

Campaign stops

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and order. Already fanned out across the country, the troops will work as a striking force with the authority to arrest troublemakers.

They will be deployed till January 24 to ward off post-polls violence.

The last time people voted in upazila elections was in 1990.

The Election Commission (EC) Secretariat has already completed its preparation for the polls that follow a long wrangle between the commission and political parties over timing of the elections.

As many as 7,32,58,950 people are entitled to cast votes to choose 480 chairpersons, and the same number of general vice-chair and women vice-chair.

Over 8,000 people are competing for the posts that constitute upazila parishes, a crucial tier of the local government system. Tomorrow will be a general holiday in the election areas.

On this occasion, Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda might address the nation today through radio and television.

To avert violence and irregularities in the local polls, the armed forces have been asked to ensure patrol more intense than that on the December 29 election.

The stringent measures reflect safety concerns under a new administration.

Initially, the EC wanted to conduct the polls without deploying the military, but it thought better of it amid reports of violence after the recently held general election.

"We have taken all necessary steps so the elections are held in a peaceful and fair manner, and the government too has extended full cooperation," Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) M Shakhawat Hossain told reporters at his office yesterday.

Asked if the government is bearing down on them to have the results in favour of the ruling parties, he said there is no pressure on the commission.

A special cell at the EC Secretariat is working to coordinate the efforts towards sound law and order.

Tomorrow's election is a

Govt mulls

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On the meetings with the foreign diplomats, he said there was a meaningful discussion with them where both sides agreed on bilateral cooperation for strengthening local government bodies.

Talking to journalists after the meeting, the US Ambassador said local government is very important to find a way to democracy. The present government is committed to making sure that local government plays an important role, the US envoy said.

The upazila system was first introduced in 1985 but after the general election the next year MPs were made adviser of the local body making the role of upazila chairman minor.

With the system the local administration had to face complexities over whether it would act as per the direction of the adviser or the chairman. In many places conflicts surfaced between the MPs and chairmen, disrupting development activities severely. The situation was worse where there were MPs from the ruling party and chairmen from the opposition.

BNP after assuming power in 1991 nullified the system. Although they formed different committees to introduce new laws regarding local government bodies, they failed to make any decision.

The AL government in 1996 amended the upazila ordinance but kept the power of announcing the election date in its hands, leading to the Election Commission's failure to hold the polls after repeated attempts.

After returning to power again in 2001, the BNP-Jamaat alliance government tried to fix the role of the MPs on the local government but failed. Finally, Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed-led caretaker government after the 1/11 change-over promulgated Upazila Parishad Ordinance excluding any influence of MPs on local government.

The ordinance also created two vice chairman posts including one reserved for women.

The upazila election will be held in 481 upazila parishes tomorrow.

challenge also to the government, as any violence and attempts to influence the polls will taint its image.

According to the local government laws, an upazila parishad shall be comprised of a chairman, two vice-chairmen, chairmen of all union parishads and mayor of municipality, if there's any under a given upazila, and a certain number of women members from reserved seats.

Though formal campaigning began after December 31, the closing date for withdrawal of candidacy, most of the contenders have been canvassing for quite a long time now.

The elections were originally slated for December 28.

An ordinance proclaimed in June last year curtailed the lawmakers' power with regard to upazila parishes and gave upazila chairmen complete authority to use development funds.

TRAVEL BAN
The government has imposed a ban on the movement of taxicabs, motorised three-wheelers, minibuses, jeeps, pickups, cars, buses, trucks and human haulers from midnight today till midnight tomorrow, says a home ministry order yesterday.

The ban applies also to launches, engine-boats and speedboats plying the waterways in the upazilas.

It, however, will not affect traffic on the highways. The checks could be eased in the port areas for emergency supplies.

The upazilas have already been declared off-limits to bikers with effect from midnight last night till midnight January 24.

The transport ban will not be applicable to local and foreign election observers, journalists, and those on election duty.

Vehicles used by the emergency, power and utility services will be out of the ban's purview.

Relaxation of the restrictions for candidates and their agents will be at the returning officers' discretion.

Admission rules

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Shahdeen Malik, counsel for the DU authorities, said he was yet to get any instructions from his clients on whether an appeal would be filed with the Supreme Court (SC) against the HC verdict.

He, however, said if an appeal is filed and the Appellate Division stays the verdict, the madrasa students would not be able to get admitted to the seven DU departments.

The HC in its judgment said the Dhaka University Ordinance 1973 does not empower the academic committees of its departments to make such a decision of disqualifying the admission seekers who came out successful in the admission tests from admission to the university.

The court said the government's decision to give Aleem equal status to the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) cannot be overridden by a mere departmental decision and the DU laws cannot be violated by any department, which is under the laws.

Barristers Abdur Razzaq and Belayet Hossain appeared for the petitioners.

Seven departments -- Economics, English, Bangla, Mass Communications and Journalism, International Relations, Women and Gender Studies, and Linguistics -- under the arts and social science faculties introduced new prerequisites for admissions in the departments for academic session 2008-09, blocking madrasa students from getting admitted to the departments.

As per the new prerequisites, an admission seeker must complete English and Bangla courses of 200 marks each at the HSC or equivalent level to be eligible for admission to the departments of International Relations, Women and Gender Studies, Mass Communication and Journalism, and Linguistics.

Students seeking admission to Bangla and English departments must complete a course of 200 marks in the relevant subject at the HSC or equivalent level.

The Department of Economics set a new prerequisite of studying a course of 200 marks in economics, math, or statistics, saying that courses in home economics and Islamic economics would not be considered equivalent to those.

Madrasa students study English and Bangla courses of 100 marks each, and Islamic economics instead of general economics at the HSC level.

ADB pledges

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achieve a more inclusive socioeconomic development by raising investment in health, education, and agriculture, among other sectors.

"We're firmly committed to assisting the government in scaling up the pace of infrastructure development, increase power production and ensure energy security," said the ADBVP.

He added that the ADB is keen to assist the government in promoting regional cooperation, particularly in sub-regional energy cooperation, transport connectivity and tourism development. "We appreciate Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's commitment to forge a strong regional cooperation."

Zhao said they are encouraged to see the government's commitment to continue the reforms initiated during the caretaker administration.

"As a trusted development partner of Bangladesh, ADB also remains fully committed to assisting Bangladesh to face the critical development challenges ahead, including climate change."

He mentioned that the collaboration between Bangladesh and ADB has increased substantially. In 2008, disbursements of ADB funds reached a record of \$ 615.64 million, with contract awards of \$ 506.17 million.

"We're particularly encouraged in this context by the government's commitment to expedite project implementation and stand ready to work together to help fulfill this important objective, especially against the background of the global financial crisis," said the visiting ADB vice president.

Mosharraf

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was released on bail before the recent parliamentary poll.

According to a news report published on The Daily Star on Monday, UK investigators found that Mosharraf, his wife, and one of their sons own a large amount of wealth in the British Isles.

Mosharraf and his wife Bilquis Akter Hossain have one million pounds in a joint account with Lloyds TSB Bank in Guernsey, a British Crown dependency in the English Channel, said a source in Bangladesh, citing the findings of a probe by the Proceeds of Corruption Unit of London's Metropolitan Police.

BNP leaders said after getting to know about the exposé, their Chairperson Khaleda Zia already expressed to them her annoyance with Mosharraf, who had also been defeated in the recent parliamentary race.

Mosharraf lately has been trying to bag the post of the party's secretary general, they added.

Other sources said BNP high-ups were also planning to nominate Khandaker Mosharraf in the by-election in a Bogra constituency, but now the party leaders are saying that will not be possible anymore following the fresh controversy about him in the media.

Some party leaders think Mosharraf should resign from the party post as the exposé of his alleged corruption put yet another big dent in the already battered image of the party at home and abroad.

"He should resign, as the party can't be liable for his personal corruption, and also since an investigation is on against him by the UK police," a BNP leader told The Daily Star.

The leaders are also expecting stern disciplinary action from the party chairperson against all leaders who are corruption suspects, as the stigma of corruption is being considered as the key reason for the party's smashing defeat in the recent parliamentary election.

Illegal money

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whether any legal question will arise in this regard. However, it can be seen if anybody files a case challenging it."

Through the drive during the caretaker government's tenure, Tk 1,219 crore was deposited with the government exchequer.

The then finance adviser AB Mirza Azizul Islam gave this estimate in his budget speech while announcing the national budget for the current fiscal year in June last.

Sources in the finance ministry, National Board of Revenue and Bangladesh Bank said nobody has raised any question regarding legality or otherwise of the money. If anybody raises any question, the government is ready to face it. The money was deposited with the state coffers through Bangladesh Bank as non-revenue income, and it was already spent.

The businessmen who had earned the money illegally deposited it or the joint forces recovered it during the anti-graft drive of the caretaker government.

The money also included that siphoned off abroad but all of it was deposited in local currency.

Barack Obama

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tattered economy left behind by outgoing President George W Bush.

"Our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow interests and putting off unpleasant decisions that time has surely passed," Obama said in an undisguised shot at Bush administration policies. "Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off and begin the work of remaking America."

The dawn of the new Democratic era with Obama allies in charge of both houses of Congress ends eight years of Republican control of the White House by Bush, who leaves Washington as one of the nation's most unpopular and divisive presidents, the architect of two unfinished wars and the man in charge at a time of economic calamity that swept away many Americans' jobs, savings and homes.

Obama's election was cheered around the world as a sign that America will be more embracing, more open to change. "To the Muslim world," Obama said, "we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect."

Still, he bluntly warned, "To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society's ills on the West know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy."

"To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history, but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist."

Two years after beginning his improbable quest as a little-known, first-term Illinois senator with a foreign-sounding name, Obama moved into the Oval Office as the nation's fourth youngest president, at 47, and the first African-American, a barrier-breaking achievement believed impossible by generations of minorities.

He said it was a moment to recall "that all are equal, all are free and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness."

"What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility, a recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nation and the world, duties that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character, than giving our all to do what is right."

With the economy in a long and deepening recession, Obama said it was time for swift and bold action to create new jobs and lay a foundation for growth. Congressional Democrats have readied an \$825 billion stimulus plan of tax cuts and spending for roads, bridges, schools, electric grids and other projects.

A mighty chorus of cheers erupted as Obama stepped to the inaugural platform, a mid-day sun warming the crowd that had waited for hours in the cold. There were some boos when Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney came onto the platform.

It was the first change of administrations since the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. Crowds filled the Mall for a distant glimpse of the proceedings or just, in the words of many, simply "to be here."

Washington's subway system was jammed and two downtown stations were closed when a woman was struck by a subway train.

Bush following tradition left a note for Obama in the top drawer of his desk in the Oval Office.

White House press secretary Dana Perino said the theme of the message which Bush wrote on Monday was similar to what he has said since election night: that Obama is about to begin a "fabulous new chapter" in the United States, and that he wishes him well.

The unfinished business of the Bush administration thrusts an enormous burden onto the new administration, though polls show Americans are confident Obama is on track to succeed. He has cautioned that improvements will take time and that things will get worse before they get better.

Culminating four days of celebration, the nation's 56th inauguration day began for Obama and Vice President-elect Joe Biden with a traditional morning worship service at St. John's Episcopal Church, across Lafayette Park from the White House. Bells pealed from the historic church's tower as Obama and his wife, Michelle, arrived five minutes behind schedule.

The festivities won't end until well after midnight, with

Do-or-die

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wickets to take a 1-0 lead on January 19 with left-arm spinner Raymond Pridgen starting with both bat and ball.

Left-handed batsman Mehrab Hossain will replace fellow lefty Zunaed Siddiqui while there is no space for Mahbubul Alam and Enamul Haque yet again.

The team management are concerned about the batting failures that has dogged the Tigers since suffering to Zimbabwe on January 10 in the opener of the Grameenphone Tri-Nation Cup.

Zimbabwe are likely to go with the same playing eleven.

dancing and partying at 10 inaugural balls.

By custom, Obama and his wife, and Biden and his wife, Jill, went directly from church to the White House for coffee with Bush and his wife, Laura. Michelle Obama brought a gift for the outgoing first lady in a white box decorated with a red ribbon.

Shortly before 11 am, Obama and Bush climbed into a heavily armoured Cadillac limousine to share a ride to the Capitol for the transfer of power, an event flashed around the world in television and radio broadcasts, podcasts and Internet streaming. On Monday, Vice President Dick Cheney pulled a muscle in his back, leaving him in a wheelchair for the inauguration.

Just after noon, Obama stepped forward on the West Front of the Capitol to lay his left hand on the same Bible that President Abraham Lincoln used at his first inauguration in 1861. The 35-word oath of office, administered by Chief Justice John Roberts, has been uttered by every president since George Washington. Obama was one of 22 Democratic senators to vote against Roberts' confirmation to the Supreme Court in 2005.

The son of a white, Kansas-born mother and a black, Kenya-born father, Obama decided to use his full name in the swearing-in ceremony.

To the dismay of liberals, Obama invited conservative evangelical pastor Rick Warren an opponent of gay rights to give the inaugural invocation.

About a dozen members of Obama's Cabinet and top appointees were ready for Senate confirmation yesterday, provided no objections were raised. But Republican Sen. John Cornyn of Texas indicated he would block a move to immediately confirm Secretary of State-designate Hillary Rodham Clinton. Still, she is expected to be approved in a roll call vote Wednesday.

More than 10,000 people from all 50 states including bands and military units were assembled to follow Obama and Biden from the Capitol on the 1.5-mile inaugural parade route on Pennsylvania Avenue, concluding at a bulletproof reviewing stand in front of the White House.

Security was unprecedented. Most bridges into Washington and about 3.5 square miles of downtown were closed. Authorities monitored a rush of intelligence leads including a possible threat from a Somalia-based group, al-Shabaab.

Among the VIPs at the Capitol was pilot Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger, the hero of last week's US Airways crash into the Hudson River.

Young and untested, Obama is a man of enormous confidence and electrifying oratorical skills. Hopes for Obama are extremely high, suggesting that Americans are willing to give him a long honeymoon to strengthen the economy and lift the financial gloom.

On Wednesday, his first working day in office, Obama is expected to redeem his campaign promise to begin the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq under a 16-month timetable. Aides said he would summon the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Oval Office and order that the pullout commence.

KENNEDY COLLAPSES AT INAUGURAL LUNCH

US Senator Edward Kennedy collapsed during the inaugural lunch for President Barack Obama yesterday, reports said, as the new US leader acknowledged there were concerns about the health of the veteran senator.

BUSH BIDS GOODBYE AT CAPITOL

With one last handshake with President Barack Obama, George W Bush boarded a helicopter yesterday at the Capitol and began his post-presidential life, closing a two-term administration marked by war, recession and the biggest terrorist attack on US soil.

Vice President Joe Biden gave him a brief salute as the chopper left the Capitol grounds and headed to Andrews Air Force Base.

Frozen accounts

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were frozen under the state of emergency. Now that the normal law is in effect, we are examining the cases according to existing laws. There should be a decision in about a week's time."

NBR froze the bank accounts of 335 people including politicians, businessmen and civil bureaucrats. They included senior leaders of both Awami League and BNP. Out of these, the bank accounts of 26 people have already been restored.

Besides cases were filed against 36 people for tax evasion. Verdicts have been handed out in 15 of those cases till date.

After the present government came to power, the NBR sent a report on the total position to government high-ups. High level discussions decided that decisions regarding which accounts can be restored would be taken in inter-ministerial meeting involving ministries of finance, law, the Bangladesh Bank and the NBR.

All the accounts frozen will not be considered for restoration under the same criteria, rather they would be classified on the basis of merit.

One DAG quits, others yet to respond to AG's call

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Only one deputy attorney general (DAG) resigned from the office yesterday though Attorney General (AG) Mahbubey Alam on Monday evening asked all attorneys recruited by the previous governments to submit their resignation letters to him by Tuesday.

Other attorneys, however, did not tender their resignation letters yesterday since the AG asked them through an administrative officer not to submit their resignation letters to him by Tuesday.

Two DAGs yesterday told The Daily Star that all the law officers made preparations to resign from their offices by Tuesday, but an official in the AG's office informed them that AG Mahbubey Alam has requested them not to submit their resignation letters at this moment.

A DAG said Mahbubey Alam has changed the directive apprehending legal complexities in the office.

Private secretary to the AG Md Abdul Wares said the AG yesterday morning asked him not to receive any resignation letter from the law officers.

DAG Mubina Asaf, appointed as assistant attorney general during the BNP-led four-party alliance government and promoted as DAG during the immediate past caretaker government, kept her resignation letter in the AG office to forward it to the president.

Barrister Shamsuddin Chowdhury Manik, a former High Court judge and close to Mahbubey Alam, yesterday told The Daily Star that the AG requested the law officers to avoid their dismissals from the service so that they retain their dignity.

"Resigning by the law officers following change of any government in most of the countries in the world is a tradition. For upholding the dignity, the law officers recruited by the previous governments should have resigned soon after the present government came to the power," he said.

22 bodies found

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Officer-in-charge of Matlab Uttar than a Sheikh Salahuddin said sukani of the trawler Rabiullah filed a case in this connection.

Deputy Commissioner of the district AKM Shahidur Rahman and Police Super Krishnapada Roy said the bodies will be handed over to their relatives after holding the inquest (Surathal). The relatives of the victims have already reached the spot to take the bodies.

Twenty-five day labourers went missing as the trawler Sabir-1 capsized in the river at about 3:00am on Monday when a sand-laden trawler, coming from opposite direction, hit its front side.

Some 25 labourers managed to swim ashore while the rest 25 went missing in the river.

The victims mostly hailing from Chatmohor upazila under Pabna district were asleep during the accident after lifting earth from a char in the river in Alurbazar area.

TCB

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"The prime minister asked for expanding TCB to import essential commodities like pulses, edible oil and flour to arrest their prices in the local market," the minister said, adding he discussed food security and the UNDP allocation to Bangladesh with Renata.

"The prices of pulses did not come down despite the fall in the international market," the ministers said.

Replying to a query about monitoring market, he said, "I believe the government should have control over different service sectors including education, health and food."

Earlier on Sunday, Commerce Minister Col (ret'd) Faruk Khan told a delegation of Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) TCB won't be reactivated. He added they would not intervene in or control the market.

Asked about the comments, Razzak said, "We can't leave consumers hostage in the hands of businesspersons."

He said he requested UNDP to increase food assistance to Bangladesh for an increase in VGD programme by 50 percent. "We also discussed progress of the Comprehensive Disaster Management Project."

The minister said both the government and NGOs would have to work together to make the projects success.

"The DFID and European Commission have given assurance of providing \$50 million for the second phase of the project," he said, adding the money will be spent to improve living condition in disaster-prone areas.

UN chief visits

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Israel launched its massive assault on December 27 and started to pull out gradually from the territory on Sunday as Hamas and other militant groups pledged a week-long ceasefire.

With an air of normalcy returning, Ban entered the strip mid-morning to witness the extent of the destruction which killed more than 1,300 people, including some 400 children, and wounded at least 5,300 others.

It was the first visit by a foreign leader to the impoverished territory since Hamas, an Islamist group boycotted by the West as a terror outfit, violently seized power in June 2007, ousting forces loyal to moderate Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas.

The secretary general was to tour a UN-run school hit by an Israeli bombardment, Palestinian sources said.

Following his visit to Gaza, the UN chief was due to visit the southern Israeli town of Sderot, five kilometres (three miles) from the Gaza border, that has taken the brunt of Palestinian rocket fire since 2000.

Gazans say the tide of global hope that has surged with Obama's election victory has not washed over the Gaza Strip.

"Obama won't bring my husband back to life," said Leila Khalil. "He was martyred and left me with six children to feed on my own. And Obama won't repair our

Internal clashes

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BCL sources said the RU unit president and general secretary run their own businesses and had been inactive in the last three years.

But their return to the RU campus after the December 29 elections irked many BCL leaders. Clashes might occur anytime there if the central committee does not take steps immediately.

He said many leaders trying to create new factions in educational institutions are senior to the top two BCL leaders.

"Moreover, some of them maintain contact with a few Awami League presidium members," the BCL leader said, adding, "The presidium members must not lend their support to them."

Factional clashes might erupt during formation of new committees in different educational institutions, they said.

Meanwhile, top central BCL leaders held a views-exchange meeting with its unit leaders at the AL office on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital.

They warned the unit leaders and activists against any involvement in violent incidents and said stern actions would be taken against anyone involved in violence.

The top leaders said they would take initiatives to announce new committees soon.

BCL President Mahmud Hasan Ripon and General Secretary Mahfujul Haider Chowdhury Ronon, among others, were present.

CU BCL

FROM PAGE 1
authorities had the police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) raid all dormitories and two fraternity houses of the university Monday night. The law enforcers could not find anything illegal in the dorms during their raid that ended early yesterday morning.

Sources said Chhatra League activists in a procession entered the VC's office in the administrative building around 12:30pm yesterday and disconnected the telephone lines. They forced Deputy Registrar Harunur Rashid to leave, sources said.

Later, Chhatra League men held a brief rally in front of the VC's residence and demanded his resignation.

Four assistant proctors of the university submitted their resignation letters to the VC around 1:00pm yesterday. The VC accepted resignation letters of assistant proctors Nurul Islam, HS Faruque Alam and Anwar Hossain. The resignation letter of Manjur Morshed, who is the coordinator of the proctorial body, was not accepted.

Later, a new proctor and two assistant proctors were appointed to the vacated posts. The post of university proctor was vacant for a while.

History department Associate Prof Anwarul Islam was appointed proctor while Assistant Prof Nurul Islam of the same department and Institute of Marine Sciences and Fisheries Director Mohammad Rashed-Un-Nabi were made new assistant proctors.

Leaders of Chittagong University Teachers' Association (