

Taskforces on graft

FROM PAGE 1 Besides many technical problems, NCC had to narrow down many of its activities taking into consideration the government's preparations for holding the stalled ninth parliamentary election with participation of all parties by year-end, the sources point out.

"The main objective of the caretaker government was to hold the general election with participation of all parties. For this, the government had to make concession in accordance with the demands of political parties," observes an official.

The sources go on to say that when political parties began bargaining over imprisoned, accused and convicted leaders the government had no option but to be softened to ensure participation of all parties in the polls.

"These are some significant issues which had profound impact on the work of the task forces and NCC that slowed down our functions many months ago," says the official.

The sources however say NCC and the task forces played a significant role to yield quick results within a short time in the massive anti-corruption drive.

The NCC and the task forces will hand over the unfinished work to the authorities concerned as well as all responsible to take legal action regarding the matters, especially ACC and NBR, the sources say.

They add there have been discussions to keep NCC and

task forces in any form to help the anti-corruption watchdog. But ACC did not show any interest in this regard, they say.

Hanif Iqbal said, "The vacuum of expert officials in ACC was fulfilled with the support of NCC and task forces. They simultaneously helped the commission in investigation until prosecution starts."

Hanif added the dissolution of the task forces will again create a vacuum for a temporary period in the multi-dimensional approach of massive anti-corruption drive.

He also said they have proposed an amendment in the ACC Act to include a provision to allow the commission to form a temporary team of experts from the defence and other government institutions.

"We will form such teams like task forces to help our investigation and enquiry, if needed," said Hanif.

He expressed the hope that ACC would have the amendment in its Act before the next elected government takes over.

Meanwhile, ACC counsel Advocate Anisul Huq told the Daily Star, "I think it has been decided NCC will remain in a very limited way for the time being and the decision whether it will be dissolved or not will depend on the new government."

The sources say though the task forces will wind up functions tomorrow NCC office will exist till the end of this month.

Modern Dhaka

FROM PAGE 1 are voted to power, we shall free the Dhaka city from crimes and traffic congestion and also resolve the water, power and gas crises."

Thousands of party activists, supporters and common people joined the rallies carrying party's electoral symbol 'Boat' and chanted slogans in support of the grand alliance candidates.

In several constituencies, a number of BNP leaders including Pallabi Thana unit BNP president Ekhas Uddin Mollah and also leaders from other political parties formally joined the AL handover 'Boat' symbol to Hasina.

The AL president said, "We shall set up metro tunnel, elevated expressway and circular railway system in the city and also improve the communication between Dhaka and other parts of the country."

She said they will also construct schools and colleges in the capital to ease the admission problem and rehabilitate slum dwellers and those who were born here after 1971 to stranded Pakistanis.

The AL chief said they will bring down the price of essentials, make education free up to degree level and ensure employment for one from each family if voted power.

The former premier started election campaign from Karwan Bazar where she introduced grand alliance candidate and freedom fighter Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal in Dhaka-11.

At another rally in Hazaribagh Park, Hasina introduced grand alliance candidate barrister Fazle Noor Taposh in Dhaka-12.

"During the tenure of BNP-Jamaat coalition government, incidents of crime had been common place. I urge people to vote for the grand alliance to free the country from crimes," she said.

Hasina also addressed a rally in front of the Mohammadpur Town Hall and introduced grand alliance candidate and Jubo League President Jahangir Kabir Nanak in Dhaka-13.

She also introduced alliance candidates Aslamul Haque Aslam in Dhaka-14, Ilias Uddin Mollah in Dhaka-15, Kamal Ahmed Majumder in Dhaka-16 and advocate Shahara Khatun in Dhaka-18.

Termining the tenure of the AL government from 1996 to 2001 'a golden period' in the country's history, Hasina urged the people to ensure another triumph for the pro-liberation war forces casting vote for the grand alliance in the month of victory.

She also branded the last seven years as 'a dark period' in the country's history and said the people now want peace and an end to misrule.

Referring to the stranded Pakistanis in the country, Hasina said, "Those who were born here, recognise the country. We shall provide you with all necessary facilities including education and employment if we win the elections."

She also ruled out any possibility of formulating anti-Islamic law. "There will be no ban to religious activities of other communities if the grand alliance comes to power," she added.

Hasina will start her three-day election tour outside Dhaka city today.

On the first day, she will head to Tungipara and address at least six rallies at different places in Gopalganj.

On December 17, the second day of the election tour, she will address a rally on the Kotilpara College ground and stay in her own constituency and exchange views with the people.

The former premier will also attend a rally in Bagerhat on the last day of her three-day polls campaign outside the capital.

Indian minister

FROM PAGE 16 up a discussion on the blasts in the northeast in October.

A debate on the issue saw several members demanding that Bangladesh be issued an ultimatum like Pakistan.

Chidambaram said the issues regarding insurgency in the northeast were "quite grave."

He said tardy progress of border fencing, issuance of national identity cards and "illegal immigration from Bangladesh" are areas of concern in northeast India.

He noted that border fencing had resulted in rich dividends in Punjab at the height of militancy there in the 1980s.

Chidambaram said a comprehensive review was being undertaken of the security situation in the northeast and the government is concerned over "Bangladesh being continuously used as a safe haven for insurgents."

Confusion continues

FROM PAGE 1 In the last parliamentary election, Dhaka City Corporation was split into eight constituencies. But this time the number has risen to 15 after the re-delimitation.

The constituencies in Dhaka city now range from Dhaka-4 to Dhaka-18. They stretched between Dhaka-4 and Dhaka-11 in the eighth parliamentary election in 2001.

Hazi Bulbul, a businessman and resident of Chawk Bazar area in the old part of the city, told The Daily Star that he like many he too did not know exactly which his constituency was.

"The last time I was in Dhaka-8 made up of Lalbagh and Hazaribagh areas. But this year I'm a voter in Dhaka-7, which consists of Lalbagh and Kotwali thanas," said Bulbul.

Motijheel, Khilgaon and Sabujbagh thanas excluding a few unions were part of Dhaka-6 in the last election. But this year Motijheel has been roped to Shahbagh to form Dhaka-8.

Saifur Rahman Dhali, a first time voter in Motijheel area, told the Daily Star that he was not sure about his constituency and candidates until the campaign began last week.

"I learned that Rashed Khan Menon is on the grand alliance ticket only when he came to canvass here the other day. Before, I thought Saber Hossain Chowdhury was the candidate of Awami League," Saifur said candidates'

posters have helped remove his confusion over the constituency he is in.

Hazaribagh, which was in Dhaka-8 along with Lalbagh, has been added to Dhaka-12. Lalbagh in turn has been placed under Dhaka-7.

Mirpur, Pallabi and Kafrul and parts of Uttara Model Town and Harirampur union were in Dhaka-11 in 2001. In the recent delimitation, as many as three seats have been carved out of the areas.

Shahriar Morshed, a resident of Mohammadpur, said he still does not know which his constituency is. He was under Dhaka-9 in the last election. Along with Adabar and parts of Dhanmondi and Hazaribagh, Mohammadpur is now a part of Dhaka-13.

M Badiuzzaman, a voter in Dhaka-8, said they used to see Mirza Abbas and Saber Hossain Chowdhury competing for their constituency. But since the two are not around this time, he does not know who the candidates here are.

Talking to The Daily Star, DCC Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka said that some voters are indeed confused about the constituencies due to re-demarcation.

"Hopefully, the confusion will be over once the electioneering is in full swing."

Khoka, also the four-party candidate for Dhaka-6, observed that the candidates too have a duty to inform the voters about their constituencies.

AL tough on graft

FROM PAGE 1 Myanmar, and strengthening of regional and sub-regional cooperation including relations with the member countries of Saarc, Bimstec, and D-8.

It categorically proposes formation of a South Asian Task Force for meeting the challenges of terrorism and militancy.

This is for the second time in its manifesto the AL is saying that laws repugnant to Quran and Sunnah shall not be promulgated. It is apparently aimed at dealing with negative campaigns by its rivals that in the name of secularism, the party promotes 'anti-Islamic ideals'.

However it also undermines the party's secularist politics as some people might as well interpret a secular law as 'repugnant to Quran and Sunnah', thereby making way for the religion's interference with politics.

The manifesto announces in the party's policy statement that terrorism, discriminatory treatment, and human rights violations against religious and ethnic minorities and the indigenous people must come to a permanent end.

In addition, it promises formation of a land commission. All laws and other arrangements discriminatory to ethnic minorities and the indigenous people will be repealed, it vows. Special privileges will be made available for the minority groups in educational institutions and in employment as well.

The 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord will be fully implemented.

It takes into cognisance that between October 2001 and 2006, there were many reports of attacks, arsons, murders, rapes and encroachment on lands of minority communities by gangsters who were sheltered by the four-party alliance government.

Achieving these goals will once again need widespread support from within the administration and the

defence forces. Mere political will will not be enough.

The manifesto also promises trials of war criminals, stopping of extra-judicial killings by law enforcers, strengthening the Human Rights Commission, and appointing an ombudsman.

While it promises 'genuine independence and impartiality of the judiciary' if voted to power one should be reminded of the fact that the process of the separation started in 1999, when the AL was in power.

For two years till 2001, the AL deferred thrice the deadline for the separation of the judiciary from the executive branch of the government. However the subsequent BNP government deferred the deadline 19 more times throughout its five-year tenure.

And without explaining how, the AL manifesto seeks to 'restore and improve' the image and prestige of Bangladesh in the international arena.

Zafar, Alamgir

FROM PAGE 16 Ahmed of Jatiya Party, Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir of Awami League and Abdul Hannan and Abdus Sobhan of BNP.

Two separate division benches of the HC passed the orders and rejected the writ petitions filed by the candidates challenging the legality of the EC's decisions.

However, the Chamber Judge of the Appellate Division Justice Md Joydul Abedin overturned an HC order that had earlier rejected the petition filed by BNP candidate Shahidul Alam Talukder.

Upon an appeal filed by Shahidul against the HC order, the Chamber Judge also asked the EC to accept his nomination paper.

Earlier, the EC had cancelled the nomination papers of Kazi Zafar Ahmed (Comilla-11), Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir (Chandpur-4), Abdul Hannan (Chandpur-4) and Abdus Sobhan (Barisal-1) on different grounds, including their conviction in criminal cases and charges of defaulting on loans.

The aspirant candidates then filed separate writ petitions with the HC challenging the legality of the EC's decisions.

The HC bench comprised of Justice Md Imman Ali and Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam rejected the petitions of Kazi Zafar Ahmed and Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir. The same bench also sent back a similar petition filed by JP candidate Fakir Ashraf (Netrokona-3).

Fakir Ashraf told reporters on the court premises that he would submit his petition before another bench of the HC tomorrow.

Another bench of Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain and Justice Quamrul Islam Siddiqui rejected the petitions filed by Abdul Hannan and Abdus Sobhan.

Advocate TH Khan, barrister Rakanuddin Mahmud, Dr M Zahir, advocate Habibul Islam Bhuiyan and barrister Abdur Razzak appeared for the petitioners while advocate Mahmudul Islam stood for the EC.

Magnetic chip

FROM PAGE 16 Overseas Employment Policy (BOEP) was organised by WARBE Development Foundation.

Speakers at the event said that though the BOEP was prepared in 2006, it is yet to be implemented in the country. Migration is still regulated under the Emigration Ordinance of 1982 that leaves workers much unprotected, they said.

They stressed the need for a plan of action for implementation of BOEP and more awareness regarding migration process.

"The government has recently adopted a nine-point strategy to ensure safe migration that include exploration of new markets for overseas employment," BMET director Dr Muhammad Nurul Islam said.

The strategies include special focus on export of female workers. Also, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed with six countries to protect workers' rights.

Sheepa Hafiza of BRAC said that Bangladesh should consider GFMD as a programme and that policy orientations should reach upazila and district level people.

Rina Roy, director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, stressed the need for networking among migrant workers in different countries. She also emphasised the need to strengthen coordination between the expatriate welfare ministry and foreign affairs ministry and to bring the migrant workers' issues under the trade union movement.

Syed Saiful Haque of WARBE chaired the dialogue where representatives from different organisations working on migration issues were also present.

SC to settle

FROM PAGE 16 be imprisoned for two to seven years, and also fined for committing electoral offences on the polling day.

Despite this, the EC on November 27 decided to empower executive magistrates to hold trial of electoral offences. And it sent a letter to the establishment ministry asking it to secure permission from the SC for implementing its (EC's) decision, sources in the EC Secretariat said.

In its letter, the EC also mentioned the limitations of the executive magistrates to hold summary trial of electoral offences.

"We asked the establishment ministry to take necessary measures to ensure that mobile courts can exercise the authority of judicial magistrates," Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hossain told reporters yesterday at his office.

As per the Mobile Court Ordinance 2007, executive magistrates have authority only to fine individuals for offences to ensure law and order.

On December 7, the home ministry issued a circular on election security saying the divisional commissioners and district magistrates will take necessary steps to engage executive magistrates when the establishment ministry gets permission from the SC regarding their exercise of the authority of judicial magistrates.

Home ministry officials said they had issued the circular in consultation with the EC.

Contacted, SC lawyer Abdul Mannan Khan said executive magistrates cannot be given the authority of judicial magistrates unless the relevant law is amended.

"Even if the law is amended for doing this, it will run counter to the spirit of separation of the judiciary," he added.

Earlier on November 16, the law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry amended the mobile court ordinance's schedule empowering executive magistrates, who are also government officials, to hold trial of electoral offences. It did so ignoring the jurisdiction of judicial magistrates to do the job.

The law ministry inserted the title of RPO in the mobile court ordinance through this amendment empowering executive magistrates to try electoral offences.

Legal experts termed the amendment illegal and asked the ministry to cancel it.

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.

The offences include interfering or attempting to interfere when a voter records his vote, intentionally defacing or destroying a ballot paper, creating obstacles to conducting election or counting of votes, resorting to an act of violence or unruly behaviour, giving threats or intimidating voters or people involved in election activities or duties.

Saddam's lawyer

FROM PAGE 16 "So far around 200 Iraqi and other lawyers, including Americans, have expressed willingness to defend the journalist for free," the Amman-based Khalil al-Dulaimi told AFP.

"I took the decision on Sunday night to defend the man after the incident. I am currently contacting Arab bar associations to form a defence committee."

An Iraqi television station on Monday demanded the immediate release of one of its journalists who caused a furore when he hurled shoes at visiting Bush.

Zaidi jumped up as Bush was holding a press conference with Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki on Sunday, shouted "It is the farewell kiss, you dog," and threw two shoes at the US leader.

Bush ducked and the first shoe hit the American and Iraqi flags behind the two leaders, while the second was off target.

Zaidi, a reporter with the Al-Baghdadia channel, which broadcasts from Cairo, was immediately wrestled to the ground by security guards and fringed by loud cheers from the troops.

"Al-Baghdadia television demands that the Iraqi authorities immediately release their stringer Muntadhar al-Zaidi, in line with the democracy and freedom of expression that the American authorities promised the Iraqi people," it said in a statement.

In Cairo, Muzhir al-Khafaji, programming director for the television channel, described Zaidi as a "proud Arab and an

open-minded man."

"We fear for his safety," he added.

Meanwhile President Bush wrapped up a whirlwind trip to two war zones yesterday that in many ways was a victory lap without a clear victory.

A signature event occurred when an Iraqi reporter hurled two shoes at Bush, declaring, "This is from the widows, the orphans and those who were killed in Iraq."

The president visited the Iraqi capital just 37 days before he hands the war off to his successor, Barack Obama, who has pledged to end it. The president wanted to highlight a drop in violence and to celebrate a recent US-Iraq security agreement, which calls for US troops to withdraw from Iraq by the end of 2011.

"The war is not over," Bush said, but "it is decisively on its way to being won."

Bush then travelled to Afghanistan where he spoke to US soldiers and Marines at a hangar on the tarmac at Bagram Air Base. The rally for over a thousand military personnel took place in the dark, cold pre-dawn hours. Bush was greeted by loud cheers from the troops.

"Afghanistan is a dramatically different country than it was eight years ago," he said. "We are making hopeful gains."

But the president's message on progress in the region was having trouble competing with the videotaped image of the angry Iraqi who hurled his shoes at Bush in a near-miss, shouting in Arabic, "This is your farewell kiss, you dog!"

Victory Day today

FROM PAGE 1 Bangladeshi freedom fighters and Indian forces at Suhrawardy Udyan in Dhaka this day with 93,000 soldiers following a miserable defeat in the war that broke out in March.

President Iajuddin Ahmed and the leaders of the two major political parties in separate messages greeted the nation on the occasion.

"On this auspicious day of victory, let it be our pledge that we should put our best endeavour to expedite the overall development as well as democratic advancement of the country," said the president.

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina urged the people to be inspired with the spirit of the liberation war again to fight out the 'dark forces'.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in her message said it is crucial for the nation to be united to protect the country's independence, sovereignty, democracy and also the fundamental and human rights.

Various socio-political organisations have taken up reporters yesterday at his office.

Special prayers will be offered at mosques, temples, churches and other religious institutions seeking divine blessings for peace and progress of the country.

State-run Bangladesh Television and Bangladesh Betar along with private TV channels and radio stations will broadcast special programmes while the newspapers will bring out special

supplements on the occasion.

The day will be heralded by a 31-gun salute at dawn.

Today is a public holiday. The national flag will be hoisted atop all government, semi-government and other important establishments.

Around 7,000 law enforcers including members of police and Rab will remain vigilant at various places in the capital and the National Memorial at Savar to ensure that the Victory Day programmes are held peacefully.

Jatiya Jukta

FROM PAGE 16 yesterday. It was a 39-point election manifesto.

Leaders of Jukta Front, a five-party alliance—Bikalpadhara Bangladesh, Gono Forum, Bangladesh Kalyan (BKP), Progressive Democratic Party (PDP) and Forward Party—also pledged to try war criminals if they win the December 29 elections and form government.

In the manifesto, leaders of Jukta Front highlighted seven points including restoration of law and order, strengthening parliamentary democracy and taking measures to contain price hike of essentials.

"We will never call hartal and boycott parliament. We will try to ban hartal by enacting new law to reduce people's sufferings," said Bikalpadhara chief AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury.

Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain said his alliance wants to play a more active role in parliament.

Among others, PDP President Ferdous Ahmed Qureshi, BKP Chairman Major General (retd) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim and Bikalpadhara Secretary General Major (retd) Abdul Mannan addressed the programme.

Meanwhile, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) President Hasanul Huq Inu also announced the party's election manifesto titled "Effort to Change" with 34 pledges including bringing down prices of essentials.

The JSD promised to curb corruption, eradicate poverty, resist militancy, strengthen the local government, increase power generation, hold trial of war criminals and create jobs aimed at building a prosperous Bangladesh free from corruption and injustice.

Scores of JSD leaders and activists, civil society members and journalists were present during the announcement at the JSD office in the capital.

He said trial of war criminals still remains an unsettled issue and the fundamentalists and war criminals are being rehabilitated politically and socially cashing in on it.

He said if they come to power, the JSD would root out militancy in the country strengthening regional and international cooperation and take initiative to form a 'national government' that will put emphasis on checking the price hike of essentials by storing food grains from local and international markets.

Inu said his party will take initiative to amend article 70 of the constitution and form a special tribunal to try war criminals under the international law of 1973.

JSD will hold upazila election as per the present schedule declared by the Election Commission (EC) and insist on the EC's making arrangements for the Zilla Parishad polls as early as possible.

Another war

FROM PAGE 1 alleged war criminals contesting the national polls.

Prior to the celebration of Victory Day today, the sector commanders and other Liberation War forces have already identified 14 candidates as war criminals in the BNP-Jamaat alliance.

The banned parties including Jamaat were given the green light to do politics during the rule of late president Ziaur Rahman after the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975.

After victory on December 16, 1971 the first issue of newspapers of the new nation carried the government's decision to ban five communal parties on December 18.

The Morning News run the report reading, "The government of the peoples' republic of Bangla Desh has banned four communal parties with immediate effect. These four political parties are Muslim League and all its factions, Pakistan Democratic Party, Nezam-e-Islam and Jamat-e-Islami. In addition to these the government has also banned the Pakistan People's Party. The announcement was made by the Bangla Desh government in a radio broadcast."

The Liberation War forces are waging the fight against Jamaat and war criminals as the long-standing demand to restrict participation of war criminals in the polls has failed.

A ray of hope, however, shimmers in the dark as the Election Commission for the first time decided to debar war criminals from polls and included a provision in the Representation of People (Amendment) Ordinance, 2008.

The provision states: "A person shall be disqualified for election as or for being, a member, if he has been convicted as war criminal by any national or international court or tribunal."

But the move to debar war criminals from polls falls flat on its face as the government has not initiated a move to officially identify them.

Former army chief Lt Gen (retd) M Harun-ur-Rashid told The Daily Star: "The government has neither initiated any move to identify war criminals nor even informed the Election Commission about them though the government has many old records and documents in this regard."

"The Liberation War ministry could have done the job on behalf of the government," added Harun, also coordinator of the Sector Commanders' Forum, which would launch a campaign soon in the constituencies of candidates belonging to anti-liberation forces.

Besides conducting door-to-door campaign against war criminals, they will also publish posters and leaflets mak-

ing voters aware why these elements should not be elected.

The leaflets and posters will feature credentials and roles of the respective war criminal candidates during the Liberation War.

Committees to resist these elements will also be formed in those constituencies in addition to carrying out regular rallies and processions to be attended by the sector commanders and freedom fighters.

Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee, a forum for secular Bangladesh and trial of war criminals, will carry out simultaneous campaigns.

Acting president of the forum Shahriar Kabir told The Daily Star: "We ran such campaigns ahead of polls in 1996 and 2001 with the slogan 'We want Razakar-free parliament'. We also distributed posters, leaflets and pamphlets containing credentials of war criminals in their respective constituencies during those campaigns."

Meanwhile, the Qur'an Sunnah Research Institute, Jhikargachha, Jessore, and Sachetan Nagorik Samaj have already published posters and leaflets against Jamaat this time.

The publication contains some statements of Jamaat founder Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi that appear contradictory to Islam.

"Had we got expected response from the political parties regarding our appeal of debarring war criminals from polls, the fight need not be launched," Gen Harun said.

When the Sector Commanders' Forum moved to hold a dialogue with political parties with the appeal, BNP did not respond. The party rather formed an alliance with anti-liberation force Jamaat.

Even Jamaat was not supposed to get registration with EC but allowed the registration to bring all parties in polls.

Just six days ahead of victory in 1971, incumbent Jamaat Secretary General Ali Hassan Mohammad Mojaheed, who was then president of its student wing, Islamist Chhatra Shanga, was active to foil the Liberation War.

Mojaheed addressed a rally organised by Al Badr on December 10.

The Daily Azad covered the rally and reported on December 11: "President of East Pakistan Islami Chhatra Shanga Al Mujaheed urged people to deal a deathblow to expansionism of Hindustan. He said, 'We cannot accept existence of Hindustan. It has become an indispensable task to eliminate Hindustan for the sake of ensuring security to Pakistan'."