

Dialogue making progress

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN and
HASAN JAHID TUSHIER

The second day of the dialogue over electoral reforms between ruling BNP and main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday progressed a bit towards resolving several demands relating to the Election Commission (EC) and electoral laws but Justice KM Hasan proved to be a difficult topic to negotiate.

After an hour long one-to-one parley at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil at a joint news conference said the discussion have progressed and they will sit again on Sunday at 7.30pm after discussing yesterday's outcome with the senior leaders of their respective parties and alliances.

A secretary general level meeting of the ruling four-party alliance

Bhuiyan, Jalil decline to elaborate, to sit again tomorrow

will be held today at 12:30pm in Bhuiyan's official residence while AL Central Working Committee will meet today in the party's Dhanmondi office to discuss the outcome of yesterday's meeting between Jalil and Bhuiyan.

Sources said Bhuiyan softened his stance on settling several minor demands which have no constitutional barrier. But Abdul Jalil brought out a combined agenda for dismissing the possibility of appointing Justice KM Hasan as the

chief adviser to the next caretaker government and ouster of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz at the beginning of the discussion before talking on other demands, the sources added.

According to the sources, Bhuiyan asked Jalil, "What would be the problem if the government considers one of the two demands?" But, Jalil insisted that the government must settle both the demands first to ensure a free and fair election in the country, the

sources added.

Jalil, who represents the AL-led 14-party opposition coalition, tried to make his counterpart understand that someone acceptable to all political parties should be appointed as the chief of the next interim government for having a credible election.

Bhuiyan told Jalil that he had not still sit with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia over the reform issue. He also said he will discuss the matter with Khaleda Zia today and formally let Jalil know about the outcome in tomorrow's meeting, sources added.

Briefing reporters, both Bhuiyan and Jalil said they discussed all the matters regarding electoral reforms in a cordial environment. They claimed that they made progress in their discussion, emerging from the much-expected dialogue held in the standing committee room-1 of Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

"We are sincerely trying to reach a consensus," Jalil said adding that the discussion was going on in a friendly atmosphere.

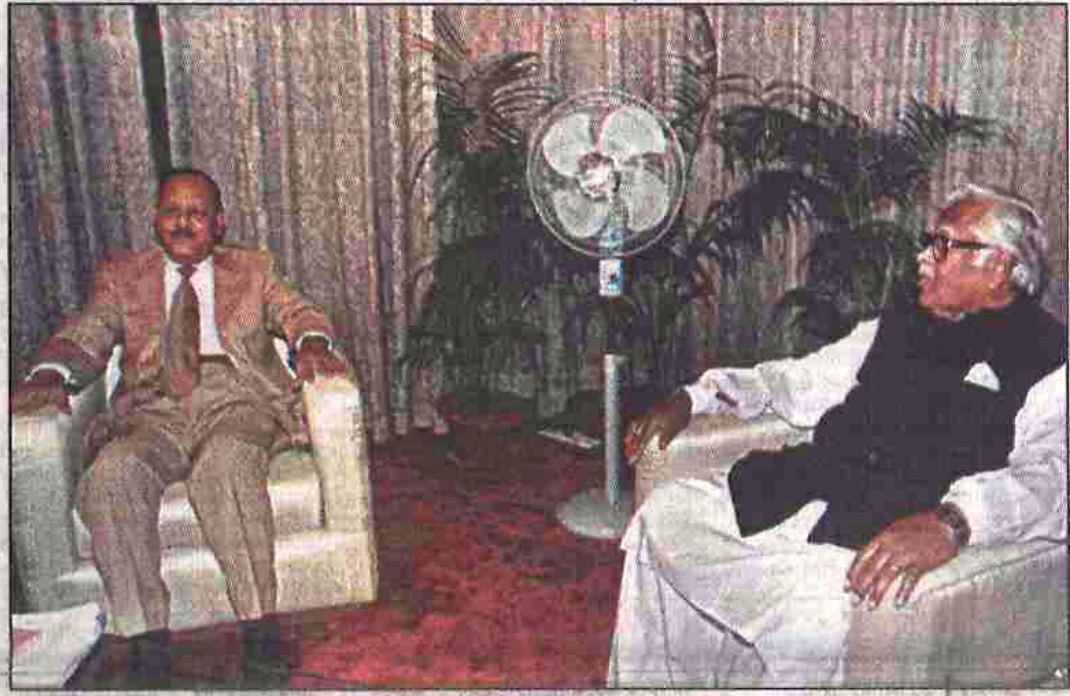
"Our discussion marked progress and we have decided to continue it," Bhuiyan said without elaborating despite repeated requests from the reporters.

Sources close to both the leaders said they agreed to review all the points of the reform proposal which are related to the constitution. Bhuiyan explained his position on the reform proposal to Jalil and asked for time until tomorrow's meeting for further comments.

After a 10-minute photo session, the secretary general level talks resumed at 11:10am and continued until 12:10pm. At the post meeting news briefing both the leaders looked more cheerful than they had been on the first day of the dialogue.

After the briefing, Jalil accompanied by his party leaders rushed to party chief Sheikh Hasina to inform her about the development of the second day's dialogue.

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BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and his counterpart in Awami League Abdul Jalil during their second day's dialogue on the proposed reforms in the caretaker government system and Election Commission.



Locals and anxious relatives through the banks of the Bangshai near Shalepur Bridge after a bus with garment workers plunged into the river.

Violent protests against power outage in two districts

STAR REPORT

Demonstrations, vandalism and barricades continued at Chuadanga and Rajshahi even at the weekend yesterday when the power consumption is much less than the usual weekdays.

Meanwhile, the residents of Talaimari, Hadirpur, Kazla, Binodpur and students of Rajshahi University (RU) on Thursday night ransacked Talaimari power substation and put barricades on Rajshahi-Dhaka highway several times demanding uninterrupted power supply.

Following an earlier declared programme, thousands of people took to the streets at Darshana in

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Over 30 garment workers missing in bus plunge

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 35 people, mostly garment workers are feared drowned as a bus carrying them plunged into Bangshai river at Shalepur Bridge near Aminbazar yesterday.

The 40-seater bus was transporting workers of Arunima Sports Wear Ltd at Jirabo in Savar to the capital.

Eleven people were either rescued by local people or they managed to climb through the bus windows and swam to safety, said an official of Fire Brigade and Civil Defence. However, the local residents put the number of survivors at seven.

A survivor, Jarina, said there were around 45 passengers on the

bus. Mohammad Mainuddin, a sub-officer of the fire department said there were 40 to 45 passengers on the bus when it tumbled into the river. He said 11 of them either managed to swim to the shore or were rescued.

However quoting another survivor a witness, Mohammad Israfil, said, "Six passengers managed to get out of the bus and around 20 others were trapped inside. Four of the survivors are identified as Parveen, Julie, Enayet and Omar Faruk."

Tajul Islam, a quality supervisor of the factory, without giving any figure regarding the number of passengers, said the bus was jam-packed with workers when it started from Jirabo, but many of

them got off at Savar.

Emdad Hossain, manager of the apparel factory, told The Daily Star, "The bus had only 11 to 12 workers of our factory on it, all of whom managed to swim to safety. The idea that people are missing cannot be correct."

Another survivor however said, "There were over 30 people on the bus since many former workers, who had gone to the factory to get their last month's salary, were also on the bus on their way back home." The driver of the bus is also missing.

Drivers of the fire brigade searched inside the sunken bus but could not find anybody dead or alive. "I entered the bus five times

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No step yet to restore HR in Bangladesh

EU parliament members express concern to PM

UNB, Dhaka

EU parliament members have expressed deep concern over police action on opposition rallies, saying that such actions will weaken the fragile democracy in Bangladesh.

"We're shocked and stunned by the actions of police force targeting opposition rallies and public gatherings. We believe these actions of the police will weaken the fragile democracy of Bangladesh even more," a letter addressed to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia said.

A copy of the letter, dated September 24 and signed by

Charles Tannock and Johan Van Hecke, both members of the EU parliament and vice-chairs of the sub-committee on human rights, reached the news agency yesterday.

They said over the last few years, human rights have been repeatedly violated in Bangladesh. Constitutionally guaranteed political rights are not allowed to be practiced. Women are subject to repression and torture.

They said despite repeated calls from the European Parliament (We recall the EP resolution on Bangladesh in November 2002 and

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Sharing pains and woes of sufferers

BSMMU plans palliative care

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

Can we exactly feel the agony of one who knows that he has been suffering from a non-curable disease and that his days are numbered? Isn't it even more painful when doctors tell one such patient that they have nothing to do to let him pass his remaining days peacefully?

Unfortunately, it happens in most cases in our country when a person diagnosed with a fatal disease at a non-curable stage goes to doctors.

But the fact remains that the doctors have much to do for a patient even when his/her disease is beyond cure while the

community as well as the family together can help the patient pass days in peace through terminal care called "palliative care".

Bangladesh finds it a new approach to incorporate palliative care in medical science through initiating an outpatient service centre at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) to provide patients suffering from incurable diseases with treatment and service based on needs.

Palliative care neither hastens nor postpones death; it provides relief from pain and other distressing symptoms and integrates the psychological and spiritual

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RMG workers still unhappy, declare fresh agitation plan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rejecting the minimum wages in the readymade garment (RMG) sector that was declared on Thursday, different workers' bodies yesterday declared countrywide strike on separate dates and vowed to 'force' the government to reconsider the pay structure.

Garment Sramik Sangram Parishad, an alliance of 11 garment workers' associations, declared countrywide strike on October 10, National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF) and United Federation of Garment Workers (UFGW) on October 15 and National Protection Alliance for Garment Workers and Industries (NPAWGI) on October 16.

NGWF will submit a memorandum to the labour ministry on October 8 demanding Eid bonus.

Sramik Karmachari Oikya Parishad in a statement yesterday also rejected the latest declaration of minimum wages for the garment workers.

At a press briefing following a rally at Muktangan, Garment Sramik Sangram Parishad leaders

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Bangladesh face Sri Lanka in opener today



BISHWAJIT ROY from Mohali

Under a new format, the ICC Champions Trophy gets underway with a confident Bangladesh facing in-form Sri Lanka in the opening match of the preliminary round at the Punjab Cricket Association Stadium here today.

The fifth version of the so-called mini World Cup will see Sri Lanka, West Indies, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe compete in the round robin league from where two teams will join the top six ICC-ranked sides in the tournament proper.

The day-night match will start at 2:45 pm (Bangladesh Standard Time BST) with Bangladesh Television and SET Max beaming live coverage.

It would be a daunting task for

the Tigers to knock down a team like Sri Lanka for the second time as the islanders have come into the competition in great form and on the back of a 5-0 whitewash of England under the leadership of inspirational Mahela Jayawardene.

But Habibul Bashar's men promised not to give up without fighting and they expressed the desire to make a place in the final round although their venture in the tournament had never been an encouraging one, especially in the last competition in England two years back when they suffered humiliating defeats.

"I still believe that realistically we have a chance to win the match. My boys are very much confident to push the opponents hard. Our two injured bowlers (Mashrafe Bin Mortuza and Syed Rassel) are now okay. Most importantly the young side are improving well," said Bangladesh coach Dav Whatmore on the eve of the match.

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50 hurt as AL, BNP men clash in Lalmonirhat

UNB, Lalmonirhat

At least 50 people were injured in a clash between the activists of the ruling BNP and main opposition Awami League (AL) at Alokdhigi in Sadar upazila of the district yesterday.

The district unit of the AL has called for a half-day hartal in the town today protesting the incident. Local sources said the clash ensued over joining the Awami League by BNP leaders and activists.

District AL General Secretary Advocate Motiur Rahman said about 100 leaders and workers of the BNP, led by Abdur Rahman, a neighbour of Deputy Minister for Food and Disaster Management Asadul Habib Dulu, joined the Awami League at a function at Kalirpat five months ago.

Since the joining, supporters of Dulu tried to persuade the BNP men to come back to the party, he said, alleging that the attack was carried in the morning.

Meanwhile, Saiful Islam, private secretary to Dulu, told newsmen over cellphone that the clash took place between the residents of

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Buddhist devotees fly a hot-air balloon outside a shrine in Chittagong as the celebrate Probarana Purnima yesterday.

Thus spake Mayor Minu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi City Corporation Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu yesterday told Rajshahi city dwellers to wait for winter to get some relief from the acute power and water crises in the city.

"Please wait a few more days, winter is near and demands for power and water will decrease then. We will also have time to accomplish a number of unfinished work in these sectors," Minu said.

Minu, also a lawmaker, was answering queries from journalists during a views exchange meeting prior to an iftar party organised at the City Bhaban.

"We have already completed several water supply projects keeping in mind the city's water requirement in 30 years' time from now when the population of the

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