

BNP reluctant

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Party insiders, however, said the BNP top leadership is not interested in Jamaat, which wants BNP's backing for pro-Jamaat mayoral candidates in at least 40 municipalities, considering the current political situation.

BNP central directed leaders of only two municipalities -- Gagni of Meherpur and Sundarganj of Gaibandha -- to support the pro-Jamaat mayoral candidates there.

Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) gave unconditional support to BNP-backed mayoral candidates across the country while Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ), another ally of BNP, will get support from its allies in Sunamganj municipality. BNP and Jamaat do not have anyone to support there.

When asked about which candidates BNP grassroots are to support, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said the party's local units would decide on this as it is a local government election.

Jamaat acting Secretary General ATM Azharul Islam,

who recently met the BNP chairperson along with Jamaat acting chief Moqbul Ahmed, said they did not seek BNP support for the pro-Jamaat candidates in the municipality elections.

"We did not discuss this issue as there is nothing to seek support for. It's a local government election and we will make decisions on our own," he told The Daily Star.

However, BNP insiders said Jamaat did try to get BNP support for 40 pro-Jamaat candidates and BNP chief Khaleda Zia had also asked for a list of those candidates, who Jamaat claimed were very likely to secure victory.

Jamaat even sent a list of 24 candidates but the BNP decided not to back them, they said.

Talking to The Daily Star, a BNP leader said pro-Jamaat candidates have prospect in winning in 10 municipalities at best but due to the current political situation [hinting at the trial of war criminals], BNP backed off from lending them support.

Textbook

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School and College in the capital around 10:00am amid festivity.

The government will observe January 1 as Textbook Festival Day every year.

Nahid will hand over books to students of Kamrunnessa Girls School at Tikatuli around 11:30am.

On Thursday, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina formally inaugurated the distribution.

Nahid told The Daily Star almost all the copies have been delivered to schools in every upazila.

"The festival will continue for seven days as some students might be absent on the very first day. We hope every student will get textbooks by this week," he said.

The minister also said, "We have our buffer stock of primary and secondary books ready in case of any shortage."

The government has aimed at distributing around 23.20 crore books to students of primary, secondary, ebtedai (primary level of madrasa) and dakhil (secondary level of madrasa) and vocational classes of this academic year.

Of them, 10.45 crore copies are for primary students and 12.75 crore for secondary level.

National Curriculum and Textbook Board officials yesterday said around 99.07 percent of books for secondary students and 98.78

percent of primary books had already reached the schools.

Almost all the books of ebtedai, dakhil and vocational classes reached the institutions, said Prof Abul Kashem Miah, member (textbook) of NCTB.

"There is no concern over textbook anymore as almost hundred percent books reached the destinations," he told The Daily Star.

The government this year for the first time took initiative to print over 5 crore copies of textbooks for class I, II and III through international bidding. Of the books, Indian printers got the contract for around 2.98 crore copies.

Ratan Siddique, special officer assigned to monitor the distribution, said some of the city schools took extra books and some 144 schools have submitted their demand afresh.

"We have so far collected 14,000 copies from the schools which took extra books and already distributed those to different other institutions," he told The Daily Star.

NCTB sources, however, said some books of class I and II did not reach Bandarban, Rangamati and Khagrachhari districts.

The deadline for the delivery was yesterday morning, they said adding, the books might reach the areas by last evening.

Dropout

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different education boards told The Daily Star.

"Students who have failed in only one or two subjects can be given a chance to attend the next year's JSC examination without hampering their academic year," said SMA Abdul Khaleque, chairman of Sylhet Education Board.

The decision in this regard can be taken in consultation with the education ministry, he added.

Guardians, however, said that the two such huge public examinations of around 15 lakh students were held at a short notice and the students could not prepare themselves properly. Many failed for this reason, they added.

"Some guardians belonging to the poorer section of the society might lose interest in continuing the study of their children who failed in the first public examination of their life. They will rather engage their children in financial activities," said Sohel Talukder, a guardian of a student who obtained GPA 4.5 from Dhaka Board.

Dhaka Board Chairman Prof Fahima Khatun, however, said the number of dropout will not be high in SSC, as those who passed the JSC exam will pass the SSC exam fairly easily.

Dhaka looks

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Bhutanese Prime Minister Lyonchen Jigme Yoser Thinley, who will pay a five-day official visit to Bangladesh beginning January 10.

Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh is expected to visit Bangladesh most likely in the first quarter or in May. Prior to Singh's visit Indian external affairs secretary and ministers will visit Bangladesh as preparatory to Indian prime minister's trip.

There is possibility of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visiting Bangladesh in the first quarter of 2011.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni, who travelled more than two dozen countries to attend various bilateral, regional and international events in 2010, will visit UAE, India, Myanmar, Bhutan, Canada, and Greece in the first quarter of 2011.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in a bid to strengthen friendly ties and multi-dimensional diplomacy, visited a number of countries, including India, China, Korea, USA, Kuwait, Russia, Japan, Belgium, Bhutan and Malaysia this year.

The foreign minister, on her part, visited India (three times), Switzerland (three times), UK (three times), USA (two times), Indonesia (two times), Kuwait, the Philippines, China, Norway, Bhutan, Tajikistan, Brazil, Uganda, Turkey, France, Spain, Vietnam, Germany, Russia, Portugal, Nigeria, Iran, Japan, Belgium, Thailand and Cambodia in 2010 and had either spoken to or held meetings with her counterparts in at least a hundred nations.

Diplomatic sources said that the visits by both the PM and foreign minister played a significant role in strengthening relations in the regional and international arena.

AL pairs with

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on January 12, 13, 17 and 18, said a source in the AL-led 14-party combine.

AL will not back any candidate of Workers Party of Bangladesh, led by Rashed Khan Menon; Samyabadi Dal, led by Dilip Barua; National Awami Party, Ganotantri Party, Ganotantri Majdur Party, Gano Azadi League and Communist Kendro.

The ruling party's decision has created a sense of mistrust and suspicion among the leaders of the other components of the 14-party combine, said some alliance leaders.

Workers Party demanded that AL back at least nine of its candidates in municipalities in Jessore, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Gaibandha, Barisal, Thakurgaon and Narail, said AL leaders.

But the ruling party decided not to extend support to any of them on grounds that the AL candidates are better placed than those of Workers Party to win the elections.

"We have backed those candidates based on the possibility of winning the polls, not on party affiliation," AL Organising

Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim has told The Daily Star.

He brushed aside any breach between the ruling party and its allies over the issue.

A source in AL said no other alliance component rather than JSD and Workers Party sought the ruling party's support for its candidates.

Bimal Biswas, politburo member of Workers Party, said, "Awami League's attitude is bound to enrage Workers Party activists across the country."

The party leader said they would support secular and pro-Liberation War candidates in every municipality, but the ruling party made a wrong decision to back only its candidates in those municipalities.

A leader of another component in the combine said AL should have sat with other alliance partners and decided on the issue through a consensus.

Acting AL General Secretary Mahbul Alam Hanif hoped that the issue would not affect the relationship between the ruling party and its allies.

Fishes in danger

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If the trend continues, nearly 70 percent of the local fish varieties may suffer the same fate in the next few years, they warn.

Around 100 out of 143 local fish species are in imminent danger of extinction, reveals a study conducted by Dr Mostafa Ali Reza Hossain, professor of fisheries biology and genetics at Bangladesh Agriculture University.

"Some will cease to exist even in the next two years unless measures for their conservation are taken immediately," observed Mostafa Ali.

According to the study, the species that have already gone extinct include gutum, korika, bhol, debari, one kind of puti, ghora mukhya, nandil, kursa, bhorkhol, ghorpoiya, one kind of tengra and kajuli, torrent catfish, kani tengra, chhoto koi and tilashol.

The fish that face extinction within a couple of years include balichata, betangi, rani, chela, darkina, pathorchata, joiya, ghor machh, baitka and mohashol.

Syed Arif Azad, aquaculture officer of the fisheries department, said excessive use of chemical fertilisers destroys breeding and rearing grounds of the fish.

Fish habitats have been disappearing fast also for people moving in to build houses and other structures.

In fiscal year 2008-2009 alone, over 30 lakh tonnes of chemical fertilisers and 45,000 tonnes of insecticides were used in farmlands across the country, according to Department of Agriculture Extension data.

Rains wash away nearly 25 percent of these fertilisers and insecticides to nearby ditches, canals and wetlands. This instantly destroys the

natural habitats of fish species.

To make matters worse, excessive fishing and encroachment of water bodies continue unabated.

"The basic problem is that there are too few fishes being chased by too many people," said William Collis, regional director of World Food Centre, an affiliate to Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), a global body.

"Fish are long-term resources," Collis said. "They need permanent protection, and to ensure that, a country needs long term plans to protect its wetlands."

However, things are not all bleak. The government has established a number of sanctuaries across the country to restore fish habitats and maintain fish diversity, said Arif Azad.

Mostafa Ali said sanctuaries are the most effective and efficient tool for protecting fish. But the problem lies in having proper guidelines on how to build and manage the sanctuaries.

"Sperm banking for fish has to be set up to protect the fast depleting species," he added.

He also stressed intensifying and expanding the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) programme to save crops from pest attacks and combat environmental degradation caused by pesticides.

The IPM is a system of protecting crops from insects without using insecticides. On crossbreeding of fish species, Arif Azad said it threatens diversity of fish, as it could strip the local fish species of their original features.

The existing fish policy is being reviewed, and crossbreeding of fish might be banned, he said.

End of an eventful year

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significant national events like two landmark higher court verdicts that cancelled two constitution amendments, which had legitimised the military rules of two generals-turned-president. It saw erratic power crisis, soaring prices of essentials, decoding of the jute plant genome by a Bangladesh researcher, garment sector unrest and some commendable successes in sports.

In 2010, the world had their eyes on Africa as the biggest show on earth, the football world cup, was held in the continent. Spain for the first time snatched the crown.

On the eve of the new year, President Zillur Rahman, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia in separate messages greeted the people of the country and the world community.

People had a bit of a relief from the traditional politics of hartal and violence on streets as they saw only three hartals called in 2010. Even though there was not much going on in the streets in 2010, it gained momentum with Khaleda Zia's cantonment house issue taking the centre stage in November. The BNP chairperson had claimed that the government forced her out of the house.

Remittance slowed down and the number of people migrating also dropped. The agriculture sector maintained a steady growth throughout 2010. The country's industrial sector made a turnaround thanks to imports of capital machinery, disbursement of term loans (loans for more than a year) and high export growth.

Inflationary pressure, however, mounted, now hovering around eight percent, slashing people's purchase capability.

Bangladesh was vocal in the United Nations Climate Change Conference, 2010 held in Cancun of Mexico in November. Some progress on climate fund was made but

Bangladesh seemingly got nothing except assurances.

The stock market was buoyant with the index of Dhaka Stock Exchange going up 3,754 points (82 percent) to reach 8,290. The bourse also witnessed its steepest single-day fall in history last year.

Economy suffered badly due to power crisis. Although the government added some electricity to the national grid, the effort was too little to meet the growing need of the people.

The year ended a black chapter of the country's history. On January 28, five condemned killers of father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were hanged at Dhaka Central Jail.

On February 2, the Supreme Court dismissed two petitions contesting the High Court verdict that declared the constitution's fifth amendment illegal. The verdict declared the governments between 15 August 1975 and 9 April 1979 were in power without lawful authority.

The much-discussed International Crimes Tribunal was formed in March to try the war criminals. Five top suspects of crimes against humanity and other crimes during the war were arrested and the process of their trial has begun in the tribunal.

The national flag of Bangladesh reached the highest peak of the earth as a Bangladeshi mountaineer Musa Ibrahim reached the top of Mount Everest on May 23.

The year saw another historic verdict. In August, the HC declared illegal the 7th amendment to the constitution that had legitimised the military rule by Hussein Muhammad Ershad. The full text of the judgment was released on 29 December with the observation that all military rulers and their accomplices must be punished.

Violence in garment sector drew attention through-

out the year. A series of fierce clashes between workers and law-enforcers left several people dead and injured many, causing serious concern for the government and the business community.

Stalking of women took a turn for the worse with a growing number of people being killed for trying to resist the nuisance.

In the first nine months of the year, at least 25 women killed themselves to escape the horror of abuse, while nine males lost their lives for standing up against stalkers, says a report of rights group Ain O Salish Kendra.

One of the success stories of a Bangladeshi researcher last year was decoding of jute plant genome. The innovation, masterminded by scientist Maqsoodul Alam, opened up a new vista in the development of variety of the world's most adorned biodegradable natural fibre.

One of the tragic events for the nation last year was the devastating inferno in the capital's Nimtoli that killed at least 123 persons and injured scores more.

Residents of the capital had to bear the brunt of tailbacks round the year while the prices of essentials remained stubbornly high.

In the sports arena, cricket had given the nation many occasions to cheer like when the Tigers blanked the Kiwis 4-0 in a home series in October.

Cricketers also fetched the maiden Asian Games gold for the country.

Captain Shakib Al Hasan was in the spotlight at the international level as the wonder boy topped the list of best all-rounders in limited-overs cricket. The cricketing prodigy bagged 46 wickets from 27 matches in the year.

The nation rejoiced when the national booters earned the South Asian Games gold last year.

The international success of Siddikur Rahman, the first ever professional golfer of Bangladesh, won accolades from home and abroad.

Welcome, goodbye

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throughout the year. The day like today will come and go, but we human beings won't. We come but once and go forever. So, let's rally to help ensure safe roads and workplace for all.

In the year gone out, the prices of essentials continued skyrocketing. Some basic food items turned doubly costlier. Public utilities, house rent, conveyance, education, recreation and what-not were on the race to be pricier. The cost of living has gone way beyond belt-tightening for commoners. Even the bravest of finance ministers would not dare to prepare a monthly budget for a family in lower-mid income brackets. In 2011, we want our government to give people some much-needed respite, instead of putting it all down to market manipulations.

With the climate changing and crucial projects unchang-

ing, people embrace the New Year with worries aplenty. Our wait for the UN funds seems destined to linger. However, we must reckon that funds alone are not going to solve our weather woes; we need to build first our capacity to utilise the funds.

We saw little progress in the efforts to conserve the environment. Plunderers denuded vast swathes of forest despite laws that forbid tree-felling. We always had laws to protect rivers, canals and water bodies from grabbers and polluters. Ironically though, the laws exist and so do the encroachers and polluters. In 2011, we expect the government to turn things around.

The crises of gas and electricity went from bad to worse in 2010. Threatening to be at the worst this year, they will surely test the patience of people. Like those in the communications sector, all

major energy projects failed to cross the tender hurdles or remained stuck in implementation phase. We don't expect any miracle in one year but hope the government will stop talking big and start delivering.

Politics remained confrontational as ever. Awami League completes two years in office in about a week and the main opposition BNP keeps on turning its back on parliament. Rival lawmakers did not lock horns in the legislature over any issues in the public interest. Politics was taken to courts and streets at times, but that too for mere partisan gains. In the months to come, we hope, it will at last dawn on our politicians that they have been elected to serve the people, and they'd better come back where they belong -- the Jatiya Sangsad.

We Mourn



With profound sorrow we inform that **Engr. Amirul Islam**, founding Director of Associated Builders Corporation (ABC) Limited, breathed his last on Thursday, 30th December, 2010 at 6:30 pm (Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Illahi Rajeun). He was buried in Banani Graveyard on Friday following his Namaz-e-Janaaza in Gulshan Azad Mosque.

Engr. Amirul Islam, a successful businessman & professional, a famed philanthropist & social patron, was an alumnus of Shibpur Engineering College and an active member of many professional, social and charitable organizations. He will be greatly missed by his mourning family, colleagues, numerous friends and admirers that he left behind.

All relatives, friends and well-wishers of the deceased are requested to attend the Doa Mahfil to be held on Sunday, 2nd January, 2011 after Asr prayers at his residence (Concord Garden, House# 20, Road# 62, Gulshan 2) and pray for the departed soul.



Directors, Officers and Employees of ABC Family
ABC House, Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Banani, Dhaka

2 held

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The law enforcers were interrogating them.

Three bodies were sent to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital morgue yesterday for autopsies, said Iqbal Bahar, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station.

No case has been recorded in this connection till filing of this report last evening, he added.

Jubo League activists Alam Ali, Bazlur Rahman and Sohan were killed in a factional clash at Pabahati village of Sadar upazila on Thursday evening.

Locals said two feuding groups, led by Jahangir and Masud, got involved in a fierce clash around 8:00pm when they were campaigning for two rival councillor candidates in the upcoming pourasava elections.

Both the groups used lethal weapons and caused the death of the three, added witnesses.

Abdul Malek, secretary of district Awami League and acting mayor of Jhenidah pourasava, condemned the killings.

He also expressed concern about the deteriorating law and order in the district.



Arannayk Foundation – the Tropical Forest Conservation Foundation of Bangladesh, welcomes the **“International Year of Forests, 2011”** with its new logo. We wish everyone happiness, peace and prosperity and urge all fellow citizens to support our efforts to conserve the remaining natural forests of Bangladesh.

Happy New Year!

ARRANNAYK FOUNDATION

Conserving forests for the future

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