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Next polls to be tough for AL

Says Hasina, asks party men to start election preparations, rev up activities

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Awami League President Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged her party leaders to start campaigning for the national election, slated for January 2024.

She asked them to keep in mind that this election would be participatory and it would be a tough one for the AL.

Speaking at yesterday's meeting of AL Central Working Committee (ALCWC), the prime minister also said she would now spend more time for the party and start visiting the districts to attend rallies. The first event she will attend will be held at the Polo Ground in Chattogram on December 4.

The meeting of AL's highest decision-making body was held at the Gono Bhaban yesterday with Hasina in the chair. The meeting started at 4:00pm and ended around 10:15pm.

It was decided that AL's 22nd triennial council would be held at Suhrawardy Udyan on December 24 maintaining austerity. The inaugural ceremony of the council will be held in the morning, the council session would be in the afternoon, and a cultural function in the evening. Twenty-two sub-committees were formed to this end.

At yesterday's meeting, Hasina said no money should change hands over formation of AL committees.

Hasina said those who do not hanker after money and played a vital role during political changeover in 2007 should be given party posts.

The remarks came just two days after Obaidul Quader asked AL men to stop taking money in exchange for posts in the AL committee.

Hasina yesterday told the meeting that the BNP would take part in the election even though it was saying that it would not.

She asked the AL leaders to keep that in mind.

"The leaders who were repeatedly elected MP should not assume that they would be nominated. Several surveys have already been conducted and more surveys will take place to find the fitting candidates," Hasina was quoted as saying by a central leader wishing anonymity.

AL's 21st national council was held on December 20 and 21, 2019, re-electing Sheikh Hasina and Obaidul Quader as its president and general secretary.

The previous ALCWC meeting was held on May 7. It was decided then that the AL would participate in the next national polls with its ideological partners of the 14-party alliance. At that meeting, the AL leaders demanded using electronic voting machines (EVM) in all the 300 constituencies.

At yesterday's meeting, AL leader Mirza Azam wanted to know what the party had decided on the councils for AL's front and like-minded organisations. In reply, Hasina said she and Quader would soon fix the dates for the councils, said meeting insiders.

UNB quoted the PM as saying, "Since we believe in democracy, the BNP can arrange meetings, processions and other programmes ... But those accused of being involved in killings, arson and militancy will be apprehended and given appropriate punishment. Because, they violated human rights by killing and burning people alive," she said.

Hasina further said people voted the AL to power time and again as they have faith in the party.

"But the people will not vote for the BNP men who are involved in terrorism, killing, arson, plundering of the public wealth, bomb and grenade attacks, and money laundering.

"The BNP men who were involved in killing and terrorism, including arson attacks and militancy, would have to face the music. They will not be spared," added Hasina.

- AL national council on Dec 24
- Hasina cautions leaders not to take money for party posts
- AL chief to spend more time for party, join rallies
- Only acceptable, popular leaders to get nomination



BNP leaders and activists from districts around Rangpur pour into Rangpur Railway Station last night ahead of today's rally in the divisional city. With buses staying off the roads since yesterday morning due to a strike, the opposition party men took trains and other modes of transport to travel to the city.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

RANGPUR RALLY AMID TRANSPORT HURDLE

Skirting strike, many BNP men arrive early

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA and KONGKON KARMAKAR from Rangpur

BNP leaders and activists from seven northern districts started for Rangpur city as early as Thursday afternoon so that they could reach the city for today's rally before the start of a bus strike at 6:00am yesterday.

Thousands of party leaders and activists took buses, trucks, and trains from their respective districts to travel to the city.

After the buses were taken off the roads, party men began pouring into the city on trains, rickshaw vans, auto-rickshaws, motorcycles, and other modes of transport.

Many party men from Thakurgaon, Dinajpur, and Kurigram came to the city riding motorcycles.

Earlier, bus strikes were enforced in Mymensingh and Khulna ahead of the BNP's rallies there.

The opposition party is holding the rallies protesting the price hike of essentials and fuel, recent killings of five party men in police firing, and also demanding "release" of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

The BNP men, who have already reached Rangpur city, are staying at different places, including hotels and homes of their friends and relatives. Many are also staying under the open sky in fields.

Visiting three such places yesterday, The Daily Star found that more than 5,000 BNP men were staying in the city overnight.

Some 2,500 BNP men from Thakurgaon took

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JP lawmaker Ranga shown the door

RASHIDUL HASAN

In a new turn of events, Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader yesterday expelled lawmaker Mashur Rahman Ranga from the party.



He was also relieved of the post of opposition chief whip and his party's primary membership was revoked, meaning that he is no more in the main opposition party in parliament.

The JP chief came up with the stern action against Ranga for "siding with opposition leader Raushan Ershad and his recent criticism of Quader".

Quader took the decision and exercised the special power bestowed upon him in the party's charter, according to a statement issued by Quader.

According to section 20/1/Ka of JP charter, the

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YABA SMUGGLING

Drug dealers turn to new tactics to dodge police

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN, back from Cox's Bazar

As drives to clamp down on narcotics trade intensify, drug dealers are developing innovative techniques and finding new routes to dodge arrest.

Some of these drug mules, locally known as "fighters", have now trained themselves to hold their breath for a long time or hide inside the riverside mud for hours motionless or sit on a tree the whole night, law enforcers have claimed.

Transnational syndicates are now using them to smuggle yaba from Myanmar to Bangladesh via the Naf river. For each successful consignment, the smugglers have to pay each fighter up to Tk 50,000, law enforcers said.

The Daily Star could not verify these claims independently. Along with yaba, they smuggle "ice" into Bangladesh through 21 points in Cox's Bazar and two points in Bandarban, according to the law enforcers.

Once these consignments reach Bangladesh, smugglers deploy the second tier of mules, mainly transport workers and CNG-run auto-rickshaw drivers, they said.

During a week-long visit to Cox's Bazar and Teknaf in mid-September, this correspondent came to know about the techniques and route details from local carriers, auto-rickshaw drivers, and intelligence officials of police and Bangladesh Coast Guard.

"The fighters mainly work as informers of the smugglers. They go to the river with fishing rods and keep an eye on law enforcers' movement," Lieutenant Kazi Al-Ameen of the coast guard in Cox's Bazar told The Daily Star.

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Be cautious in carrying out border ops

Bangladesh Army tells visiting Myanmar military delegation

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Army Chief Gen SM Shafiuddin Ahmed on Wednesday told a visiting Myanmar army delegation that the two sides should work together on regional peace and security and quick repatriation of the Rohingyas.

The delegates also met Bangladesh Army Chief of General Staff Lt Gen Ataul Hakim Sarwar Hasan who reminded the Myanmar Army to be cautious while conducting operations along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border, according to a statement issued by the Inter Service Public Relations Directorate on Thursday.

The three-member delegation of the Myanmar Army led by Lt Gen Phone Myat of the Command Bureau of Special Operation arrived in Dhaka on Wednesday and is scheduled to leave today.

Lt Gen Ataul also said he expected that the border forces of the two countries would work jointly for maintaining peace.

During the meeting with the delegates, Army Chief Shafiuddin urged

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Taking a break on the weekend, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina shares a light moment with her younger sister Sheikh Rehana after catching a Chitrol from the pond at the Gono Bhaban. The photo went viral on social media after it was uploaded on the Awami League's verified Facebook page yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: AWAMI LEAGUE

Elon Musk takes control of Twitter

Fires top executives

AFP, San Francisco

Elon Musk yesterday began his first full day leading Twitter, with critics and fans anxious to see how the planet's richest man will run one of the world's leading social media platforms.

The mercurial Tesla chief's tumultuous, \$44 billion bid to buy the company concluded after months of uncertainty and speculation, and now users could start to see his plans.

Musk tweeted "the bird is freed" on Thursday, a jokey reference to the firm's logo, shortly after he said he made the purchase "to help humanity, whom I love".

Yet the idea of Musk running Twitter has alarmed activists who fear a surge in harassment and misinformation, with Musk himself known for trolling other Twitter users.

European politicians were quick to warn him that the continent had regulations for social media companies.

"In Europe, the bird will fly by our

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