

Hasina

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generation of voters to participate in the great endeavour for national reconstruction. CALL TO THE PEOPLE

Calling upon the people of the country to forget past differences and disputes, the former prime minister urged all to join hands in 'the fight for change with the spirit of glorious struggle for freedom'. "Let us put a permanent end to persecution, deprivation, inequity, and misgovernance. Let us construct a just and democratic society and build a happy, prosperous, golden Bengal," she said adding, "We'll bring back peace and trust in your life by reducing prices of daily essentials, if Awami League is voted to rule the country."

With a vision for turning Bangladesh into a prosperous nation free from hunger, poverty and illiteracy, Hasina presented the main elements of the manifesto with 68 bullet points.

According to the pledges, AL would break the syndicates that keep the prices of essentials high.

It would form a task force along with a centre for collection and analysis of data to help cope with the global economic downturn, and would take steps to ensure self-reliance in food production.

The Anti-corruption Commission would be further strengthened.

War criminals would be tried and religious terrorism would be suppressed with an iron hand.

Independence of the judiciary would be ensured in 'true sense', good governance would be ensured through establishment of fundamental human rights, and the rule of law.

The verdict in Bangabandhu murder case would be implemented and killers of four national leaders would be tried again, perpetrators of the grenade attack on an AL rally on August 21, 2004 would be tried as well as the perpetrators of other deadly grenade attacks.

Power generation of 5,000 megawatt by 2011 and 7,000 megawatt by 2013 would be ensured for bringing electricity to all.

Poverty ratio would be reduced from the current 45 percent to 25 percent within the next five years.

Agriculture and rural development would be given the highest priority as policy instrument for eradicating poverty, and food security would be ensured for the ultra-poor.

A comprehensive employment policy would be adopted, subsidy would be given for purchasing fertilisers, seeds, pesticides and other agricultural inputs, while fair prices of agricultural products would also be ensured.

The parliament would be made effective, the government administration would be free from political and partisan influence.

Recruitment, appointment and promotion of government employees would be considered based on merit, competence, efficiency and seniority.

Economic growth would be accelerated to 8 percent per annum by 2013 and to 10

percent by 2017.

A permanent pay commission would be set up for government officials and employees, while a permanent wage commission would be set up for workers.

Minimum wages and trade union rights would be ensured for workers, while a separate service commission would be established for teachers by 2014.

Enrolment at the primary level of education would be raised to 100 percent by 2010, and education up to the level of bachelor's degree would be made free in phases, while healthcare for all would be ensured by 2013.

33 percent of parliamentary seats for direct election would be reserved for women, child labour would be prohibited.

Employment guarantee schemes would be introduced, which by 2011 would provide employment to one able-bodied young person per family.

A scheme would also be adopted to employ higher secondary certificate holders in 'national service'.

Opportunities would be created for investment by local and foreign entrepreneurs as well as for non-resident Bangladeshi (NRB) investors.

Steps would be taken to materialise the commitments of the liberation war, rehabilitation of freedom fighters' dignity, and restoration of the 'true history' of the liberation war.

The manifesto also pledges to implement the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord in full.

Steps would be taken to deal with global warming effectively, and to ensure freedom of the mass media, according to the manifesto.

The armed forces would be kept above all controversies, and a taskforce would be set up to combat terrorism and militancy in the South Asian region.

According to AL's vision, a 'Digital Bangladesh' would be built, and unemployment would be cut down to 15 percent from the current 40 percent while employment would be increased from 4.2 crore to 9 crore by 2021.

The party also pledges to build a bridge over the river Padma, a tunnel under the river Karnaphuli or a bridge over it if voted to power, while pledging to modernise the railways.

It promises to build a deep seaport and modernise Chittagong and Mongla seaports along with all land ports, while connecting the country with the Asian Highway and Asian Railway.

Hasina also said her party wants not only a mere change in the halls of power. "We're determined to salvage the country from its present critical state and to transform it into a land of real democracy with the rule of law, food security, rapid development, and peaceful existence," she asserted.

Leaders of different political parties, senior journalists and editors of different newspapers, foreign diplomats, teachers, media personalities, and cultural activists were present at the publication ceremony among others.

1 shot dead in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criminals yesterday shot dead a driver of a rent-a-car company in the capital's Narinda.

The deceased was identified as Shah Alam, 21, a resident of Gendaria.

Sources said the criminals fired two shots at Alam in a lane at Narinda at about 9:00pm leaving him dead on the spot.

The criminals fled when locals rushed to the scene hearing the gunshots, said Tofazzal Hossain, officer-in-charge of Sutrapur Police Station.

He could not confirm the motive for the killing.

However, sources said Alam might have been killed following a feud over narcotics trade.

Police said they recovered Tk 5,500, a mobile phone and an ATM card from Alam's trouser pockets.

World leaders

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go forward with the climate change issue till COP-15 so that Bangladesh could be benefited by the negotiations.

The delegates decided to persuade the government in appointing a permanent special envoy, who is experienced in UN negotiations, on climate change.

Raja Roy, chief of the Bangladesh delegates, promised to convey the message to the government.

Seleemul Haque, chief of the climate change cell of International Institute of Development and Environment (IIDE), at the meeting said the meetings of the climate change adaptation fund board achieved a lot of progress which is good news for vulnerable countries like Bangladesh.

Former US vice-president Al Gore yesterday delivered his speech at the Poznan summit. He said the sign of climate change is clear and this is the biggest disaster that the humankind has ever faced.

"We are approaching a point of no return. Roads to Copenhagen are clear and we have to go forward," he said, adding that the global leaders must reach a consensus on greenhouse gas emissions.

Claiming climate change is a moral and spiritual issue, Al Gore said, "Even the steps taken here sometimes seem small but now we are at a point from where we can go forward."

Referring to his conversation with US president-elect Barack Obama, Al Gore said Obama would place the climate change issue as one of his priorities and once he takes office the US will engage in the negotiations vigorously.

"The time for delay is over. The time for denial is over. This is a matter of national security," Al Gore quoted Obama as saying.

Gore said, "Our children have rights and they deserve better future."

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3 'criminals'

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Selim who was wanted in a number of cases from Uttara area. According to his confession statement, the elite force raided the village of Kaliganj upazila at about 2:30am to arrest his cohorts and recover hidden arms.

"When Rab members reached near Kaliganj Sramik College with Selim, his cohorts opened fire on them, forcing the law enforcers to fire back", said a Rab-1 official adding that Selim died on the spot while trying to flee the scene.

One pistol and some sharp weapons were recovered from the spot.

Our Narayanjan correspondent reports: Top terror Mohammad Ali, who was awarded capital punishment in absentia by a court for murder, was arrested by Rab-11 from Raniganj Fulbaria village in Kapasia upazila of Gazipur Thursday midnight.

Rab later took him to Brahmanbaria in Ruppaganj upazila to recover hidden arms and bullets as per his confession.

Sensing the presence of Rab, Ali's associates fired bullets targeting the law enforcers at about 3:30am. The elite force also retaliated resulting in a gunfight.

Sources said Ali was caught

in the line of fire while trying to flee. Critically injured Ali was rushed to Ruppaganj Health Complex where doctors declared him dead.

Rab personnel recovered two pistols and several bullets from the spot. Ali was wanted in a number of criminal cases including murder and extortion, police said.

Our Staff correspondent from Rajshahi adds: Police arrested PBCP-Lal Potaka leader Shahjahan from Baruihati Bazar on December 9. During police interrogation, he confessed to having illegal firearms.

Police said they along with Shahjahan went to recover firearms and bullets around 2:30am. When policemen reached a pond at Baruihati village, criminals opened fire on them, triggering a gunfight that continued for half an hour.

Police said Shahjahan sustained critical injuries during the gunfight and died at Bagmara Health Complex. He was wanted in a number of cases on charges of five murders in Atrai, Bagmara and Doulatdia police stations.

Police found a shutter gun, four bullets, a machete, a Chinese axe and some other sharp weapons on the spot of the clash.

Country in deep crisis

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nationalist-Islamist forces have to come to power to solve the crisis," Khaleda said. "The country will survive and sufferings of people will be removed once the BNP-led alliance comes to power."

She said, "There is no fundamental rights in the country at present, no development work was done during the last two years, many people are without jobs, prices of essentials have increased 80 to 100 times, people are passing days half-fed or without food."

"There was food security during our rule, lots of development work were done and people were employed," she said, adding that only a BNP-led government can resolve the present crises.

Asking the government and the Election Commission to ensure holding of the election in a free and fair manner, Khaleda said if the election is held that way, the four-party will come to power.

She alleged that after her arrest her two sons were also arrested and tortured so much that they are yet to recover fully.

Khaleda handed over the party election symbol, sheaf of paddy, to candidates, terming it the symbol of development, independence and sovereignty.

Earlier, Khaleda was welcomed at some 25 spots in Narayanjan, Narsingdi, Kishoreganj, Brahmanbaria, Habiganj and Sylhet on her way to the city of shrines. She stopped at the Sylhet Circuit House for about an hour and talked to a few candidates there.

Extensive security measures were taken in Sylhet city for the BNP chief's visit. A huge contingent of police and party security men were deployed. The road leading to Shah Jalal's shrine was also kept free.

On way to Sylhet, Khaleda's convoy had to slow down at Itakhola, Baroicha, Sarail intersection and Madhabpurbar as enthusiasts and local BNP leaders and

Eid holidayers

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Traffic policemen at different intersections were seen discharging their duties in a relaxed mood. Most city-service buses had a handful of people on board.

According to witnesses, buses, trains and launches leaving Dhaka carried very few people while the ones coming into the capital were overloaded.

Parks, amusement parks, Dhaka Zoo, cinemas and other recreational places were swarming. Many families used yesterday for recreation purposes and to enjoy Dhaka with a different flavour as the city becomes this empty only twice a year.

Shop owners said they had to keep their shops closed as most of their employees who left for their homes outside Dhaka for Eid are yet to return.

Rickshaw-pullers earned a lot during the last three days as most city dwellers took rickshaws in the almost deserted city. Drivers of cars being on holiday is another reason for city dwellers' preference for rickshaws.

Those who stayed in the city during the holidays have been enjoying a more comfortable city. However, Dhaka is expected to return to its former self by Wednesday.

4 constituencies

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may back Zahiruddin Swapan, former BNP lawmaker, who is contesting the polls as an independent.

The returning officer for Sirajganj-5 declared BNP leader Maj (retd) Manjur Quader unfit for polls as he is a loan defaulter. Neither BNP nor its allies have any alternative candidate in that constituency.

The returning officer for Moulvibazar-2 declared BNP candidate Abed Reza unfit for polls for being a loan defaulter. The alliance may back former BNP lawmaker MM Shaheen who is running as an independent candidate in that constituency.

The returning officer cancelled the candidature of Mohammad Ali, nominated by AL for Noakhali-6, as he was identified as a loan defaulter.

AL sources said Ali's wife Ayesha Ferdous, contesting the polls as an independent with pitcher as her electoral symbol, may get the party backing in polls.

CPB says

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The party will contest the election in 37 constituencies including two in Dhaka.

"The sector commanders have made public a list of 50 war criminals. Eight war criminals got nomination from a major electoral alliance while another electoral alliance nominated two war criminals as its candidate," said CPB President Manjurul Ahsan Khan while inaugurating the campaign at the Central Shaheed Minar.

He said only four percent people in the country were landless during the liberation war but now the number has reached 72 percent because of corruption of the previous governments.

CPB General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim said it is time for all left-leaning forces to get united ahead of the national polls.

He also urged the people to vote for CPB candidates in the next parliamentary election.

CPB leaders Sajedul Haq Rubel and Ahsan Habib Lablu will contest the election from Dhaka-15 and 13 constituencies respectively.

Meanwhile, Workers Party of Bangladesh (WPB) President Rashed Khan Menon, who will contest the election from Dhaka-8 as a candidate of Awami League-led grand alliance, also started his election campaign yesterday placing floral wreath at the Central Shaheed Minar.

Menon pledged that he would take initiative to ease traffic congestion in his constituency if he gets elected.

Health scare

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respiratory tract infections in bird flu-hit areas. We have put the patients in isolation," senior health official Parthajoy Gogoi told AFP.

Bird flu was ruled out in all cases, the official said.

The virus has spread in the past two weeks across six Assam districts, where an estimated 300,000 people live in the affected areas.

More than 250,000 poultry have been slaughtered so far and an estimated 150,000 more have been ordered to be killed.

The government was "worried" about the infection spreading to humans, as authorities may not be able to cope, local health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

The sale of poultry and poultry products has been banned in most parts of the state.

India reported its worst outbreak of bird flu early this year in the eastern state of West Bengal.

The WHO says the deadly H5N1 strain has killed nearly 250 people, mostly in Southeast Asia, since 2003.

Fresh onslaught

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a worker showed a destination point at least two feet into the canal.

Eastern Housing authorities however said the work was going on for building a walkway on the bank.

"We will build a four feet walkway on the bank," said engineer Md Harun-ur Rashid, assistant general manager of Eastern Housing Ltd, adding that they will maintain 167 feet canal width according to the government requirements.

Earlier, the housing company had put slabs on the slope of the canal bank, but recently they took those out and is now filling up more of the canal for 'levelling' the bank, before handing over plots to the buyers.

In block A of Aftabnagar, a six-storey building is already up, but there is no walkway space left between the canal and the building. The building owner also dumped rubble into the canal behind the building.

Local residents fear, if government authorities do not take proper actions, the developer will continue to fill up more of Rampura Canal.

EU seals climate

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singled out by Steinbrueck, said the agreement was a riposte to those "who say you (should) do nothing".

"What Europe has proved unanimously today is that it is ready to act in a united way to deal with the global downturn," Brown told reporters.

"We will continue to reject the do-nothing approach and we will not stand by and let the recession take its course."

Under the stimulus plan, member countries would pump on average the equivalent of 1.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) into their economies in order to temper the impact of a global recession.

Ahead of the summit, Germany had expressed reservations about ploughing so much public money into the economy and resisted pressure to contribute more than what it judged necessary to get the German economy going again.

Sarkozy also said that there had been unanimous agreement on the need for a "historic" climate package that he said should inspire the rest of the world.

"It is quite historic what has happened here," he said.

"No continent has given itself such binding rules that we have adopted with unanimity."

The EU's climate-energy package, the "20-20-20" deal, seeks to decrease greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent by 2020, make 20 percent energy savings and bring renewable energy sources up to 20 percent of total energy use.

Sarkozy denied the targets had not been watered down during the negotiations amid calls by several states for amendments to the initial package at a time of recession.

"The objectives remain the same," said Sarkozy. "No way can the (economic) crisis be used as an excuse not to move on the environment."

European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso said the agreement showed that the 27-nation bloc was serious about tackling global warming.

World markets

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provide a multibillion lifeline to help them avoid imminent collapse.

General Motors Corp. and Chrysler LLC, which have said they could run out of cash within weeks, have few options left after the dramatic defeat in the Senate of a \$14 billion bailout for the domestic auto industry.

Its demise late Thursday prompted immediate calls from lawmakers in both parties for the Bush administration to tap into the \$700 billion Wall Street bailout to rescue the beleaguered auto industry. The bill failed after talks broke down over the refusal of the United Auto Workers union to meet Republican demands for aggressive wage reductions.

The Senate rejected the bailout 52-35 on a procedural vote well short of the 60 required after the talks fell apart.

"I dread looking at Wall Street," said Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid in anticipation of Friday's stock market reaction. "It's not going to be a pleasant sight."

Stock markets in Asia and Europe dropped sharply on Friday after getting word of the bailout's failure.

The Bush administration has repeatedly said the Wall Street bailout fund should not be used for emergency aid to the automakers because it was designed to restore stability to the financial sector. Following the vote, the White House said it was studying its options.

"Plan B is the president," said Sen. Carl Levin, D-Michigan. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said action by President George W. Bush was the "only viable option."

General Motors and Chrysler are in the most immediate danger while Ford Motor Co. has said it does not need federal help now, but could face collateral damage if one of its domestic rivals fell. With the economy in recession, the auto industry has struggled under the weight of lackluster sales and choked credit markets.

Detroit's carmakers employ nearly a quarter-million workers, and more than 730,000 others produce materials and parts for cars. If one of the automakers declared bankruptcy, some estimate as many as 3 million US jobs could be lost next year.

It's not just stock markets suffering in the wake of the failure of the Senate to pass the rescue deal. The dollar slumped overnight too, particularly against the yen.

"These are the most ambitious proposals anywhere in the world," he said.

"Europe has today passed its credibility test. We mean business when we talk about climate."

Leaders also confirmed they had adopted a deal to pave the way for Ireland to stage a second referendum on a stalled package of key reforms, the Lisbon Treaty which was rejected in June.

Irish Prime Minister Brian Cowen said he was prepared to call a new referendum as long as promised guarantees are delivered.

"I have said that I would be prepared to return to the public with a new package and seek their approval of it," Cowen told reporters.

"Today we have the clear evidence the European Union is ready to respond" to the concerns displayed by the Irish people in the June plebiscite, he added.

Under the deal, Ireland would try to hold a new referendum by November 2009 in exchange for guarantees on key issues including an assurance that it does not lose its EU commissioner.

Record

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ROs and assistant ROs today. Additional deputy commissioners have been appointed as ROs while Upazila executive officers as assistant ROs.

The ROs will scrutinise the applications on December 17, 18 and 19 to find eligible candidates.

The aspirants can file appeal against the ROs' decisions with deputy commissioners who have been given the authority to dispose of the appeals.

Earlier, the EC on November 2 announced that the upazila polls would be held on December 28. But the commission deferred the election date in the face of opposition from the two major electoral alliances led by Awami League (AL) and BNP.

AL and BNP during their tenure did not hold upazila elections.

Mumbai attacks

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than 30 offices and four hospitals belonging to Jamaat-ud-Dawa, provincial home secretary Arif Ahmed Khan said.

A spokesman for the charity in Pakistan's North West Frontier Province told AFP that authorities there had arrested 150 people linked to the organisation and closed 42 offices in recent days.

"We have arrested four Jamaat-ud-Dawa members and put their leader under house arrest," Chaudhry Imtiaz, deputy commissioner of Muzaffarabad, capital of Pakistan-administered Kashmir, told AFP.

"We have also sealed an office, a motor workshop and two schools belonging to the charity," he said.

Hundreds of people rallied outside the UN office in Pakistani Kashmir Friday, chanting anti-US and anti-Indian slogans to protest against its closure.

Speaking to AFP by telephone from his home, the leader of Jamaat-ud-Dawa in Pakistani Kashmir, Maulana Abdul Aziz Alvi, condemned the move.

"We regret it, we condemn what our government is doing under American pressure," Alvi said.

The head of the charity, Hafiz Saeed, who also founded the Islamist group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), blamed for the Mumbai attacks, was Thursday placed under house arrest and orders were given for eight other leaders to also be restricted to their homes.

The strikes on Mumbai have severely strained relations between the nuclear-armed neighbours but India,