

Govt, opposition must cooperate to institutionalise democracy

Says visiting US official

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A visiting senior US official yesterday urged the ruling and opposition political parties to work together to give democracy an institutional shape.

Outsiders cannot force parliament to become functional unless there is a strong political will, said Frederick W Schieck, deputy administrator of United States Agency for

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BNP MP denies contact with B Chy's 'third force'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abdul Hye, a ruling BNP lawmaker and chairman of parliamentary standing committee on social welfare ministry, yesterday denied a press report that hinted he might have been maintaining contact with former president AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury.

Taking the floor on a point of order at the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, Hye denied being the chief coordinator, as alleged by the news

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Businessman held for accusing Saifur's son of demanding toll

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Businessman Nuruzzaman, who accused the eldest son of Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman of demanding toll from him, was arrested from his residence yesterday.

A joint police team led by the officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station in Sylhet and a sub-inspector from Srimangal Police Station in Moulvibazar district picked him up from his residence in

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Sehri, Iftar timings			
Ramadan	Nov	Sehri	Iftar
22	18		5-15
23	19	4-53	5-15

Prayer Timings		
November 19		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-54	5-00
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-16	5-23
Esha	7-30	8-00

Source: Islamic Foundation



PHOTO: STAR

Drug smugglers sit handcuffed yesterday after they were caught transporting 30 sacks of banned Phensidyl bottles stashed in a cabbage-laden truck at Amin Bazar in Savar. The truck was brought to the Department of Narcotics Control in Dhaka.

BNP liberals fear axe like B Chy

REZAUL KARIM

Liberals within the BNP known to have been closely associated with AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury before his fall from grace and subsequent resignation as the republic's president are reportedly passing anxious days apprehending a similar fate.

Party insiders said BNP hardliners, many of who accused the former president of conspiring against the party and were instrumental in his ouster, might not look kindly on the liberals' once cozy relationship with Chowdhury.

The former president, also founding secretary general of the BNP, recently came down hard on the government for its failure to tackle crime and corruption, giving rise to speculations that a new political front under his leadership might be in the offing.

Sources said these hardliners would almost certainly approach BNP Chairperson and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia for doing something about these 'mainstream' and progressive 'pro-Chowdhury' leaders in an effort to prevent them from 'fomenting trouble and creating division' within the party.

Khaleda is currently away in Saudi

Arabia to perform Umrah and is due home on November 23.

The prime minister reportedly had talks with a number of BNP leaders of ministerial status and also belonging to the so-called liberal group after an intelligence agency included them on a list submitted to her containing names of several BNP leaders purported to have held secret meetings with Chowdhury.

"The report is completely false, baseless and motivated," a senior BNP leader told The Daily Star on condition of anonymity.

The leaders in question, however, managed to convince Khaleda about their allegiance to her leadership, but the hardliners are active to sway her opinion in their favour, he said.

Another important BNP leader said no-one from the 'liberal' group have maintained any contact with B Chowdhury since his resignation. "It will be suicidal for the party if someone got the axe on the basis of an intelligence report or due to influence of the hardliners."

Bush, Blair close ranks against anti-war anger

Extraordinary security as 1 lakh expected to protest

REUTERS, London

George W. Bush and Tony Blair will mount a defiant show of solidarity after the U.S. president flies to London on Tuesday for his first visit to a major European capital since war in Iraq polarized the world.

Tens of thousands of protesters have vowed to give the president his first taste of European anger at the war.

But if the British prime minister is a reluctant host, he has shown no sign of it, robustly defending his decision to defy other big European powers and support Bush's war in Iraq.

"The prime minister believes this is precisely the right time for president Bush to be visiting this country," Blair's spokesman said.

"He believes that the majority of people welcome President Bush, recog-

nise the importance of the relationship with America and acknowledge the commitment it is showing to establish democracy in Iraq alongside our diplomats and soldiers."

Organisers expect 100,000 anti-war demonstrators to cap their protest by toppling a giant statue of Bush in central London's Trafalgar Square -- an echo of the toppling of a statue of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein in April.

Bush will be met by Prince Charles and stay at Buckingham Palace as guest of Queen Elizabeth. But his guardians, fearing an al Qaeda attack, have ruled out such traditional events as a royal horse-drawn carriage ride.

British police will mount the biggest security clampdown ever for a visiting leader, with weekend

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JP (Ershad) may return to JS today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The opposition Jatiya Party (Ershad) is likely to return to the House today responding to government assurance that their demands would be met.

"We heard their (JP) problems and will try to resolve those," Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told newsmen after a meeting with the JP parliamentary party yesterday.

Mannan Bhuiyan and Minister for Health Khandakar Mosharraf Hossain invited the JP lawmakers to a meeting with them. JP legislators led by Raushan Ershad attended it.

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DGFIDD, his assistant charged with rape attempt

COURT CORRESPONDENT

An attempted rape case was filed against a deputy director (DD) in-charge of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) and his office assistant with the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka yesterday.

DD Mostafa and assistant Mohammad Mahbub alias Mahfuz, are posted at the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (Caab) at Zia International Airport (ZIA).

Mosammet Sheuli Akhter, an information assistant at the Caab, filed the case charging the two with attempt to rape her at office hours on November 13.

Sheuli alleged that she and the accused worked at the same office and sometimes they discuss their family affairs. The accused would often make sexual advances during office hours and touch her on different excuses.

At about 8:30am on November 13, Mostafa asked her to meet him at

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Transatlantic war brews over Iran nukes

Powell busy wooing Europe

AFP, Brussels

With a new transatlantic battle brewing over Iran's suspect nuclear program, US Secretary of State Colin Powell sought to win support here yesterday for a sharp denunciation of Tehran from a wary Europe.

In a day of meetings with his European Union counterparts, Powell is to make the case that the UN's atomic watchdog must condemn Iran for what Washington insists is the Islamic republic's nuclear program.

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Baghdad dates with darkness

Sabotage, high winds lead to massive outage

AFP, Baghdad

Baghdad was in the grip of a two-day-old power outage yesterday after sabotage and high winds knocked out two key supply lines in the national grid, officials said.

Power ministry officials in the capital said they hoped to begin getting supply back to normal later in the day, but officials in northern Iraq, from where the capital draws the lion's share of its electricity, said repairs might take as long as three days.

The ministry's director of power generation, Mohsen Hasan, said the city-wide outage had been sparked by the failure Sunday of one of the two main feeder lines supplying the capital.

The problem was then compounded by the rupture of the second line in an explosion Monday.

Hasan said work was already under way on restoring the two lines that provide some 60 percent of the capital's electricity and that supply might be restored to some areas as early as Tuesday evening.

"Repairs to the sabotaged line have already begun and we have sent teams of engineers to assess the damage to the other line," he said.

But the head of Iraq's Northern Electricity Company, Sabah Shakkur, painted a gloomier picture, saying it could take as long as 72 hours to repair the damage, which he blamed on the weather and the looting of copper cable from the power lines.

The capital does have a single power plant of its own, which provides the balance of its normal

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PHOTO: AFP

Assisted by Awami League lawmaker Asaduzzaman Noor, Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday offers a woman drinking water in Rangpur, one of the eight districts in the north reeling from near-famine.

Scramble to book launch ticket on

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Advance booking of cabins of most luxury launches seems to have been completed though some south-bound passengers were still buying cabin tickets paying extra charges.

All fares for deck passengers were normal till yesterday at the Sadarghat terminal for different routes of the southern region but it would be increased from Tk 30 to Tk 50 from November 20, terminal staffs said.

Passengers on the southern district routes have already started crowding

the Sadarghat terminal to reach home to celebrate Eid with their near and dear ones.

But passengers who plan to leave the city three to four days before Eid were queuing up at the luxury launch counters to book advance cabin tickets. Many launch operators have sent them back though the passengers were ready to pay more for a single or a double cabin.

It has been alleged that the launch staffs would sell the cabin

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12,000 species face oblivion

BBC Online

Another 2,000 species have been added to the annual Red List of the world's most endangered animals and plants.

The "official" catalogue produced by IUCN-The World Conservation Union now includes more than 12,000 entries.

This year, IUCN has highlighted the problems faced by many island habitats which it claims face a bleak future.

It says many native animals and plants on the Seychelles and the Galapagos, for example, are being driven to extinction by invasive species.

Since AD 1500, IUCN says 762 plants and animals have vanished, with another 58 known only in cultivation or captivity.

Achim Steiner, the organisation's director-general, said: "While we are still only scratching the surface in assessing all known species, we are confident [the list of 12,259 species] is an indicator of what is happening to global biological diversity."

"Human activities may be the main threat to the world's species, but humans can also help them recover - the Chinese crested ibis, the Arabian oryx

and the white rhino are just a few examples."

The Red List threat categories are critically endangered (extremely high extinction risk in the wild); endangered (very high risk); vulnerable (high risk); near-threatened (close to qualifying as vulnerable); and least concern (this includes widespread and abundant species).

IUCN says island wildlife is being lost through the effects of invasive alien species, which have driven to extinction four plants from Ascension Island that were found nowhere else.

Other Atlantic islands, including Tristan da Cunha, St Helena and the Falkland Islands also face "unrelenting" pressure from invaders, grazing animals, and habitat loss.

The Red List says the future for Hawaii's plant life looks "grim" because of invasions, loss of pollinators that evolved with native plants, and human pressures.

Of Hawaii's 125 endemic plants (species found nowhere else) added to the Red List this year, 85 are

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PHOTO: BBC ONLINE

The black-browed albatross has moved from 'vulnerable' status in 2001 to 'endangered' in 2003. All species of albatross are now globally threatened.

Robbers go on rampage in four villages

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Making a mockery of the ongoing operation by the joint forces in the district, armed robbers looted houses and shops, raped three women and shot eight people Monday night and the night before in Dumuria upazila, according to delayed reports received here yesterday.

A gang looted a shop at Dumuria Bazar and fired indiscriminately, injuring shop owner Khokon Raha Monday night, witnesses said.

A number of houses in four villages of Dumuria were looted Sunday night.

The robbers created panic in the villages, firing at any one raising an alarm. Seven people including two women suffered bullet injuries.

The injured are Salauddin Molla of Chingra village, Abul Hossain of Tipna, Shefali Pal, Geeta Rani Pal and Rabiul Islam of Balabunia and Kalam Molla and Ranjan Das of Bhangdarpara.

Three with critical injuries were admitted to Khulna Medical College Hospital. Of them, Salahuddin's right leg was amputated yesterday.

Three women at Bhangdarpara were allegedly raped by the gang.