

Plea to put election campaign under EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Making election part of the Election Commission's (EC) responsibilities may curb violence during polls, said participants at a discussion yesterday.

Organised by the Legislative Support Service Project of the Manabik Sahajya Sangstha (MSS), civil society members, politicians, and students took part in the meet moderated by former vice-chancellor of Jahangirnagar University Dr. Alauddin Ahmed.

The main point in the keynote paper, presented by freelance

journalist Hasanul Alam, was that the EC ought to conduct election campaigns for all contenders.

This would result in lesser untoward incidents and also prevent campaign expenditures from going far beyond the ceiling laid down by the EC, according to the keynote paper.

If the EC were to conduct campaign for contesting candidates, it would be able to put a check on illegal money race and uphold code of conducts facilitating better election.

Some recommendations include all political parties should be registered with the EC; public fund should be introduced to meet candidates' election expenses; a common poster for all candidates in each constituency; and holding common public meetings where all the candidates of a particular constituency may address the people.

Truck collision

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Four of the injured were admitted to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital while the rest given first aid.

The bodies were sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

The driver of both the vehicles fled the scene immediately after the accident.

Donors' model

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viding alternative job to the labourers, the statement added.

It also criticised government's Intermediary Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP) for lack of involvement of grassroots people. Structural policy reform was not considered as a poverty reduction strategy in I-PRSP, it added.

It demanded a separate sector in the budget for poverty reduction and increase in allocation in social service, education and health sectors. It also demanded housing project for slum dwellers in Khas land of the city and social safety for the poor.

It also urged the government to introduce direct tax to reduce disparity between the rich and the poor.

Kazi Faruque Ahemd, president of Proshika, Mahub-Ul-Karim, senior vice president of Proshika, Dr Atiur Rahman, senior research fellow of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, Mohammad Shahabuddin, director of IDPAA were also present at the press conference.

Rain

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Our Chittagong correspondent adds: incessant rain till Friday night swamped large parts of the port city and its environs.

Many city streets went under waist-deep water, stalling traffic movement and stranding people.

Port activities were hampered and movement of ships was disrupted, port officials said.

Meanwhile, the meteorological office in Dhaka said rain or thunder-shower, accompanied by gusty winds, was likely in Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi, Barisal, Chittagong and Sylhet divisions today.

Day temperature might fall.

Beaten to death

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Locals found his body, bearing marks of beating, near the main gate of Hazi Ibrahim Ali Govt Primary School at east Islambagh at 8:00am yesterday.

Later, police recovered the body and sent it to Milford hospital for autopsy. Mizan was killed sometime in Friday night, police said.

A murder case was filed with the Labagh Police Station but no one was arrested.

Pottermania

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pens because they have read the book and that is what's important to me," the author said on Sky News.

In Britain, it was launched at midnight on Midsummer's Day, the longest day of the year in the northern hemisphere.

Bookshops opened specially so kids could buy the book, all 255,000 words of it. Oscar-winning actress Judi Dench took her six-year-old grandson to a celebrity launch in London. "It is something that appeals to everybody," she said of the book.

Once they are sated by the brick-sized book five, Potter fanatics can relax. Rowling has confirmed that she has already started work on book six of the seven-book saga.

The planet's favourite boy wizard has turned into a global publishing phenomenon. The first four books have sold almost 200 million copies in 55 languages and 200 countries.

An estimated 13 million copies of book five have now rolled off the presses. It has already broken Internet sales records with more than one million advance orders received by Amazon.

New Zealand marked the launch with a bid to set a new world record for the longest ever children's book reading. Prime Minister Helen Clark was one of the first to read aloud at the 27-hour marathon.

"The wonderful thing about the Harry Potter story is that it has captured the imagination of children everywhere and helped to encourage a love of reading," she told Reuters.

In South Africa, more than 500 children and adults converged on a Johannesburg bookshop to get their hands on the book.

"I'm here for my 21st birthday," beamed one girl, tossing her cloak over her shoulder and adjusting her black-rimmed glasses. "I just love Harry Potter!"

From the kangaroo-plains of Australia's outback to its golden beaches, Pottermania swept "Down under."

Some Australians drove for hours along isolated, desert roads to get their copy, others journeyed in a special 14-carriage Hogwarts Express steam train, many queued for hours with anxious children.

And the worldwide spell woven by the teenage wizard was perfectly encapsulated by tiny eight-year-old Madeleine Chapman.

Dressed in a wizard's hat, she stood in silence at the entrance to Sydney's main railway station, clutching her book and reading. Not even the flame-throwing fire eaters nearby could distract her from Harry's latest adventure.

\$490m IMF loan

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cess and provides a coherent and comprehensive policy framework for halving poverty by the year 2015.

In line with this strategy, the authorities have adopted a three-year programme under PRGF designed to maintain macroeconomic stability, accelerate structural reforms that are critical for poverty reduction and growth, and improve the investment climate, Sugisaki noted.

The programme comprises fiscal reforms, reforms of the nationalised commercial banks and state-owned enterprises (SoEs), introduction of more liberal exchange and trade regimes and ensuring improved economic governance.

Under the programme, real GDP growth is targeted to rise to 6.5 percent by fiscal year 2005-06 and foreign reserves to equal three months' worth of imports.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister Saifur Rahman yesterday welcomed the World Bank and IMF's decision to release a total of \$1.026 billion in development funds for Bangladesh, saying the move reflected a renewal of their confidence in the country's economic management.

"But getting funds is not enough... we'll now have to utilise the funds

properly, honestly and timely to get the desired outcome," he told newsmen at his secretariat office.

Saifur hoped that other bilateral donors as well as individual investors would be encouraged to support Bangladesh's national development efforts.

Dy speaker

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knew that no debate could be raised on such statements.

Brushing aside allegations of suppressing the voice of the opposition and giving more opportunities to the ruling party, the deputy speaker said he was conducting the House sittings as per rules.

He asked the opposition party to go for constructive discussions in the parliament and assured them of adequate time to speak.

He also refuted allegations that questions from the opposition party were not taken in the prime minister's question-answer session. "Questions from all parties were taken. They (opposition) boycotted it just for the sake of their own politics."

About the alleged abuse of Section 300 of the Rules of Procedure, the deputy speaker said ministers have the right to speak on any topic under Section 300.



M Enayetur Rahman, managing director of the ntv, a local satellite channel, speaks at a press conference at Hotel Sheraton yesterday to announce its launch on July 3.

200 Europe-bound migrants feared drowned off Tunisia

BBC ONLINE/ AFP, Tunis

Tunisian rescue teams have resumed their search for about 200 illegal immigrants from Africa who are feared dead after their boat capsized off the country's coast on its way to Italy.

The Tunisian coast guard has already rescued 41 people and recovered 20 bodies, but rough seas have hampered the rescue operation.

Survivors said the boat had been carrying about 250 people, believed to be from sub-Saharan Africa and northern Africa.

It is at least the second boat to go down in the area this week. As many as 70 were drowned when their boat sank off the tiny Italian island of Lampedusa on Monday.

Italian newspapers have described the stretch of water between Africa and Sicily as a huge underwater graveyard.

The cause of Friday's sinking is not known. It may have been because the boat was overcrowded or in poor condition, or because of

the bad weather - or a combination of all three.

A fishing boat raised the alarm at dawn on Friday when its crew saw the sinking ship.

The Tunisian national guard and navy responded, as did four civilian ships nearby and a pair of boats from offshore oil rigs in the area.

Officials have not said where the boat came from but survivors say they boarded in Libya, which is becoming a favourite spot of the ruthless immigrant-smuggling gangs, says the BBC's Frances Kennedy in Rome.

Italy this week accused Libya of being a base for boats trying to bring illegal immigrants across the Mediterranean.

Italy's long coastline makes it a popular landfall for people seeking to enter Europe illegally, with almost 3,000 believed to have landed in the country this month alone.

In the past week more than 1,000 migrants have arrived on Lampedusa, which is closer to Africa than to the Italian mainland.

Teenage girl raped, killed

UNB, Sirajganj

A teenage girl was raped and killed by miscreants at Nandinamodhu village in Kamarkhanda upazila in the early hours of yesterday, police said.

A gang of about six men stormed into the house of Chhaya Khatun, 18, at about 12:30am and took the girl to an isolated place where they gang-raped and subsequently strangled her, said an eyewitness account of the incident.

Later, police recovered the body from the spot yesterday and sent it to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

A case was filed with police. Police have launched a manhunt for the killers.

3 cops closed on extortion charge

UNB, Keraniganj

Three policemen of Khejurbagh police outpost under Keraniganj Police Station were closed to police lines yesterday on charge of extortion.

Sources said Havildar Abdul Aziz and constables Nurul Huq and Abdur Rouf were suspended following an investigation report submitted to the Police Superintendent of Dhaka by the officer-in-charge of the Police Station.

Diplomatic tightrope

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Metzger had left. Admiral Metzger was the military filler of Powell's Dhaka entourage and he holds one of the most important portfolios in the Pentagon as the special assistant to the US forces' joint chief of staff.

Meanwhile, serious opposition is being voiced by some political quarters against any government move to consenting to the US request (see the accompanying story).

A section of the media yesterday reported that the US used the influence of one of its coalition partners in Iraq war to convince the government about sending troops before Powell's visit. These reports indicate that a Dhaka-based envoy of the coalition partner discussed the issue with Foreign Secretary Shamsur Mobin Chowdhury and the government was fully aware of what Washington's expectations were.

The Daily Star also learnt that the decision to comply with the US request is being justified pursuant to the UN Security Council Resolution 1483. Resolution 1483 deals with hostilities between US-led coalition forces and the forces led by Saddam Hossain. It doesn't, per se, constitute a mandate to empower the US to cobble forces from other

countries for any combat mission in Iraq.

Observers believe if the government decides to comply with the US request solely on the basis of the UNSC Resolution 1483, it will imply a departure, for the second time in history, from Bangladesh's long-held stance on troubleshooting in international crises 'only under the UN mandate'.

In 1994, the legitimacy of the then BNP government's decision to dispatch combat troops to Haiti at the American behest following the US invasion of that country was challenged in a local court. This resulted in the issuance of a show cause on the government over the constitutionality (as well as the juridical-legal merit of it from the international law's perspective) of such a decision. Again in September 2001, Dhaka's decision to grant air and sea port facilities to the US forces in the wake of the Afghan war stirred widespread controversy and gave birth to another litigation.

Sources say Powell arrived in Dhaka to lemon-squeeze Dhaka's consent, and his diplomatic bid was laced with a suitable quid pro quo. Powell had assured Dhaka that the US desire to take Bangladeshi troops on board in aid of the ongoing

American military campaign in Iraq follows the placing of a Senate bill in Washington - the Middle East Trade and Investment Act (METIA) 2003. The bill envisages the creation of an 18-member free-trade entity comprising some Muslim countries, including Bangladesh.

Critic of the bill, however, maintain that Bangladesh is neither a Middle Eastern nation, nor does its inclusion into the proposed trade entity is likely to come without a string -- recognising Israel and establishing trade and diplomatic linkages with the Jewish state.

Reports in the US media indicate that the METIA was designed as an economic appendage to the Middle East RoadMap that seeks normalisation of relations between Israel and Palestine on the one hand, and between Israel and other Muslim states of the region, on the other.

Analysts also point out that in light of India's and Pakistan's polite refusal to the similar request by the US, Bangladesh must err on the side of caution and refrain from committing any combat troops in the danger-prone Iraq theatre where the intensity of guerrilla attacks against US forces has multiplied in recent weeks.

BNP's date with a dilemma

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call and send troops to Iraq as soon as possible to maintain good relations with the lone superpower.

"Our decision to oppose the war was right and now it will also be a good decision to send troops because the war is over," said a BNP policymaker.

He said though days are ahead and Bangladesh will have to face difficulties in trade and commerce, so it would be a right move for the government to go ahead with America's invitation, ignoring protests and criticisms, if any, at home.

But another section of BNP leaders think that it would not be wise for the government to place the troops under US authority because the majority of people opposed the war on Iraq.

They think the government should discuss the matter at various political forums before taking any decision and that it would not be right to go against the sentiments of people.

On the other hand, a number of leaders of the BNP's coalition partners - Jamaat-e-Islami, Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) and Islam Oikya Jote (IOJ) -- said it would not be

judicious for the government to send troops to Iraq right at this moment because a volatile situation is still prevailing there.

"Moreover, it would not be wise to send troops under American command and the government should wait until UN peacekeeping forces are sent to Iraq," they said.

Jamaat leader Mohammad Kamaruzzaman said the government should think seriously before taking the final decision on sending troops because the situation in Iraq is still not favourable.

He said even countries like India and Pakistan have not agreed to send troops to Iraq.

BJP Secretary General Kazi Firoz Rashid said the government should attach due importance to the sentiments of people before deciding whether to send troops to Iraq. "Nobody would object to the plan if Bangladesh troops work as part of the UN peacekeeping force."

IOJ Vice Chairman ARM Abdul Matin strongly opposed the plan of sending troops to Iraq because the "US committed a serious crime by waging war against Muslims in Iraq".

He said Bangladesh must have its identity as a Muslim country and it would not be wise to sell out this identity for any temporary gains.

"We will not oppose sending troops if the UN sends its peacekeeping force to Iraq. Bangladesh should take the final decision in the light of its foreign policy," he added.

Chairman of another faction of IOJ Fazlul Haq Amini said the government has to rely on its judgement in a matter like this (sending troops to Iraq).

Terming the matter sensitive, he said, "We will not say anything in favour of or against sending troops because it is up to the government to decide what it will do."

Meanwhile, a section of BNP hardliners believe sending troops to Iraq would be suicidal for Bangladesh in view of the country's giving a candidate for OIC secretary general.

One of them said, on condition of anonymity, the member states of the OIC might take it otherwise and withdraw support for the Bangladesh candidate.

Businessman mugged in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Muggers took away over Tk one lakh from a businessman at Rifles Club Market here yesterday morning.

Witnesses said, Rabiul Hossain, proprietor of Jimi Bakery and Confectionery, drew Tk 1.13 lakh from Rifles Club Market branch of the United Commercial Bank near Reazuddin Bazar under Kotwali Police Station at around 10.30am.

As the businessman got into his car, four armed muggers swooped on him and snatched the money breaking open the window panes.

CNG plant opens in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A compressed natural gas (CNG) plant was inaugurated at Dampara in the city yesterday.

Food Minister Abdullah Al No-man, State Minister for Petroleum and Mineral Resources AKM Mosharraf Hossain and Mayor of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury were present at the inauguration ceremony.

The plant is sprawled on a one 'bigha' area.

The ministers lauded the initiative of the CCC and the mayor in setting up such a plant. It was also said to be one of the best plants in the country.

"We need to ensure the best use of our own resources to build a self-reliant country," said No-man.

The plant will serve customers from 7:00am to 11:00pm everyday in two shifts.

JCD leader

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flict was resolved through political mediation. Soheli's friends said he might have been killed as a sequel to the conflict.

Another source said Soheli had rivalry with a JCD central leader over the ward commissioner election. He wanted to run the election while another JCD central leader was also an aspirant. The dispute was settled as Soheli stepped back.

Some of the victim's friends said Soheli might have been killed over his rivalry with the leader.

Family sources said Soheli and his friend Koshru left home at around 10:00am after getting a phone call. The two went inside the Bangladesh Sarak Gobesongar compound at Paikpara where they met another contractor Jahangir Taufiq. After a while, Soheli got on a rickshaw and was coming out of the Gobesongar through the Laboratory Road.

A few minutes later, he was assassinated. Taufiq went there and found Soheli lying in a pool of blood.

Soheli got married six year ago and has a four-year old daughter, Soheli. His body was taken to the BNP central office at Pallan after autopsy.

Shazneen case

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terday, Faridul Islam said he had rushed to Shazneen's residence following a directive from the higher authorities soon after the incident. He had collected some evidences and fingerprints from Shazneen's blood-stained bed, bedroom, bathroom, doors, basin and a glass wall near the boundary wall of that house.

Fingerprints of accused Shahid matched some of the fingerprints he had collected, Faridul said.

In reply to a question, he said no man's fingerprints match that of another person.

Judge of the tribunal Kazi Rahamat Ullah will record deposition of other witnesses today.

Shazneen Tasnim Rahman, 15, the youngest daughter of the Chairman of Transcom Ltd., Latifur Rahman, was raped and killed at their Gulshan residence on April 23, 1998.

The tribunal is hearing the rape case filed by police and the High Court has stayed proceedings of the murder case filed by Latifur Rahman.

Special public prosecutors Mahub Ahmed and Arfan Uddin Khan appeared for the prosecution yesterday. Advocates Mosharraf Hossain Kajol and M A Kamrul Hassan Khan defended the accused.

Justice Hasan

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close relative of Col Faruq and Col Rashid, who have been sentenced to death for the assassination of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Although Justice Hasan commands respect as a judge, this proved too small to the AL government which did not appoint him to the Appellate Division.

The BNP is also attaching importance to his case as the 13th amendment to the constitution provides that the immediate past chief justice will be the chief of the caretaker government.

Justice Hasan retires on January 27 next year. But the government is planning to extend judges' retirement age by two more years.

If the extension is given, he will retire on the day in 2006 and oversee the next general elections due in October 2006.

Meanwhile, Chief Justice Mainur made a farewell call on President Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban yesterday, fuelling the speculations.

Saddam's sons

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But recent US intelligence intercepts suggest Saddam Hussein and his sons are alive and in Iraq, and efforts to capture them have intensified, reports say.

Mahmud al-Tikriti - the "ace of diamonds" in the US pack of cards in Iraq earlier this week.

On Friday, the chief US administrator in Iraq Paul Bremer told the BBC that the arrest of the other aces in the pack - Saddam Hussein and his two sons - was still America's "major objective".

Mahmud al-Tikriti has been questioned over the last four days by US officials in Baghdad.

The information he could give has "enormous potential significance", the New York Times says.

"You follow up every lead that you can get, and when you get a person who's that high up in the regime, it's obviously in your benefit to move quickly on anything he tells you," the paper quotes a senior defence official as saying.

But he added that Mahmud al-Tikriti's claims are also being treated with some scepticism.

"This is a person who is very close to Saddam Hussein, who was for many, many years, and who was part of the lies and deception for so long that you have to be very careful about what he tells you," he told the New York Times.

ntv to go on air

FROM PAGE 12

lite connection.

People from any part of the country, the continents of Asia and Australia and most parts of Europe and Africa will be able to watch ntv where news service will get the top priority.

"We have set up a computerised telecasting system with two modern studios," Rahman said.

Executive Director of ntv Hasnain Khurshed, Director Mohammad Yunus and Programme Director Shamsuddin Haider Dalim were present at the briefing.

PM: Manpower

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graduates look for jobs in the public sector because government is the biggest employer as opposed to developed countries where most jobs are provided by the private sector.

The prime minister told the new graduates not to depend on employment alone but also become entrepreneurs taking advantage of the external loans that the government receives in different sectors including the promising ICT (information and communication technology) sector.

Khaleda Zia said the government has taken initiative to set up polytechnic institutes for women in different districts.

Referring to the government decision to turn all BITs into universities, she said the teachers must prepare themselves to conduct advance research work before the decision could be implemented.

Hartal

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station in connection with Thursday's incident.

Chhatra Dal President Ashrafur Islam Pinto has filed a case accusing 26 leaders and activists of Awami League and injured AL MP Abdul Hye has filed another case naming 20 leaders and activists of BNP and Chhatra Dal as accused.

Police have so far nabbed five people for their alleged involvement in attack.

Chhatra Dal in its FIR has stated that one of its leaders has been missing since Thursday evening.