

KOKO'S MONEY ACC has no proof: BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday said the ACC's "ill motivated" and "biased" revelation about Arafat Rahman Koko's financial transactions in Singapore is aimed at diverting people's favour for the party and the four-party alliance.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) revealed the information about the youngest son of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia "without any evidence and enquiry", alleged BNP Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan at a press conference at Khaleda's Gulshan residence.

"People want to know about the motive of the ACC press conference," he said, further alleging that it was also aimed at creating an opportunity for

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SC CLEARANCE TO CANDIDATES EC to destroy 24 lakh ballot papers

Symbols reallocated in 18 seats

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The Election Commission (EC) will destroy around 24 lakh ballot papers printed for eight constituencies where it has let new contenders be in the December 29 parliamentary polls on court orders.

The commission has already ordered the press for fresh ballot papers for the seats--Comilla-10 and -11, Satkhira-2 and -3, Chittagong-3, Dinajpur-6, Netrakona-4 and Mymensingh-4, said sources in the EC Secretariat.

Besides, the printing of ballot papers for 10 more constituencies has been stopped to include new entrants.

Meanwhile, returning officers (ROs) yesterday allocated electoral symbols to 18 of the 21 candidates who have got back in race thanks to Supreme Court (SC) rulings.

The EC is likely to send the remaining three names to ROs for allocation of symbols today, said EC sources.

To accommodate the latest entries from BNP, Awami League (AL) and Jatiya Party (JP), the ROs had to cancel their previous allocations of the party symbols.

They however did not scrap the names of those who have lost the symbols, and left the issue to be settled by the EC.

EC Secretariat officials said that now if the candidates who have been stripped of the symbols go to courts, it would mean more

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Both alliances face trouble with cleared candidates

RASHIDUL HASAN

BNP and Awami League (AL)-led electoral alliances are again on the horns of a new dilemma as several of their past nominees, who had been rejected as parliamentary candidates by the Election Commission, were allowed to contest by the Supreme Court (SC) over the last few days.

The Election Commission (EC) so far allowed 21 previously rejected candidates to contest in the upcoming parliamentary race on orders from the SC.

Returning officers (RO), who had already completed on December 12 the allotment of electoral symbols to earlier confirmed candidates, once

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Rebels worry grand alliance in 41 seats

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

The Awami League-led grand alliance is threatened with losing a lot of votes in at least 41 seats to the rebel candidates of alliance components AL and Jatiya Party (JP) in the December 29 parliamentary elections.

AL candidates have not yet withdrawn their candidature in at least 14 seats that have been kept for JP while rebel AL candidates have become a threat to alliance candidates from the AL itself in at least 20 seats.

In three constituencies JP leaders are contesting against alliance candidates from their own party while two AL leaders are contesting against the alliance candidates independently in two seats.

In Munshiganj-3 constituency, JP leader Mujibur Rahman is contesting the polls against alliance candidate Idris Ali of AL.

The grand alliance has kept three constituencies where both AL and JP candidates are contesting the polls as rivals.

Talking to The Daily Star last night, JP

Chairman HM Ershad blamed the AL for the situation. "Our opponents might get its benefit," he said in a resenting tone.

When contacted, AL election conducting committee co-chairman HT Imam said they would resolve the problem by today.

According to the seat sharing deal within the grand alliance, AL leaders were nominated for 242 seats and JP leaders for 49 seats including the three open seats, Workers Party leaders for three constituencies, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) for four seats and Gonotontri Party and Zaker Party each from one seat.

The three seats where the AL and JP are fighting as rivals are Nilphamari-4 with Shawkat Chowdhury of JP and Col (ret'd) Maruf Saqlain of AL, Khulna-3 with Abdul Gaffar Biswas of JP and Munnujan Sufian of AL, and Sylhet-3 with Atiqur Rahman of JP and Mahmud us Samad Chowdhury of AL.

AL CANDIDATES AGAINST ALLIANCE CANDIDATES FROM JP
The 15 seats where both AL and JP candidates

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Vote down corrupt, 'militants' patrons

HASINA URGES VOTERS

HASAN JAHID TUSHER, from Fariapur

Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged voters not to vote for the corrupt people, black money holders and patrons of terrorists and militants in the next parliamentary election.

"Soon after assuming power, the BNP-Jamaat coalition government looted crores of taka and siphoned off the money abroad which are now being revealed one after another," said the AL chief pointing finger to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's son Arafat Rahman Koko who, according to the Anti-corruption Commission, has foreign currencies worth around Tk 11.43 crore deposited in a Singapore bank.

Hasina addressed several election rallies in the country's southwestern part before returning to the capital ending her four-day election campaign there.

Urging people to vote for honest candidates in the polls, the AL chief said now it is time to take a firm stance against corruption and terrorism.

She also pledged to protect the country from terrorism and

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PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ
The runway at Zia International Airport is kept lit at daytime yesterday for airliners to land and take off as dense fog choked the capital.

Khaleda warns of 'polls engineering'

Alleges media control

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday warned that any sort of 'election engineering' in the upcoming parliamentary polls will have dire consequences for the country.

Expressing doubts about neutrality of the Election Commission (EC) Khaleda said it could not act responsibly many times in the past and this has created suspicion in public mind that the election might be 'engineered'.

She was addressing an election rally in support of BNP-led four-party alliance nominee for Dhaka-3 constituency Goyeshwar Chandra Roy at Chankutiya Girls' School playground at Keraniganj across the Buriganga in the evening.

The BNP chief alleged that news reports on election campaign of four-party combine are being 'controlled' from somewhere. So, these reports are not coming in the media properly.

This has raised questions as to whether the state of emergency has been withdrawn or not, Khaleda said.

Earlier, at another rally at Kholamora near the capital to

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'Independent' judicial secretariat has to depend on ministry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Judicial Service Secretariat Ordinance 2008 for establishing an independent judicial secretariat triggered frustration among judicial officials as the ordinance keeps the law ministry's 'control' over the new secretariat.

The council of advisers to the caretaker government on Sunday gave the final approval to the ordinance, which is now waiting to be promulgated by the president, sources said.

According to the ordinance, the judicial service secretariat headed by the chief justice must go through the law ministry to contact the president and the prime minister regarding any matter related to the functioning of the secretariat.

It means the chief justice will not be allowed to communicate directly with the president or the prime minister regarding the secretariat's functioning.

Legal experts said the new ordinance is against the spirit of the judiciary's separation from the executive branch of government, with some of its provisions running counter to relevant articles in the country's constitution.

Article 116 of the constitution says the control including the power of posting, promotion and granting of leaves, of disciplining persons employed in the judicial service and the magistrates exercising judicial functions shall be vested in the president and shall be exercised by him in consultation with the Supreme Court.

Article 109 says the High Court shall have superintendence and control over all courts and tribunals subordinate to it.

The legal experts said the new ordinance puts the law ministry in the way of the High

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UPAZILA POLLS SCRUTINY ENDS 8,896 candidates declared eligible

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The candidature of 8,896 aspirants for contesting the January 22 Upazila Parishad elections was cleared yesterday, the last day of three-day scrutiny of nomination papers.

A total of 9,976 aspirants submitted nominations papers to returning officers (ROs) and assistant ROs in 481 upazilas across the country.

Of the valid candidates, 3,699 are vying for chairmanship while 3,173 for vice chairmanship (general) and 2,024 for the same position reserved for female candidates.

The nomination papers of 1,080 aspirants -- 523 for chairmanship, 370 for vice chairmanship (general) and 187 for the same position reserved for female candidates -- were declared invalid by returning officers.

Additional deputy commissioners were appointed ROs while upazila nirbahi officers worked as assistant ROs.

The aspirants whose nominations have been cancelled will be able to file appeal on December 20 and 21 with Deputy Commissioners (DCs) who have been given the appellate authority.

The hearing of the appeals will be held on December 22 and 23. The last date for withdrawal of candidature is December 31.

Most of the aspirants are mid-level leaders of various political parties. If they get elected, they will have to quit party posts.

Malicious campaign in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Supporters 4-party alliance candidate in Chittagong-10 during their campaign yesterday allegedly sold booklets containing provocative statements using religious sentiment against Awami League (AL) chief Sheikh Hasina and party policies.

The supporters, mostly activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir, were seen selling two booklets titled "Disgraceful picture of Awami misrule" published by Touhid Publications, Chittagong, and "Violent politics of Sheikh Hasina to foil 2007 election" written by former Jamaat-e-Islami ameer Golam Azam.

They were selling those at Ghosaildanga area during a campaign rally of the AL

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2 BNP men killed as truck ploughs into procession

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

At least two BNP men were killed and eight others injured as a speeding truck ploughed through an electoral procession at Mominpur on Dhaka-Bogra Highway in Sherpur upazila of the district yesterday evening.

The deceased are identified as Abdul Majid, 44, and Mohammad Milon, 30, local leaders of Garidaha union unit of BNP.

Witnesses said the truck hit the crowd of BNP activists at about 6:45pm and fled the scene, killing two on the spot and injuring eight others.

Injured activists Shafiqul Islam and Mizan were rushed to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in a critical condition while rest of them were taken to Sherpur Upazila Health Complex.

Angry BNP men damaged several vehicles and put up a barricade on the highway, disrupting traffic movement for about half an hour.

Sherpur police said they could not trace the killer truck as it fled from the spot immediately after the accident.

Deployment of troops from today

UNB, Dhaka

Army will be deployed across the country as strike force today to help ensure peaceful parliamentary elections on December 29.

They will be posted in aid of the civil administration to maintain law and order in accordance with the decision of the Election Commission.

The troops are poised to take up the assignment after 72 hours of withdrawal of the emergency.

The emergency was lifted on December 17 following an order from President Iajuddin Ahmed.

Major parties earlier made persistent demand for lifting the state of emergency to create congenial atmosphere for general election.

Nizami shares assets with wife, Mojahid just doesn't

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

Ameer of Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami Motiur Rahman Nizami shares ownership of money and assets with his wife but his deputy Jamaat Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojahid has next to nothing in his life partner's name.

Mojahid earns around Tk 4.60 lakh annually while Nizami earns around Tk 1.80 lakh, according to the two top-ranking Jamaat leaders' wealth statements submitted to the Election Commission (EC).

Mojahid did not even give ownership of gold and other ornaments to his wife. However, he mentioned in his statement that those are actually his wife's.

He mentioned in the category of movable properties that he, his wife and sons share Tk 1.51 lakh he kept in different banks and financial institutions.

He has four flats. "Process is underway to transfer the ownership of three flats to my three sons and I will share the other one with my only daughter," he said in his disclosure of immovable assets. His wife does not own any flats.

As per the affidavit attached to his nomination paper, he has Tk 84,100 in cash and shares of two companies worth over Tk 5

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PHOTO: STAR
An oversupply of vegetables has sent their prices slumping at Karwan Bazar kitchen market in the capital. The photo was taken yesterday.

Vegetable prices down

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prices of potato and other vegetables dropped further in city markets yesterday because of huge supply while tonnes of old potatoes remained unsold.

The price of each 80-kilogram sack of old potatoes was Tk 450, which was Tk 1,300 before the Eid-ul-Azha. Tonnes of old potatoes also remained unsold yesterday.

Sheikh Jilil, a wholesale potato trader at Karwan Bazar, said that a sack of 80-Kg potato was available between Tk 200 and Tk 350 at the cold storages in Munshiganj and if not sold it would be rotten.

Karwan Bazar wholesale market sources said huge quantity of new potatoes are also coming to the city markets from Dinajpur and

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