

Govt bans gathering

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She urged the law enforcers to decide whether they would stand beside the people or would continue to protect the corrupt regime.

"It is nothing new...this government had imposed ban on our programme last month. The government should refrain from showing this kind of autocratic attitude and give up the blue print for holding a controversial election rather. If the government does so, we will not agitate further," Hasanul Haque Iqbal, president of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), a component of the 14-party coalition, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Thousands of people will participate in the sit-in programme to protest the prime minister's anti-people activities," the JCD leader said.

The opposition coalition will sit in a meeting today to decide the next course of action following the ban. It will declare its next programme tomorrow following an evaluation of the government's attitude towards its already announced programme, sources said.

The opposition line-up announced the sit-in programme on March 30 to press home its demand for reforms in the caretaker government system and the Election Commission.

Directed by the government high-ups, DMP Commissioner SM Mizanur Rahman imposed the 24-hour ban from midnight today to midnight tomorrow due to what he considers a security threat to the PMO.

The ban is imposed on carrying any kind of arms, explosives and other harmful substances as well as on holding rallies, processions, demonstrations, laying siege to the PMO and on sit-in programmes around the PMO.

"There is an apprehension of disruption of security of the PMO as a section of political parties has announced a siege and a sit-in programme around the very important office," a press release signed by DMP Commissioner SM Mizanur Rahman said.

"Maintaining a peaceful atmosphere and public safety there is needed," he added.

DMP Sources said plans have been chalked out to halt the opposition activists far away from the PMO by barred-wire barricades and by deploying additional security forces.

The mainstream opposition coalition that has been agitating since last year has already faced several government-sponsored obstructions to their programmes.

Law enforcers foiled the opposition's March 12 programme to lay siege to the Election Commission Secretariat and the government imposed a ban on all kinds of rallies around the Secretariat ahead of the coalition's sit-in programme on March 30 in front of the Secretariat.

The government declared the

opposition line-up's February 5 long-march programme illegal, and said, to protect public interests and property it would resist any attempt to disrupt law and order.

Ahead of the opposition-announced November 22 grand rally last year, a government-backed transport workers union enforced a wildcat strike to foil the rally.

RESTRICTED AREAS
The ban will be enforced from Mohakhali crossing to Shaheed Jahangir Gate, from PSC to Parjatan crossing, from Bijoy Sarani to Aeroplane crossing, from Rokeya Sarani to Shishu Mela crossing, from Shishu Mela crossing to eastern side of Mohammadia Supermarket via Mirpur Road, from Dhanmondi 27 (old) to Square Hospital on Panthapath through Tallabagh and Sukrabad, from Square Hospital to Shelley crossing via Hotel Sundarban crossing, Free School Street and Bangla Motor Link Road, from Bangla Motor crossing to Maghbazar intersection, from Maghbazar intersection to Tongi Diversion Road up to Ahmed CNG filling station, from Ahmed CNG to Rainbow crossing and from Satrasa crossing to Mohakhali via Nabisco crossing.

All areas and roads, lanes and by-lanes under the above mentioned areas have been put under the ban, the release added.

OPPOSITION'S PREPARATION

The opposition coalition meanwhile has undertaken massive preparations to mobilise a huge number of people from all across the capital and its adjacent districts for tomorrow's programme.

In the last couple of days, senior leaders of the opposition parties and their front organisations held series of meetings preparatory to the programme.

A day before the sit-in programme, Awami Jubo League, youth front of the main opposition in parliament AL, will hold a grand rally in the capital today and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina, who will address the rally, is likely to give directives to her party activists.

Dhaka city unit of AL yesterday in a news release alleged that the police have started rounding up its activists and leaders in the capital since Sunday, especially in the old part of the city.

The release also alleged that although the police are saying that they are carrying out routine law and order maintenance drive, in reality they are singling out AL leaders and activists for arrests.

of the injured journalists.

Meanwhile, State Minister for Youth and Sports Fazlur Rahman expressed his deep regrets over the police attack.

A press release said the state minister talked to higher authorities concerned and gave assurance that a proper investigation will be carried out.

PRESS CLUBS CONDEMN
National Press Club President Riazuddin Ahmed and General Secretary Shawkat Mahmood in a joint statement yesterday demanded immediate punitive measures against the responsible officials and members of the police, apology to the tortured journalists, and compensation and proper medical treatment for them.

"Otherwise, journalists will be compelled to launch a tough movement," the club leadership threatened.

Our staff correspondent in Chittagong reports: Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) authorities yesterday sent a proposal to Chittagong Press Club (CPC) and Chittagong Union of Journalists (CUJ) leaders to sit in a meeting in the afternoon to discuss the issue.

CPC and CUJ leadership on behalf of the journalists rejected outright the proposal and said they will not sit for any sort of negotiation until their demand to arrest and punish the police personnel is met.

ANURUP TITU STILL IN CRITICAL STATE
Photojournalist Anurup Titu of the daily Purbokone, who was beaten mercilessly by police and later underwent a surgery for serious head injury, was still kept under observation in the post-operative room of Royal Hospital yesterday.

Hospital sources said he would be kept there for 48 hours before the hospital authorities comment on his condition.

The hospital authorities put restrictions on visitors yesterday for the sake of Titu's safety.

BPC dues

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few days.
Earlier the energy ministry and Sonali Bank claimed for about Tk 12,000 crore to settle BPC's liabilities.

In February this year, Sonali Bank wrote a letter to the ministry asking for cash or bond that can be invested, depicting its wretched financial state due to lending money to the BPC. It said the BPC owes Tk 5,230 crore to it, which is 23 percent of its total loan.

The energy ministry also sent a proposal to the finance ministry for a subsidy of Tk 6,795 crore for the BPC to meet the increased import price of fuel.

Tel Aviv

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Blood was spattered across the pavement while restaurant chairs were turned over and shoe boxes from a nearby stand were strewn across the street.

Steve Bar-Ner, a spokesman for the Magen David Adom ambulance service, said many of the casualties were foreign workers.

"The wounded were men and women, mostly middle-aged people and foreign workers," he said.

Witnesses told police they had seen a blue vehicle fleeing the scene of the attack seconds before the explosion occurred. Police helicopters were searching for the vehicle, which they suspect dropped off the bomber.

"I saw a young man opening a bag at the entrance to the restaurant where a security guard was standing, the explosion happened a second later," said bystander Mussa al-Zidat.

The area has been the target of several suicide attacks in recent years, including the last such bombing in Israel on January 19 which left around 15 people wounded.

A spokesman for Islamic Jihad told AFP's offices in the West Bank town of Ramallah that it was behind the latest bombing.

The attack was a "response to the Israeli massacres and siege imposed on our people," the caller said on condition of anonymity.

14-party

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Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim and Obaidul Quader also addressed the discussion.

As part of the programmes of the day, the national and party flags were hoisted simultaneously at Bangabandhu Bhaban, AL's central office and all its offices across the country.

Wreaths were placed in the morning at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

In Mujibnagar yesterday wreaths were placed at the Mujibnagar Memorial. A rally and a cultural programme were also organised, our Kushtha correspondent reports.

AL leaders at the rally urged people to be united to root out the present ruling forces and establish the ideals of Liberation War as envisioned by them on April 17, 1971.

The rally held at the historic Mujibnagar mango grove was followed by a guard of honour to the freedom fighters and a cultural programme.

Senior AL leaders Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Mohammad Nasim, Prof Abu Syeed and Muzammil Haque addressed the rally along with local leaders.

Hartal called

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14-party extended support to the hartal.

Pro-hartal activists brought out a procession in the city yesterday evening that paraded different streets. Later, a rally was held at Saheb Bazaar zero point.

HC asks govt

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In the rule the HC asked the respondents to explain why they should not be directed to perform their duties as per constitution.

The writ petition was filed on Sunday alleging failure of the authorities concerned in taking proper action against those who had tortured the religious minorities after the 2001 elections.

The petitioners submitted that at least 15,000 incidents of killings, rapes and tortures on the minorities, grabbing of their lands and arson attacks on their houses took place since the elections held on October 1, 2001.

Advocate Manzil Murshid moved for the petitioners while Advocate Rabindra Ghosh, Advocate Asadzaman Siddique, Advocate Jagadish Chandra Sarker and Advocate Dulal Choudhury assisted him. Additional attorney general was present for the state.

JCD men

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Contacted, acting principal of the college Mosharrif Hossain told The Daily Star that some of the students locked him and some other teachers in his office so that the agitating students could not enter.

The problem regarding admission could have been avoided if the number of seats could be increased, he said adding that 890 students took the admission test for the honours courses of 13 departments this year.

JCD leader of the college Morshed Azam said that they have been agitating for admission as per the merit list as the college authorities were not doing so.

The General Secretary of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) Abdul Wadud told The Daily Star that the JCD leaders took money from the students who failed to get enrolled in the college to arrange their admissions illegally. "As the teachers did not bow to this illegal demand, the JCD leaders tore the merit list and kept the principal and teachers confined," he added.

SC grants CEC's leave

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the writ petitioners, told reporters that the HC directives will continue to subsist until the Appellate Division passes its final verdict on the CEC's appeal.

The Appellate Division will make some observations regarding the statement made in the application of the CEC's counsel.

Before the hearing on the CEC's February 1 petition for leave to appeal, Nurul Islam Moni on February 4 sent a "confidential and urgent letter" to CEC's counsel Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed.

It sought to bring to the recipient's notice Awami League (AL) lawmaker Dr Alauddin Ahmed's comments at a TV talk show.

Mahbubuddin on February 5 attached the letter to the application for leave to appeal. He also filed a supplementary petition with the Appellate Division, seeking a stay on the hearing at the four-member regular bench. It instead wanted the full court to hear the leave to appeal petition at a deferred date.

On March 27, the SC issued a contempt rule against Aziz and Moni for 'lacking confidence in the apex court' dealing with the much-talked about voter list case. It also ordered the CEC and the ruling BNP lawmaker to show cause by April 9 why contempt proceedings should not be brought against them.

Officials at the EC Secretariat said the next step will be fixing the dates for publication of the draft and final voter rolls.

Sources said the EC will hold its meeting at a time when election commissioners M Munsef Ali and AK Mohammad Ali who have all along been opposed to preparing a fresh voter list will not be in office on expiry of their tenure on April 19.

In that case, CEC MA Aziz who has on his side the other two election commissioners, Justice Mahfuzur Rahman and SM Zakaria, will not face any opposition to having the fresh list prepared, added the source.

Meanwhile, Munsef Ali and Mohammad Ali whose terms of office will expire tomorrow, are yet to have an appointment to call on the president.

He said the CEC has filed the petition for leave to appeal against

two of the five directives made by the HC. Of the two [directives], one says the EC should prepare the new voter list on the basis of the existing roll prepared in 2000, and the other one asks the commission to incorporate the names of people aged 18 or above in the new electoral roll while excluding the names of dead and insane voters from the current list.

Kamal Hossain, Amir-Ul Islam and Rokonuddin Mahmud, counsel for the writ petitioners, were assisted by Sara Hossain, Tania Amir, Tanjib ul Alam while Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed and Abdur Razzak, counsel for the CEC and Moni, were helped by SR Khoshnabish and Toufique Inam Tipu.

NEXT STEPS OF THE EC
On receipt of the certified copy of the court's ruling on the leave to appeal petition, the EC will hold a meeting to decide on the next course of action regarding preparation of the fresh voter list going on since January 1.

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DU probe

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not submit reports, they expressed their doubts that with the dilly-dally-policy the committee might be looking for opportunities to cover up the matter after passing enough time in the name of investigation.

DU syndicate on February 28 formed the probe committee with Pro-Vice Chancellor (Pro-VC) Prof AFM Yusuf Haider as its convener and asked it to submit a report on the matter within the next 10 working days. The deadline has already expired.

Fifty-two students of the political science department secured first class marks in the master of social science examinations, 2002, which were held in 2004. The number is unusually high for the coveted ranking, which gave rise to a wide-spread controversy.

Till date, the committee only took two steps forward into the investigation. It expanded itself to include three more members and reshaped its terms of references to ensure transparency in the investigation and to meet the demand of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta).

Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, former Duta president, said, "To ensure transparency and accountability of the administration, the authorities should conduct a thorough investigation of the matter proper action against those who had giving it a top priority, otherwise

students and guardians will lose confidence in the university administration."

Sources in the syndicate said the committee, which held only two meetings in one and a half month, decided to re-tabulate the marks of the students. According to the earlier terms of reference the committee was to only recheck the existing tabulation-sheets.

The committee will also interview all the concerned who were connected to the examinations and publishing of the results, the sources added.

The prospective interviewees are Prof Ataur Rahman, chairman of the examination committee, the examiners, tabulators and the examination controller.

Sources said decisions to implement these plans might be taken at the next meeting of the committee on April 22.

Convener of the committee, Pro-VC AFM Yusuf Haider, said the committee is working and the report will be submitted although it has been delayed.

When contacted, DU VC Prof SMA Faiz, expressed his hope that although the committee is taking time, it will reach a correct decision as all know that the investigation is a complex one.

Rabbani vows

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continue movement on other issues.

In the rally of around 10,000 people from 16 unions, Rabbani read out the memorandum signed between him and the government and condemned the local lawmaker Shahjahan Mia for his role 'behind the attacks on Sangram Parishad.'

Asking his followers to refrain from further agitations on the issue without proper reasons, he urged them to unite against corruption, injustice and bribery at land offices, hospitals and local police stations.

Sangram Parishad will hold union-based meetings on the issues and go for further movement if the government does not meet their 14-point demand in a month as per the agreement.

Following the government's conceding to the Sangram Parishad's 14-point demand on Sunday afternoon, normally started to return in the trouble-torn Kansat and adjoining unions that witnessed the killing of 20 people since Sangram Parishad began movement on August 8 last year.

At a rally at Kansat on Sunday night, Rabbani announced the government's acceptance of all their demands and asked his followers to withdraw the strike and remove the roadblocks within the night.

About 300 trucks, which were waiting at the land port since April 7 due to the indefinite strike called by the Sangram Parishad, started leaving at 7:00am yesterday for their destinations.

No stranded truck was found at Sonamasjid land port yesterday afternoon. Most of the trucks were carrying stones while onion was the second major item. Besides, there were

Probe body

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suggestions to strengthen the security of the parliament building.

The Speaker yesterday told reporters that he would not take action against any official, as 'the probe report did not accuse any official of setting fire.'

Referring to the non-functioning of the 16 CCTVs on April 8, the probe report said the investigators faced difficulties to identify the miscreants.

The probe body recommended taking punitive action against the people responsible after investigation by the intelligence agencies.

Ninety-two security officers, including 45 officers from the army, navy and air force, are at present posted inside the parliament building to ensure security.

The speaker yesterday said more security personnel will be deployed to keep watch on different floors of the parliament building.

In addition to the existing 16 CCTVs, 48 more CCTVs will be installed soon to ensure security.

Another probe body headed by the additional commissioner of DMP that is investigating the incident is yet to submit its report.

NBR mulls

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of them sold the cars to businessmen for a profit of Tk 10 lakh to 25 lakh a car.

Selling cars like BMW, Cadillac, Porsche, the lawmakers made at least Tk 50 crore during this parliament. For own use, they, however, seem to prefer low-cost cars.

The Ershad government introduced the privilege of duty free-cars for the lawmakers and the present alliance government on August 22, 2005 added a new provision that says a lawmaker cannot import duty-free car unless at least two years' time is left in the tenure of parliament after their election.

Due to the new provision, women lawmakers of the current parliament cannot import cars as they were elected when the parliament had less than two years to go.

Rejoinder

FROM PAGE 1

which is harmful to a turbine. Such under-rated loading of a turbine will cause uneconomic wear and tear, and loss of revenue to the owner.

The gas turbine of Tongi plant is not a junk and it was manufactured and supplied by GE France.

Our reply:

Our story mentioned that the plant remained shut for a staggering 2,026 hours between June 22, 2005 and March 11, 2006. The rejoinder says it remained shut for 2,933 hours from August 24 last year till date. Accordingly, the PDB's revenue loss so far due to the shutdowns should be much higher than Tk 34 crore as our story mentioned. We stand corrected.

We have categorically mentioned "non-availability" of gas as one of the reasons for 75 rounds of shutdown of the plant since March last year. Records show that non-availability of gas is responsible for around 30 such shutdowns while the rest happened mainly because of the poor machinery and configuration of the plant.

The rejoinder contradicts nothing with the story and we stand by our story.

Sonia owns

FROM PAGE 16

grams of jewellery which is worth Rs 10.49 lakh. Her silverware amounts to 88 kg with a value of Rs 11.17 lakh.

The United Progressive Alliance (UPA) chairperson owns no motor vehicle but she has lent Rs 5,04,394 to her daughter Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

The congress president has Rs 85,338 in her savings account in UCO Bank and Rs 20 lakh in fixed deposit in the same bank.

She owns Rs 12 lakh in Reserve Bank of India (RBI) bonds and Rs 52,800 in UTI she also holds 10 shares of Maruti Technical Services Pvt Ltd and the worth of the shares was not quoted in the declaration.

She owns 500 shares of Western India Tanneries, her declaration said without quoting their value either.

The congress president owns Rs 1.49 lakh in national savings scheme and Rs 17.88 lakh in public provident fund.

Gandhi who travels in a motorcade protected by a fleet of bullet-proof cars owns no automobile according to the financial declaration.

The total value of three agricultural plots she owns is mentioned to be Rs 2,19,300 citing the wealth tax returns of 2005-06.

Accompanied by her son Rahul, daughter Priyanka and son-in-law Robert Vadra, the 59-year-old leader filed her papers hailing Rae Bareilly as her "Karma Bhoomi" [working place] and gave broad hints of initiating an exercise for revival of the party in Uttar Pradesh ahead of next year's assembly polls. "I am sure things will start looking up. They have already started looking up," she said when asked about her party's prospects in the polls in the politically crucial state. Earlier she drove in an open vehicle to the Collectorate with party workers shouting slogans hailing her victory and showering flower petals all the way.

As part of a family tradition, she performed a ritual at the Congress Party office before proceeding to file the nomination.

Black money

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while people of different professions including doctors, lawyers, chartered accountants, bankers and government officials are also there. The list includes even housewives.

Sources said 35 people were given membership of the DSE, most of them relatives or friends of ministers or ruling alliance leaders. Each member-ship cost for Tk 80 lakh, and it was made compulsory that a member must form a company and get it registered with Joint Stock Companies. Besides, the companies must have a paid up capital of at least Tk 1 crore each.

Asked if the NBR will get tax against the whitened money, NBR sources said no one is going to keep the money idle. Even if he keeps the money in banks, the NBR will get tax from the interest. Those who will invest the whitened money in business, the profits certainly going to be taxable.

Black money holders are getting more and more opportunities to whiten their undeclared income but the policy of successive governments since late 1970s has failed to get significant amount of black money whitened.

The first such opportunity was given in 1976 that enabled black money holders to legalise their illegal money paying 25 percent income tax. Since then, a total of Tk 3,920 crore has been whitened, NBR sources mentioned.

But the amount is very small compared to the colossal amount of black money, and the size of GDP (gross domestic product) that has increased 30 times over the last 29 years.

Latifur Rahman said the entire system of whitening black money was introduced disregarding all moral

obligations.

The MCCI always protested the system and it is still against continuation of the process.

The system is punishing legal taxpayers who pay 25 per cent for their hard-earned money while criminals are legalising their black money by paying only 7.5 percent. "It is sheer injustice," he said.

"Is the NBR allowing criminals' money to be whitened through this process? Does the black money whitening process legalise money laundering?" Latifur Rahman questioned.

"The government introduced money laundering prevention act to check illegal transactions but it allows whitening money earned probably through drug and arms smuggling," he said.

In reply to a question, Latifur Rahman said, "I have never seen any large company established through investment of black money."

The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) President Mr Nasir Hossain said use of the black money whitening policy is stepped up toward the end of a fiscal year.

The FBCCI in principle does not support this system. It was introduced to allow a huge amount of black money come in to the mainstream economy.

The system may discourage normal taxpayers, he said. "Nothing unethical should continue."

Nepal deploys army

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Prices for fresh food have rocketed in the capital as trucks delivering goods had been unable to enter the Kathmandu valley, home to some 1.7 million people.

Security forces shot the man in southern Nepal, the fifth death since widespread protests hit the country two weeks ago, a district official said.

"We have received reports that one protester died while being rushed to the hospital after security forces opened fire at an anti-royal demonstration," said an official from the Bara district, on condition of anonymity.

Late Sunday, an alliance of seven major political parties called on citizens to halt tax and utility bill payments and avoid patronising businesses run by the royal family, ahead of a mass protest in Kathmandu set for Thursday.

The parties also urged countries to stop all aid to the kingdom and Nepal's working overseas to delay sending money home to their families -- a vital source of income in a country where annual per capita income is 240 dollars.

The information minister offered no hint of a compromise.

"There will come a time when the security situation will become untenable and we have our legal options," Shrish Shamsheer Rana told AFP.

One option would be to call a state of emergency, Rana said, that would "suspend some rights of the people."

He said the government believed the protests were aided by Maoist rebels who have waged a decade-long insurgency to topple the monarchy.

"This is not a democracy movement, this is a movement clearly to capture government," the minister said.

The parties aim to suffocate the economy, already reeling from non-stop strikes and protests and the insurgency, and thereby to force the king to restore democracy after 14 months of absolute rule.

Private banks were closed Monday and a petrol and kerosene shortage loomed.

"I haven't been riding my motorcycle but wanted to fill up because I heard there was a shortage," said Ravi Sharma, a 19-year-old student waiting in a long line at a petrol station in Kathmandu.

The national oil company said it had sufficient supplies but that transport was difficult.

"We have adequate stocks of petroleum products but because of the strike most of the petrol pumps are shut, thus creating an artificial shortage," said an official from the Nepal Oil Corporation.

He added, however, that fuel consumption had also dropped drastically as very few vehicles are on the streets.

Doctors, lawyers, engineers, journalists and many other civil society groups are supporting the