

Grassroots leaders promise to work for BNP nominees

474 aspirants from Barishal, Khulna divisions interviewed by nomination board on 2nd day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP grassroots leaders in Barishal and Khulna divisions promised the party's nomination board to work together for whoever is nominated.

The board told the aspirants that there were many competent candidates in every constituency but as not more than one could be nominated, everyone had to abide by the party decision, said party leaders.

On the second day of interviews of BNP aspirants, a total of 474 hopefuls from 57 constituencies of Khulna and Barishal were interviewed by the nomination board comprising of the party's standing committee members, acting chairman Tarique Rahman and Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir at its chairperson's Gulshan office.

The Daily Star correspondent spoke to more than a dozen aspirants, all of whom promised to work for those

nominated.

An aspirant, wishing anonymity, said former lawmaker Mujibur Rahman Sarwar and BNP leader Syed Moazzem Hossain gave interviews for Barishal-5.

"During the interview, Tarique asked Sarwar why he was not talking and Sarwar replied that he would work [for the party], no matter who got the party tickets," said a senior leader.

Akand Kuddusur Rahman, a contender of Barishal-1, said, "We have full confidence in the party high ups and hope that a competent candidate will get the party ticket."

Monir Hossain, an aspirant from Patuakhali-2, said, "We have decided to participate in the election as part of the movement to restore democracy and release Khaleda Zia. We hope that the party's top leaders will give nomination to the best candidate."

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6



BNP men gather outside the party chief's Gulshan office in the capital yesterday. The party's nomination board has been interviewing nomination seekers since Sunday ahead of the parliamentary polls scheduled for December 30.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Family fights over AL ticket

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Land Minister Shamsur Rahman Sherif will face challenges from his family for the party's nomination in the upcoming national polls.

His daughter, Mahjabin Shirin Pia, and son-in-law, Abul Kalam Azad Mintu, are running against him for the "boat" symbol at Pabna-4, along with 14 other aspirants.

"I have been involved with Awami League politics for many years and I have enough dedication for the party. I deserve party's nomination," Mintu, also mayor of Ishwardi municipality, told The Daily Star.

However, he said he did not run as an independent candidate if he failed to get the nomination, adding, "I will work for whoever gets the boat symbol."

Contacted, Pia refused to comment on the issue.

Meanwhile Sherif, who has been the lawmaker in that area since for the past 20 years, could not be reached over phone.

Talking to the locals, this correspondent found different versions about Sherif's performance.

Some people said they wanted to see new leadership in the constituency, while others said the veteran Sherif's experience was necessary for

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

Jamaat men set to clash in Ctg-15

M NURUL HAYAT CHOWDHURY, Ctg

Two former Jamaat lawmakers, who are in jail now, will compete against each other from Chattogram-15 constituency in the upcoming national election.

Of them, ANM Shamshul Islam, the central nayeib-e-ameer, has Jamaat's nod while its central majlish-e-sura member, Shahjahan Chowdhury, may have to run as a rebel candidate, said local party leaders.

As Jamaat's registration as a political party has been scrapped, the party's nominees will contest the polls either as independents or under the BNP-led alliance.

Satkania upazila Jamaat President Abul Fayeze told The Daily Star he did not know why Shahjahan had decided to run from the constituency, despite the party high-ups selecting

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4

St Mark

FROM PAGE 16

time and believed to be the last recovered.

"This is a very special piece that's more than 1,600 years old. It's one of the last and most beautiful examples of art from the early Byzantine era," Brand told Agence France-Presse.

It was the hunt of a lifetime for Brand and one that took him across Europe, where "informants were arrested in unrelated cases" and "people got scared and disappeared," he claimed in a post on his website.

Brand managed to trace the mosaic to an apartment of a British family in Monaco who were "horrified" to find out the piece was looted treasure.

"It was in the possession of a British family, who bought the mosaic in good faith more than four decades ago," he told AFP.

Such brutal crimes must not recur

FROM PAGE 1

however, commuted the capital punishment of 11 others to life imprisonment. All the eleven had been sentenced to death by a Narayanganj court in the murder case.

The judges also upheld jail terms of nine others for various terms ranging from seven to 17 years.

The accused were found guilty of murdering seven people, including Narayanganj City Corporation panel mayor Nazrul Islam and senior lawyer Chandan Sarker. They were abducted from the Dhaka-Narayanganj link road on April 27, 2014. Later, their bodies were found floating in the Shitalakkhya river.

In the full text verdict, the HC said from the facts, circumstances, and evidence on record, it is evident that both the defence-accused personnel and civil accused-personnel conjointly under criminal conspiracy and pre-planning in furtherance of their common intention abducted the victims, killed them and dropped their bodies in the river.

"From the evidence and materials on record, it appears that the victim-deceased persons were at first kidnapped in a preplanned way out of conspiracy, then were killed by twisting their mouth with polythene and by strangulation with rope, the dead bodies were tied up with plastic sacks, containing bricks, the dead bodies were taken to the estuary of the rivers Meghna and Shitalakkhya, the dead bodies were perforated with knife under navels for easy drowning into the river water and thereafter dropped in the river water," the HC said.

"Said facts clearly suggest that as per pre-planned conspiracy and in furtherance of common guilty intention to kill the victims, they were killed by twisting their mouths with polythene and by strangulation with rope by the accused-persons and thereafter, to destroy the evidence, the dead bodies were dropped in the river water..."

"To what extent the accused Nur Hossain is influential and powerful

is evident from the fact that the victim Nazrul did not have the courage to file a case against the accused Nur Hossain although the men of the accused Nur Hossain beat up Nazrul and his men over construction of a drain. Rather, the accused Nur Hossain got a false case filed by Mobarak, an associate of him, against Nazrul," the HC said.

"From the materials on record, it transpires that to perpetrate the occurrence, the accused-persons Nur Hossain, Lt Col Tarek Syeed Mohammad and Major (retired) Arif Hossain had meetings at different times prior to the occurrence and that they conspired in that regard and the convicted-accused Lt Commander MM Rana became a part to it which is evident from his activities on the date of the occurrence.

"From the discussion made here above, it is clear that the accused-persons namely, Nur Hossain, Lt Col Tarek Syeed Mohammad, Lt Commander MM Rana and Major (retired) Arif Hossain under a crim-

inal conspiracy abducted, murdered and made disappearance of evidence of the alleged offence of murder and as such, the charge under section 120B of the Penal Code was framed rightly against the said accused-persons and were rightly found guilty under that sections by the trial court," the HC said in the full text of the judgement.

The convicts, Tarek Syeed Mohammad, Arif Hossain, Masud Rana, Nur Hossain, Nayek Md Bellal Hossain, Habilder Md Emdadul Haque, ROG Md Arif Hossain, Lance Nayek Md Hira Mia, Sepoy Md Abu Taiyab, Constable Md Shihab Uddin, SI Purnendu Bala, Sainik Md Abdul Alim (absconding), Sainik Mahiuddin Munshi, Sainik Alamin Sharif and Sepoy Tajul Islam were involved in the pre-planned murder "without provocation from the victims' side".

"This court opines that they deserve capital punishment in the case and as such, the trial court

rightly imposed capital punishment i.e. death sentence upon them," the HC said.

"On consideration of the nature of the role played in the murder, the sentence of death as awarded to the condemned-prisoners namely Sainik Md Asaduzzaman Noor, Sergeant Enamul Kabir, Md Mortuza Zaman Churchill, Ali Mohammad, Md Mizanur Rahman Dipu alias Mizan, Md Raham Ali, Md Abul Bashar, Salim (absconding), Md Sanaulla, Manager Shahjahan and Jamal Uddin appears to this court to be harsh and severe and as such, this court is inclined to commute the death sentence as awarded to the said convicted-accused-persons to a sentence of imprisonment for life and also with fine."

It observed that in the case, the accused Rab personnel acted illegally with individual responsibility and upon personal interest. So, the Rab as a whole did not commit the alleged offence, the HC said in the full judgement.

Ershad lying low, again

FROM PAGE 1

mysterious role.

"I think he is under pressure for selecting party candidates and sharing seats with the ruling party," a JP lawmaker, who is also a minister in the Awami League-led government, told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

Ershad's hide-and-seek comes at a time when the seat-sharing between the ruling AL and his party still remains a contentious issue.

The JP, the main opposition in the current parliament, in the last couple of days wrote to the ruling AL twice to finalise the seat-sharing. But as of now, it remains unresolved.

Ershad demanded that the AL leave 100 out of 300 parliamentary constituencies for JP candidates to contest the polls under the banner of the grand alliance led by the ruling AL, insiders said.

But the ruling party did not agree on this creating an impasse.

Ruhul Amin Hawlader, secretary general of JP, was supposed to meet Obaidul Quader, general secretary of the AL, yesterday evening.

In the afternoon yesterday, Hawlader confirmed to The Daily Star about the planned meeting. In the evening, he said the meeting has been postponed and it will be held later.

"We are facing pressure from party

leaders and activists as we cannot tell them from which parliamentary constituencies our candidates will run for the election," he said.

He said the party cannot clarify it as the ruling AL has yet to make it clear how many seats they will leave for JP leaders in the upcoming parliamentary election.

"We hope we will be able to reach an amicable solution over seat-sharing through a meeting with the ruling party high-ups soon," Hawladersaid.

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader on Sunday told newsmen that the issue of seat-sharing with the components of the grand alliance would be completed in a couple of days.

Besides, the JP secretary general said the party's nomination seekers along with many of their supporters are still staying in Dhaka to know the party's decision on selection of candidates.

"Therefore, they are yet to start preparatory work for election to fight the opponents."

A senior JP leader said prospective candidates of both the ruling AL and the BNP-led alliance are taking preparations in full swing in their constituencies. "But we are facing uncertainty as we still don't know how many seats the ruling party will leave for us."

The delay in resolving the seat-sharing issue prompted the JP to postpone its work for interviewing nomi-

nation seekers. It was originally scheduled for November 17.

The party will start interviewing aspirants today, said a JP press release yesterday. Hawlader confirmed that the date remains unchanged.

"The party chief may appear before the nomination seekers today," a senior JP leader said.

The party sold 2,700 nomination forms in six days since November 11.

Asked if the party is in talks with the BNP or Jatiya Oikyafront over seat-sharing, JP presidium member SM Foyzal Chisty replied in the negative.

UNPREDICTABLE, AS ALWAYS

What Ershad is doing now is nothing new.

In 2006, he went into hiding facing pressure from the then ruling BNP to join its alliance. On December 18 that year, he suddenly appeared at a Paltan Maidan rally organised by AL, and announced his decision to join the AL-led alliance.

Following his instructions from hiding, JP leaders and workers had joined the rally before he reached there. Senior JP leaders Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Ruhul Amin Hawlader and GM Quader, among others, were present on the dais.

Joining the rally, Ershad said he and his party had been subject to constant threat and pressure for speaking out against what he said was unbridled

corruption of the BNP-led four-party alliance.

"I am receiving threats that I would be sent to jail and come out as a mere corpse," the former dictator told the rally. "But I am a soldier, I am not scared of death," he added.

"I've thrown off the shackles to express solidarity with the Awami League-led grand alliance. I'm here today, free as a bird," he said on an emphatic tone.

He claimed he had to get over several hurdles to get to the rally "at this crucial juncture".

Ershad led his party to remain in the AL-led grand alliance to contest the 9th parliamentary election in 2008, held two years behind schedule due to the state of emergency declared amid political turmoil.

After seven years, when another parliamentary election was in the offing, Ershad became the centre piece of a long-drawn drama for his flip-flops over joining the January 5 polls in 2014.

Announcing that the JP will not participate in the election, he had asked his party's candidates to withdraw their nomination papers. The BNP-led alliance and some other opposition parties also boycotted the polls.

Giving rise to questions and confusions, he was taken to the CMH from

his Baridhara residence on December 12, 2013.

However, a section of JP leaders decided to join the polls. The party chairman was elected a lawmaker in the January 5 polls as he could not withdraw his candidacy from Rangpur-3.

From the CMH, where he had been staying for unknown "illness", Ershad directly went to the Bangabhaban to attend the oath-taking ceremony of the prime minister and ministers of the new government on January 12, 2014.

On the same day, he was appointed special envoy of the prime minister with the status of a minister. Three of his party lawmakers were inducted into the council of ministers.

Talking to reporters at the Bangabhaban after the ceremony, Ershad said: "I'm quite well." From there, he returned to the President Park with a new role.

In the wake of criticism against his party for being in the opposition and in the cabinet at the same time, Ershad on several occasions in recent years said he would ask the three party men to step down as ministers paving the way for JP to emerge as the real opposition.

But earlier this month, after talks with the AL-led 14-party alliance, the JP chief said his party will participate in the upcoming election as a compo-

Local admin steps in

FROM PAGE 1

Quoting officials, the EC yesterday said 90 percent of the campaign materials had been removed.

"We have once again directed divisional commissioners, deputy commissioners and chief executive officers of city corporations and other local government bodies today [yesterday] to remove the electoral campaign materials. They will take action against political parties and candidates who had not removed those," said EC Secretary Helal Uddin Ahmed.

The Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) started removing posters, banners and festoons since yesterday morning.

Led by DSCC Executive Magistrate Masud Rana, the drive was conducted in Suritola, English Road, Purana Paltan, Khilgaon, and Motijheel areas.

All employees concerned were asked to remove the materials as per the EC directives, an official said.

The DSCC would continue the drive and had requested ward councillors for assistance.

In Chittagong, posters of Awami League leader and parliamentary hopeful Syed Mahmudul Haque were seen on the south gate of MA Aziz Stadium.

Another AL aspirant Helal Uddin's posters were also there.

Banners of AL aspirants were seen on the walls of Railway hospital and Railway Building areas yesterday.

Contacted, Munir Hossain Khan, Chattogram district election officer, said mobile courts led by 16 executive magistrates had conducted drives across the city.

"As far as I know, electoral campaign posters and banners have been removed in 95 percent of the areas," he said.

Except Godagari upazila, most of the campaign materials were removed on time in Rajshahi.

At Kamarpara market, posters of AL aspirants Motiur Rahman and Tajibul Islam were seen at 3:00pm yesterday.

"Most of the aspirants paid heed to our call and cleaned up the materials. We had engaged workers to remove the remaining ones," said Kader, deputy commissioner of Rajshahi.

He said no punitive action was taken against anyone.

"If any campaign material still remains, our mobile courts will launch drives and take legal action," he added.

In Dinajpur, our correspondent found many posters of Ahmed Sharif Rubel, a JP aspirant.

Some posters of Communist Party of Bangladesh aspirants were found at Kalitola area of the district. A big sign-board of Sweschchasebak League also

remained there.

In Barishal, Executive Magistrate Mozzeml Haque Chowdhury said about 50 billboards had been removed in a drive in several areas. No one was penalised though.

The Khulna City Corporation removed most of the banners, posters and other campaign materials from the city by Sunday. The remaining materials were removed by 10 executive magistrates yesterday, said Palash Kanti Bala, chief executive officer of the corporation.

Only a few tom banners were seen yesterday.

There were similar pictures in Bogra, Mymensingh, Narayanganj and