their way to college at about 9:00am.

The three students were then taken to a nearby clinic where critically injured Hridom was shifted to Pangu Hospital.

As the news spread, the college students took to the streets with sticks and rods and vandalised three buses of the bus service at Farmgate at about 2:30pm, turning the area into a virtual battlefield.

Vehicular movement on the nearby road was also disrupted for an hour during the vandalism.

Meanwhile, police rushed to the spot and charged baton on angry students to disperse them.

The students also responded by pelting brickbats and stones. At least 15 people, including students and policemen, were injured in the clash.

Additional police forces have been deployed in the area to avert any untoward incident.

Police said they resorted to baton charge to disperse the angry students and take the situation under control.

John McCain

FROM PAGE 1
Services Committee.

Foreign ministry officials said during their two-day visit the US senators will discuss bilateral issues with the government and civil society leaders and monitor the pre-election atmosphere in Bangladesh.

They are expected to meet with President Prof Iajuddin Ahmed, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed and army chief Moeen U Ahmed.

They will also meet with BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, Awami League President Sheikh Hasina and members of the civil society to discuss the December 29 general election, strengthening democratic process and US-Bangladesh relationship.

A pre-election assessment team of the United Nations is also now in the country. The team will report back to the UN headquarters before the election and visit Bangladesh again to monitor the poll.

The European Union Election Observation Mission will also launch pre-election monitoring programme next Friday.

AL cautious

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expert team headed by AL advisory council member HT Imam has been analysing the alliance candidates' possibility of winning in their constituencies for making the final decision on seat sharing.

Meantime, AL's allies including Jatiya Party and Liberal Democratic Party have handed over separate lists of their prospective candidates to AL.

"We shall refrain from giving nominations to those grand alliance candidates who do not have much possibility of winning," AL president member Matia Chowdhury said after a meeting of AL presidium, the party's highest policy making body, yesterday.

Talking to The Daily Star she said, "We shall make the final decision on it in a day or two after reviewing the nominations."

Various issues including seat sharing with the grand alliance components, reviewing nominations of AL candidates in different constituencies, party manifesto, election campaign and training of the party's polling agents across the country were discussed at the meeting in Hasina's political office in the capital's Dhanmondi.

The AL presidium members accused the Election Commission (EC) of favouring a certain political party through misinterpretation of 'electoral laws' in the name of creating a level playing field.

Although the Representation of People Order (RPO) clearly states that recommendations from grassroots-level committees are mandatory to nominate party candidates, an Election Commissioner said 'it is not mandatory', AL spokesperson Syed Ashrafur Islam said while briefing journalists after the meeting.

Ashraf said if grassroots leaders of a certain party recommend the name of a nomination seeker of that party, he or she will not be able to contest polls from another party. But now the EC says such a nomination aspirant will be allowed to

Ctg mayor

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Order (RPO) 2008 which denies the constitutional rights of the city mayors and debars them from contesting the general election while in office.

Petitioner's counsel Advocate Hari Sadhan Deb Brahman told The Daily Star, that hearing of the petition might be held today.

Earlier on November 25, in response to a writ petition filed by Dhaka City Corporation Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka, the HC stayed for four weeks operation of the EC's decision in a similar case asking it to explain why its debarment of the city mayors from contesting the general election while in office should not be declared illegal.

Madrasa students

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students under the banner of 'Madrasa Chhatra Odhikar Sangrakshak Committee' also declared a student strike at the university on the day of 'Gha' unit admission test.

The admission test of the unit is scheduled to be held at 10:00am tomorrow and over 30,000 HSC-passed students from across the country will sit for the examination in an effort to get a seat to the country's one of the top educational institutions.

On October 20, over 200 madrasa students vandalised the office of DU vice chancellor demanding cancellation of the university authorities' decision of not allowing admission, in some departments, to the students who did not study Bangla and English of 200 marks each in their higher secondary or equivalent courses.

Dean of social science faculty Prof Harun-or-Rashid told The Daily Star that they have completed all preparations to hold the admission test on the scheduled date. He also hoped that essential steps would be taken to ensure smooth holding of the examination.

Chamberlain said the gunman spoke in Hindi or Urdu. He managed to slip away from the group as they were forced to walk up the stairs, but said most of the group was still being kept hostage.

4 foreigners

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Balamou Antoine, 30, and Mekeze alias Guy alias Bah Ahmadou, 30, of Guineenne, and Kwami Keufue, 33, of Cameroon.

Sources said the CID police recovered a huge quantity of fake dollar-printing papers and chemicals, an instruction book and six passports from their possession.

CID Inspector Shyamal Chowdhury told The Daily Star that they arrested Michel and Bah Ahmadou from Eskaton area while they were waiting in a blue taxicab in front of Eastern Tower at about 9:30pm.

"By searching their luggage, we found fake dollar-making papers and chemicals. Balamou and Kwami were arrested later from a hotel at Ashkona in Dakkhin Khan area with the same materials following the confessional statements of Michel and Bah Ahmadou," he said.

The foreigners were shown arrested under section 54 of the CrPC and later produced before a court. After the hearing, the court granted a five-day remand for them.

contest polls from another party, he said.

"Either the Election Commission is misinterpreting the Representation of People Order or provoking certain political parties into violating the electoral laws," Ashraf said. "Frequent change in decisions by Election Commission has made holding of the parliamentary elections uncertain," added the AL leader.

The meeting reviewed the party manifesto, which is almost prepared, and decided to go for "positive" election campaign with a strong stance against militancy.

The presidium also decided to review party nominations in over 50 constituencies and train its polling agents across the country.

After the meeting, a delegation of Zaker Party, a grand alliance component, led by its Chairman Mostafa Amir Faisal Mozaddedi met Hasina.