

Boon or bane?

FROM PAGE 16
Local AL leaders and supporters of Ajmat told The Daily Star yesterday that such an incident had been "embarrassing" for them.

"It will take a few more days to overcome the setback," said AL lawmaker Abdul Mannan, who went to Gazipur city yesterday morning to boost local leaders.

Some local leaders echoed Mannan's view.

"It would have been better both for him [Jahangir] and the party had there been no drama over his withdrawal," said Abul Kalam Azad, president of ward 29 AL unit.

They, however, think that Jahangir's campaigning for Ajmat in the coming days would eventually prove to be a boon for the AL.

But boon it has already been for the BNP-backed candidate.

While the opposition camp is trying to cash in on this issue, many Chhatra Dal and Jubo Dal leaders and activists who had been working for Jahangir are now joining their party-backed candidate's campaign, said Sheikh Fazlur Rahman Fulon, president of city Jubo Dal unit.

"We had been worried. His [Jahangir's] pull-out has come as a blessing for us," he added.

ASM Hannan Shah, a BNP standing committee member, told reporters in Gazipur yesterday: "The ruling party has become desperate to win the Gazipur polls after its defeat in the four city elections. So

it has forced Jahangir to quit the race. It is a violation of electoral code of conduct."

Meanwhile, Jahangir, who has been campaigning for Ajmat since June 24, yesterday tried to convince people, saying he willingly withdrew from the race for the party's sake.

He said he was also trying to boost his supporters, who got upset following his withdrawal.

City people, however, have a critical view of his pull-out.

"The way Jahangir was crying at the press conference [from where he announced his withdrawal] has hurt our sentiments. His tears proved that he was forced to quit," said Moniruzzaman, a small businessman of Mariali area.

It may be a surprise for rest of the country as to how Jahangir has become a factor in the Gazipur polls, although he now holds no post in the local AL.

Recently, he stepped down as vice chairman of the pro-AL student body BCL in Gazipur to contest the polls.

Despite being elected vice-chairman of Gazipur Sadar Upazila Parishad with a big margin in January 2009, he had almost nothing to do for the people due to the ineffectiveness of the upazila parishads.

Yet to serve voters, he relied on his own income. The money he earned through his jhut (garment wastage) business has been spent on anyone asking for help, sources said.

"There are very few

educational and religious institutions he did not contribute to," said Insan Uddin Ahmed, who identified himself as a BNP supporter of Mariali area of ward 26.

He claimed it would have been difficult for Mannan to win the battle had Jahangir contested, as Jahangir had acceptance with all, especially the young generation.

Mominuddin Ahmed, vice president of Jatiya Srakmik League Gazipur district unit, a pro-AL labour wing, said many people had opted to approach Jahangir for help instead of the local MPs as he never let anyone go empty-handed.

[Abu Bakar Siddiqui Akand also contributed to this report]

Govt eyes majority

FROM PAGE 1
those from becoming void in line with a court order.

According to the draft, GB's paid-up capital will be raised to Tk 300 crore from the current Tk 60 crore.

The paid-up capital was raised to Tk 300 crore during the rule of the caretaker government in 2008 but the Awami League-led government did not sign it into a law after assuming power in 2009.

The commission told the finance ministry that there was no need to raise the paid-up capital since the ordinance, issued in 2008,

was not made into a law, sources said.

The finance ministry said it had injected Tk 13.2 crore into GB to raise the government's stake to 25 percent, which dropped to 3.29 percent as the government did not pay against its share in the paid-up capital.

The government-sponsored commission is set to hold a seminar of experts in Dhaka on July 2, in which ideas of changing the legal structure of GB would dominate the agenda.

The commission is however tight-lipped about the

experts to be invited for the workshop.

Meanwhile, the commission's recommendations have drawn strong criticism from nine elected borrower directors of GB, independent observers and anti-poverty campaigners.

The nine directors, who constitute the majority in the 12-member Grameen Bank board, rejected the suggestions.

A number of respected experts say the government has taken the step only to destroy the microcredit organisation.

Nine senators

FROM PAGE 1
Democratic senators said.

Obama is expected to decide by the end of June whether to suspend Bangladesh from the GSP programme, which waives US import duties on thousands of goods from poor countries to spur economic development.

Suspending Bangladesh from the programme would be mostly symbolic since the Asian nation's main export, clothing, is not eligible for GSP tariff cuts, in deference to the GlobalWorks Foundation.

Bangladesh paid \$732 million in duties on \$4.9 billion worth of clothing exports to the United States, he said.

The AFL-CIO, the largest US labour organisation, first filed a petition to suspend Bangladesh from the GSP in 2007.

The US government has put off that decision for six years, hoping the threat

would be enough to encourage Bangladesh to make labor reforms.

US trade officials emphasised that suspending trade benefits was seen as "the last resort" while expressing frustration that Bangladesh had made little progress addressing long-standing US concerns over its labour conditions.

"President Obama must do everything in his power to prevent tragedies like the Bangladesh factory collapse from happening again," Senator Sherrod Brown, an Ohio Democrat said in a statement with the other senators.

Earlier this month, an AFL-CIO official said she expected Obama would decide to suspend the benefits.

Shab-e-Barat

FROM PAGE 1
homemade foods among the poor, neighbours, friends and relatives.

On the occasion, Islamic Foundation Bangladesh and other religious and socio-cultural organisations took up various programmes, includ-

ing milad mahfil, zikr, etc.

Yesterday was a public holiday.

President Abdul Hamid,

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Opposition in Parliament

Khaleda Zia issued separate

messages felicitating the

Muslims on the occasion.

Bangladesh Television, Bangladesh Betar and private TV and radio channels aired special programmes.

Newspapers published articles, highlighting the significance of the night, also known as Lailatul Barat.

60 AL MPs

FROM PAGE 16
parts and entrusted four leaders with the job of monitoring the lawmakers' activities.

The four are lawmakers Abdul Mannan and BM Mojammel Haque, and Abu Sayeed Al Mahmud Swapan and Sujit Roy Nandi. AL Organising Secretary Ahmed Hossain will coordinate their work, party sources said.

Communications Minister Obaidul Quader and State Minister Jahangir Kabir Nanak, who cannot directly take part in the campaign as per electoral

rules, will work from outside the city area.

They will mainly deal with the grievances and frustrations of the local party leaders, if any, and try to persuade them to work for the party-backed candidate.

In the last two days, Quader and Nanak held two meetings with Jahangir Alam and his supporters at a house in the capital's Uttara. Jahangir had earlier filed nomination as a mayoral candidate and later quit the race and extended support to the AL-backed candidate Ajmat Ullah Khan.

AL looks

FROM PAGE 1
a final survey to bring changes of candidates to ensure victory of her party in the 10th parliamentary election.

And she has also been talking to the party's grassroots leaders on a regular basis to get their views. She has already warned many lawmakers that they would not get nomination if the grassroots do not propose their names, sources in the party said.

Dedicated AL leaders, upazila chairmen and vice chairmen with good performances and clean image and having wide contacts with people in their areas would get preference as regards party nominations, the sources mentioned.

Seeking anonymity, some AL high-ups said such a large number of constituencies were going to witness changes in nominations for the next polls as the incumbent lawmakers either resorted to corruption and nepotism or distanced themselves from local party leaders and workers and formed their own circles with their relatives.

"Those who have already been detached from the party and people in their constituencies will be replaced by new faces who have clean image and good contacts with party men and other people," AL Presidium Member and Communications Minister Obaidul Quader told this

correspondent.

Contacted, another Presidium Member and Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury said the prime minister was conducting a survey on her own to decide on nominations for the next polls.

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China workers hold US boss hostage

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