

Scrutiny of nomination

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convicted under the Emergency Powers Rules (EPR), which prevents them from contesting the polls.

Bangladesh Bank has directed banks and financial institutions concerned to be present during the scrutiny with documents on loan defaulters so that they could be disqualified from the race, sources in the EC Secretariat said.

The central bank in a circular issued earlier warned the banks and financial institutions concerned of punitive actions in case of negligence in discharging this duty.

The EC has also issued

circulars directing utility service providers to send their representatives with information on bill defaulters during the scrutiny, sources in the EC Secretariat said.

As per the directives, officials of utility-service providing organisations like telephone, water, power and others are supposed to be present during the scrutiny at the ROs' offices across the country.

Officials in the EC Secretariat predict that the EC might receive a record number of appeals against the ROs' decisions as parliamentary aspirants are allowed to challenge the ROs' decision on any acceptance or rejection of nomination papers. In the past, aspirants were only allowed to challenge the ROs' rejection of their nomination papers.

The EC Secretariat yesterday in a press release said any parliamentary aspirant aggrieved by the decision of ROs can file an appeal with the EC between December 5 and December 7. The EC will start disposing of the appeals from December 6.

A total of 2,460 nominations were submitted for the parliamentary elections scheduled for December 29.

Ferry escapes disaster on Padma

A CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

A ferry carrying over 300 people and 22 vehicles narrowly escaped a disaster as its hull developed a crack while in the middle of the Padma and water gushed into it.

The ferry -MV Raipura - left Kawkandhi for Maowa at about 5:30pm, and faced trouble around 10:30pm.

Sensing imminent danger, the master of the vessel quickly anchored it at a char (shoal) and contacted officials of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC).

Fighters, BIWTC personnel and Shariatpur district police rushed to the spot and pumped out water from inside the ferry, making it danger-free.

Contacted, Sirajul Islam, BIWTC manager at Maowa ghat, said the ferry restarted for its destination in the early hours today after repair of its hull.

The vessel was carrying three buses with about 300 passengers, 14 trucks and five other vehicles.

Jukta Front

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Bikalpadhara Bangladesh President Badruddoza Chowdhury accepted the PDP led by Ferdous Ahmed Qureshi as a component of their electoral alliance on Sunday despite opposition from Gono Forum President Dr Kamal, sourceraid.

A gap has developed between Bikalpadhara and Gono Forum because Dr Kamal did not agree to allow PDP in the Jukta Front. That is why our leaders were absent at PDP's joining ceremony, said Gono Forum President member Pankaj Bhattacharya.

He said the Jukta Front was formed with Bikalpadhara, Gono Forum, Bangladesh Kalyan Party and a few other little-known parties on November 18 to bring a change in politics. So, controversial or corrupt leaders should not be allowed in the alliance, Pankaj added.

Bangladesh's proposal also stated that current arrangement of responsibility-based mechanism must be revised to make contributions of developed countries mandatory.

The Bangladesh delegation also asked for developing a mechanism, with the help of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, to create an index on the vulnerability of each country to climate change.

Bangladesh demanded creation of an effective environment for climate-change adaptation, nationally, regionally and internationally with the support of appropriate institutions.

"We proposed the setting up of the head office of the International Adaptation Centre in Dhaka," said a government official representing Bangladesh. However, all parties attending the conference have to agree on this.

Bangladesh demanded a long-term global goal on the climate change issue. Its proposals also said the goal should be made according to the undertakings of developed countries on emission cuts, technology transfer, finance and capacity building.

Mr Reazuddin, director technical of the department of environment, presented the proposal at the meeting.

Meanwhile, Oxfam International in a report yesterday estimated that more than \$50 billion could be raised each year if developed countries, in auction, the right to only 7.5 percent of their emission units.

The money should be handed to a new multilateral adaptation-finance mechanism under the UNFCCC. Oxfam yesterday released the report called "Turning Carbon into Gold" which also suggested that other new finance mechanisms in the aviation and shipping sectors could generate another \$28 billion.

The HC later extended its stay order until December 9.

The ACC filed the case on September 2 last year on charges of corruption in awarding Global Agro Trade (Pvt) Ltd (Gatco) a contract for container handling at Dhaka and Chittagong inland depots.

Around 9,000 participants including government officials, NGO workers, scientists, and journalists from 190 countries gathered in Poznan to attend the two-week-long conference.

He is facing a number of cases including 15 regarding illegal handing over of 18 houses.

BNP reviews

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Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain and Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan were also present in the discussions at the former prime minister's Gulshan office.

Nothing could be known about the meeting outcome immediately.

Meanwhile, supporters of those denied nominations were continuing demonstrations in front of the office.

Some of them were on a hunger strike demanding changes to the party's panel of candidates.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday afternoon, Nazrul Islam Khan said, "We are still examining the list which will hopefully be settled tonight."

Asked about controversial candidates, he said they kept the names as 'alternatives' and those are not final.

A number of BNP leaders alleged that vested interests and some close aides to the party chief had played a key role in selection of individuals with dubious records.

Even findings of the country-wide surveys conducted by professional researchers and the party's organisational teams have been ignored in choosing candidates.

The chairperson is working on the matter after being briefed on reactions of the rank and file, one of her aides told The Daily Star yesterday. "And you'll see some positive changes by tomorrow (Wednesday)."

BNP carried out the surveys to find out competent contestants for the upcoming polls. Party leaders on several occasions said the nominations would be given in line with the survey recommendations.

Many who aspired to be BNP candidates alleged that a coterie of senior leaders was involved in 'nomination trade', and that answers why so many dodgy characters are on the party ticket.

Of the questionable nominations, those of Kabir Ahmed Bhuiyan (Laxmipur-2), Khandaker Abdul Hamid Dablu (Dhaka-19) and Anwar Hossain Bulu (Naogaon-6) have angered the partymen most.

Kabir is brother of Amin Ahmed Bhuiyan, who filed a case against Khaleda Zia's elder son Tarique Rahman following imposition of the state of emergency.

Dablu, son of BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain, was allegedly involved in criminal activities during the four-party alliance rule.

Bulu is the brother of former state minister Alamgir Kabir who

AL for S Asian

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out terrorism and establish peace in the region," Hasina told a faction of Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) leaders when they met her at her office.

She said Islam is a religion of peace and there is no room

for terrorism in Islam. Those who are tainting Bangladesh and other Muslim countries by committing terrorist activities in the name of Islam must be stopped, she added.

Bangladesh must recover its identity as a secular democratic state, she observed.

She added the Muslim world has to take steps to curb terrorism in the name of Islam.

The former premier, against who several plots were hatched mostly by Islamist militants, said she might be targeted again for making such comments. She said 19 such attempts to assassinate her have already been made but she is not scared.

Hasina also said if voted to power she would take steps to modernise both general and madrasa education system as proper education is needed to fight terrorism and remove unemployment problems.

She also pledged that her prime task as a premier would be to bring prices of essentials within the reach of the common people. She reiterated her pledge to ensure education, health,

shelter and employment of the commoners.

About attacks on 'Balaka' sculpture and 'Lalon' sculptures by Islamist militants, Hasina said, "I don't understand why those people desecrated a beautiful sculpture. Many Islamic countries have such sculptures."

She also said while she was in jail, authorities had offered to punish any rivals within her party who had slighted her in the past.

Mentioning her life under detention, she said, "The authorities asked me to name anyone who had let us down in the past at any stage of our political careers. The authorities assured me that they would punish the offenders. I said Allah will take care of all injustices."

"Upon their insistence on eliciting names of offenders, my neighbour gave names and they were arrested straightaway," she said in an indirect reference to her political rival BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, who had been detained in another special jail at the same parliament complex.

IOJ Chairman Misbahur Rahman Chowdhury, Vice-chairman Nurul Islam Khan and Secretary General Muniruzzaman Rabbani and AL leaders Motia Chowdhury, Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir were present.

Establishes link between the government and the people.

He urged the delegation to undertake a training programme for Bangladeshi journalists to further improve their professional excellence.

IPI Director David Dade agreed that Bangladesh has press freedom as he also learnt during meetings with different important personalities and institutions in the country.

He thanked the chief adviser for making the Right to Information Ordinance, saying that "the biggest thing" has been done by the interim government.

Dade said the journalists would have to be very responsible for their duties.

The members of the delegation include Owais Aslam Ali, secretary general of Pakistan Press Foundation, and Manjul Ahsan Bulbul, local coordinator of the IPI in Bangladesh.

After the meeting, CA's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim briefed newsmen.

Khaleda, Hasina

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alliance chief AL President Sheikh Hasina would be the first since restoration of parliamentary democracy in 1990.

On November 21, the two top political leaders of the country met and exchanged greetings after a long time at the Armed Forces Day reception at Senakunja in Dhaka Cantonment. The incident showed high hopes for their holding talks in the future to bring an end to the country's confrontational politics.

Businessman Lutfor Rahman Matin has been chosen for the seat.

Chowdhury Motahar Hossain, who vied to run for Naogaon-6 on BNP ticket, yesterday said, "My nomination has been sold to Alamgir Kabir's brother, though madam had promised me the party nod."

A group led by Khandaker Delwar had all along been pressuring Khaleda Zia to leave the party to bring the two electoral alliances led by BNP and AL. Instead, top leaders of the alliances would get the invitation, commission sources said.

Asked who will be invited to the debates, Sakhawat said they are planning to hold three-four sessions with senior political leaders. "We plan to bring the top leaders in the last episode of the programme," he added.

Delwar walked out of the parliamentary board meeting on Thursday night following a difference of opinion with the chairperson over picking some 'reformist' leaders as candidates.

Though Khaleda sent some leaders to Delwar's house to bring him back, he did not return that night.

Hundreds of workers and leaders who were in front of the chairperson's Gulshan office Thursday and Friday night expressed annoyance when they heard names of controversial persons as candidates.

McCain

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by Senator Joseph Lieberman and Senator Lindsey Graham.

Foreign Adviser Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury received them at the airport.

He told journalists that McCain would call on Chief Adviser Fakhrudin Ahmed this morning. "They are expected to discuss Bangladesh's parliamentary election," he added.

The senator will hold a press briefing at the airport at 8:00am today before leaving for Delhi at 9:00am.

McCain, who ran against Barack Obama in a historic battle of ballot for the White House, was first elected to US Senate from Arizona in 1986. He has an adopted daughter of Bangladeshi origin.

India asks Pakistan

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wanted in India on charges of masterminding serial bombings in Mumbai in 1993 that killed around 300 people.

Pakistan has said in the past that it will not hand over any of its citizens to India and denies Dawood Ibrahim, an Indian national, is on its soil.

Pakistan Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani told CNN that his government wanted to probe of allegations that his country's nationals were involved.

It said Indian intelligence officials intercepted a phone call on November 18 to an address in Pakistan used by the head of the militant Lashkar-e-Taiba, revealing a possible target.

About 10 gunmen landed in rubber dinghies in Mumbai on Wednesday and wreaked havoc with automatic weapons and hand grenades, in an assault that killed 188 and injured more than 300. The dead included 22 foreigners.

"Pakistan will act very responsibly," the prime minister said. "We have talked to all our friends (to see) that they will use their good offices to defuse the situation."

Questions about whether India ignored US intelligence warnings and if Pakistan would divert troops from the Afghan border will likely come up in discussions with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who arrives Wednesday.

Bribe gets

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Bidhan Chandra Sen of Chittagong Medical College. However, in a statement made to the ACC officials yesterday, he claimed he was unaware of it all, and that Ferdousi tricked him into the scene.

The arrestees have been getting students enrolled on MBBS course fraudulently. And many of the students are now in different academic years in medical colleges across the country," said ACC Assistant Director Jahangir Alam, who was in the ACC team led by Major Zulfiqar Haider Chowdhury.

"We are after the entire syndicate," he added.

Nuruddin, who registered at the Comilla Medical College on November 29, said he had contacted Ferdousi on learning that every year she gets a number of students admitted to different medical colleges in exchange for money.

Ferdousi told him that she charges Tk 6 lakh for admission to Comilla Medical College, Tk 9 lakh for Chittagong and Tk 10 lakh for Dhaka.

Nuruddin paid her Tk 28,000 in advance. The rest of the amount was to be paid after admission.

Ferdousi's niece Rony took him to Comilla Medical College. As Nuruddin filled in the admission form, he handed him an admission clearance, signed by the director general of health directorate.

On completing admission formalities, Nuruddin returned home. But as he kept having pangs of conscience, he decided to inform the ACC of the matter.

The ACC officials also seized the car Ferdousi used to go to the bank.

The anti-graft officials also questioned Bidhan Chandra Sen who claimed to have practised in eight private diagnostic centres but not in Nahrar.

Earlier, while demanding the rest of the money, Ferdousi instructed Nuruddin to write the check in Bidhan's name.

Ershad earns

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mention his profession but said he is the proprietor and chairman of a limited company. The statement also shows he had bank and other assets of about Tk 6.79 crore.

Besides, his wife Rawshan Ershad owns about Tk 4.58 crore in the form of bank deposit, bond, stock exchange, company share, motor vehicles, gold, postal savings and capital investments for trade.

Moreover, she owns wealth worth about Tk 6.07 crore in the form of buildings, apartments and miscellaneous.

The names come from a list of suspects originally put together by India after the 2001 parliament attack. It includes Hafiz Saeed, the founder of Lashkar-e-Taiba.

Others include Maulana Masood Azhar, chief of the Jaish-e-Mohammed rebel group, and Dawood Ibrahim.

The names come