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# Ershad leaves his fate to Hasina

JP accepts Zillur's nomination for presidency, Hasina visits him with flower, sweets; cabinet to be formed tomorrow

HASAN JAHD TUSHER

The Awami League-led alliance is likely to form the new cabinet tomorrow with representatives of its major components as the AL and key ally Jatiya Party (JP) overcame the differences of opinion on choosing the next president of the country.

The differences were resolved with the JP's acceptance of the AL parliamentary party's decision to nominate its leader Zillur Rahman as the next president.

The JP high command had been saying since the parliamentary elections that they would reconsider joining the cabinet if Chairman HM Ershad is not made the president.

But after the first sitting of the AL parliamentary party following the oath-taking ceremony on Saturday, party chief Sheikh Hasina told the press that Zillur Rahman is their nominee for presidency.

In the wake of the complexities, Ershad sent

## Secretariat ready for changeover

CA holds farewell meeting; thanks people, govt staff

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

Advisers to the caretaker government are wrapping up their pending official tasks as the country's administrative hub, Bangladesh Secretariat, prepares to receive new ministers after over two year's wait.

Bureaucrats yesterday bade farewell to a number of advisers who took charges of different ministries on January 12 last year and are expected to end their tenure with the swearing in of the newly-elected cabinet members tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed and his cabinet colleagues--10 advisers and five special assistants--had their final cabinet meeting yesterday to review their decisions and activities in the last two years. They thanked

# AL gets better power sector to build on

1,164 MW new power generated during caretaker govt

SHARIER KHAN

When Fakhruddin Ahmed-led caretaker government took over, the power sector was in a deep mess as the official demand hovered around 4,000 MW (unofficially around 5,000 MW) against Power Development Board's supply of only 2,693 MW on average in February 2007.

The situation only reflects that the previous BNP-led four-party alliance government did nothing for the sector.

In the last two years, the official demand increased to 4,400 MW (unofficial 5,200 MW to 5,500 MW). But when the caretaker administration hands over power, the scenario has changed a lot as the average power supply in December was 3,646 MW.

This was possible because the caretaker government implemented some small power schemes and a couple of public sector power projects. Besides, it also undertook a major policy intervention where policymakers and the power ministry encouraged different power-related entities including PDB, Rural Electrification Board (REB) or the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh to make their own decisions.

Consequently, the new Awami League government is expected to have a comparatively better year for the power sector to start with. There will be load shedding, but that would not be as horrible as the level the four-party left the country with.

The PDB can now generate around 3,800 MW power and is able to generate another 600 MW if Petrobangla increases gas supply to different plants in Ashuganj-Ghorashal and Chittagong. Moreover, 742 MW is likely to be added to the national grid as some projects are under implementation by June.

With such development, the AL government will have some breathing space to implement some large power projects, namely the Bibiyana 450 MW, Sirajganj 450 MW and Meghnaghat-2 & 3 of 450 MW projects.

"However, if the Awami League government fails to pursue these power projects properly, Bangladesh will face tremendous power crisis from 2011," says a top official at the ministry.

The caretaker government has already finished different power projects totalling 422 MW capacity. By June, 16 small and medium and one large-sized power plants would add another 742 MW power to the national grid.

The already completed plants include small power projects of 92 MW, a 20 MW 15-year rental power project, 140 MW capacity of three-year rental power project, and two public sector plants totalling 170 MW power (Fenchuganj 100 MW and RPCL 70 MW).

Of these, the four-party government initiated the two public sector projects.

In addition, the caretaker government also increased 500 MW power by rehabilitating and maintaining old plants. But the benefit of this has been offset by gas supply shortfall. As most power plants run on gas, the crisis is costing generation of at least 600 MW power now.

## Natore voters pick taxpayer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Voters of Natore-1 constituency in the December 29 polls opted for a taxpayer turning their back on veteran BNP politician and "farmer" Fazlur Rahman Patal, who does not pay any income tax.

The voters went in favour of businessman Abu Talha of Jatiya Party whose total wealth is around Tk 3.04 crore and who paid income tax of around Tk 5.20 lakh in this tax year.

Fazlur, former state minister for youth and sports who claims to be a farmer by profession, owns a Lexus and a Nissan SUV, a Mazda car and a building in Dhaka worth Tk 1.54 crore. He also claims to earn Tk 2.15 lakh a year, for which he does not have to pay any income tax. His total wealth is Tk 1.98 crore, according to his



# Israeli troops invade Gaza, kill 45

9 Jewish soldiers also killed; UN fails to agree on truce call; toll crosses 500

AGENCIES, Gaza City

Tens of thousands of Israeli troops backed by tanks battled Hamas fighters in Gaza fields and roads yesterday as the Palestinian death toll from the offensive to end militant rocket attacks passed 500, including 87 children.

Israeli forces surrounded the enclave's main city and families fled other battlefield towns in packed trucks and cars to escape the biggest Israeli military operation since its 2006 war in Lebanon.

More than 45 Palestinians were killed by tank shells or missiles fired from warplanes since the ground offensive was launched on Saturday night, Gaza medics said.

Israeli troops pushed deep into Gaza yesterday with thousands of soldiers and scores of tanks battling Hamas fighters and moving toward the capital on a mission to end militant rocket attacks.

International efforts to halt the conflict floundered. The UN Security Council failed even to agree the wording of a statement on the conflict, with the United States giving strong backing to Israel while other powers criticised the offensive.

The Security Council late Saturday failed to agree on a statement calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip after the United States had argued a return to the situation that existed before Israel's ground invasion was unacceptable.

After nearly four hours of closed-door consultations, members of the council emerged without reaching agreement that would have asked Israel and Hamas to end eight-day hostilities.

## ROs asked to sue persons showing used ballot papers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) yesterday decided to direct recent parliamentary election's returning officers (ROs), who are also deputy commissioners, to take legal actions against any person exhibiting ballot papers used in the poll.

The decision came as a part of the commission's effort to thwart some quarter's noticeable attempts to give rise to controversies regarding the recent election.

EC Secretariat officials said they will send letters to all ROs in a day or two directing them to file criminal cases through

# BNP, allies delay oath schedule

Sit Wednesday for decision; Sircar plays his last hurrah, administers oath to 5

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The lawmakers-elect of BNP-led four-party alliance skipped the oath-taking scheduled for them yesterday.

This denied Jamiruddin Sircar, who was elected speaker from BNP in the immediate past parliament, the opportunity to administer oath to his party and alliance colleagues.

Now the chief election commissioner (CEC) will officiate at the oath-taking if the MPs-elect of four-party alliance decide to be sworn in by the next three days.

According to the constitution article concerning oaths of office, the outgoing speaker shall administer oath to lawmakers-elect in the first three days after publication of election results in the gazette. The CEC shall do the job for the next three days.

Meanwhile, Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar administered oath to five lawmakers yesterday afternoon.

Of the five, Fazlul Azim, Abdul Baten and Kabirul Haq were elected from Noakhali-6, Tangail-6 and Narail-1 constituencies as independent candidates, Col (retd) Oli Ahmed from Chittagong-13 on Liberal Democratic Party ticket and Ranjit Kumar Roy from Jessore-4 on AL ticket.

BNP and its allies have yet to decide when their lawmakers-elect will take oath. BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia might meet her party lawmakers-elect Wednesday at her Gulshan

## Post-election violence continues

2 killed, 12 hurt

STAR REPORT

The mother of BNP leader Nityalal Das succumbed to her injuries yesterday after she was wounded in a post-polls attack allegedly by local Awami League (AL) cadres at Kuliarchar in Kishoreganj on December 30.

Criminals stabbed a shrimp-enclosure owner to death and injured three others hurling a bomb at Sahapara under Doulatpur upazila in Khulna last night.

At least 12 people were injured in separate clashes in



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Government building Tanmoy near Bailey Road is being prepared for Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed as this will be his residence from today as the new cabinet takes oath tomorrow.



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