

SC Bar urges Hasan to reject voluntarily caretaker job

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) yesterday appealed to Justice KM Hasan to voluntarily reject the post of chief adviser of the caretaker government in the interests of national stability, constitution and the very institution of interim government.

"If Justice Hasan rejects the post with a judge-like attitude, he will be remembered as a chief justice with honour more than that he might earn by heading the next caretaker government," said Barrister Amir-Ul Islam, president of SCBA, at a press conference at its auditorium.

The earlier he takes the decision, the bigger the chance for the country and its democracy to get out of the ongoing crisis fast, he said adding that it is a matter of paramount importance as only a free and fair election can ensure democracy and continuation of the constitution.

"From this perspective, what alternative Justice KM Hasan does

BARAPUKURIA COAL-FIRED PROJECT Plant pumps out 1,100 tonne groundwater an hr

Exhausts water level fast, poses ecological disaster in 15 villages

KONGKON KARMAKER with SHARIER KHAN

The Barapukuria 250 megawatt coal-fired power project pumps out a staggering 1,100 tonnes of groundwater per hour threatening an unforeseen environmental disaster in 15 villages around the coalmine area.

The plant built by a Chinese consortium led by CMC is using at least 1,100 tonnes of water per hour for power generation and then wasting it all away, power plant sources said.

Within a span of about eight months, the underground water table has apparently depleted by three times, villagers said. As a result, almost all the tube-wells in these 15 villages have become

completely dry, creating an acute crisis of drinking water.

Villagers are now being compelled to use polluted and unfiltered water for drinking, cooking, cleaning and other purposes while the authorities are yet to take any remedial action.

Lowering of groundwater level now affects nearly 35,000 acres of land of the 15 villages, and the water level is going down day by day, much to the distress of the farmers, sources at the Department of Agriculture Extension said.

Farmers said at least 30 per cent arable land of these villages remain uncultivated due to water shortage.

The affected people of the 15 villages formed a Sangram

Committee to protest this excessive underground water usage by the power plant.

The situation is also posing a threat to the existence of fish species, aquatic resources and birds of the area as most of the ponds in the area are drying up, said experts in the Parbatipur Fisheries Department. Many ponds and small canals of the affected area became vulnerable for fish and birds, they added.

It is not clear how the CMC was given the government's environmental clearance for such an operation, and why the authorities till date took no action to force the CMC to change its design or penalise the company for the disaster.

To meet the huge water demand

Rab recovers explosives from old Dhaka house

One held
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday seized huge quantity of crackers and explosives from a house at Becharam Deuri in old Dhaka.

Rab men also arrested Mir Shajahan, 35, in this connection, said a Rab press release.

Following information that a gang at Becharam Deuri under Kotwali Police Station stocked huge quantity of explosives and were planning to conduct some criminal activities, a team of Rab-10 raided a house at Noor Box Lane and arrested Shajahan with the explosives and firearms at 2:00am.

The seized items include six kg sulphur, 200 gm gunpowder, 5,000 crackers, 700 gm aluminium powder, 60 kg potassium nitrate, 15 kg charcoal, one kg iron dust, three kg calcium carbonate, detonating wire, an airgun and 50 small knives.

The Rab men also picked up Humayun, 40, and Habibullah, 33, for selling crackers.

Kotwali police could not give any details about the incident as Rab was yet to handover the arrestee and the recovered goods to the police station as of filing this report at 8:00pm.

Street face-off on the cards after handover

AL, BNP go to grassroots workers for political showdown

SHAKHAWAT LITON and HASAN JAHD TUSHER

Despite the ongoing talks between ruling BNP and main opposition Awami League (AL), both the camps are preparing for street showdowns with political programmes after expiry of the present government's tenure on October 27.

The preparations made by the two political archrivals triggered apprehension of confrontations

ahead of the next parliamentary elections. Political analysts believe that if the trend continues, the next caretaker government will have a tough time to keep law and order at a tolerable level.

"Threats and counter-threats in the political arena will put extra pressures on the caretaker government to maintain law and order," former adviser to caretaker government ASM Shajahan told The Daily Star yesterday.

Another former caretaker gov-

ernment chief, Major General (ret'd) Moinul Hossain Chowdhury, also said there is every chance that the law and order situation during the transitional period will deteriorate.

Confrontations between supporters of the BNP and AL have already begun in different parts of the country, which, many political analysts believe, will increase if the ongoing dialogue fails to reach a consensus.

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PM stresses army's role in restoring democracy

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday stressed the redefined role of military forces in restoring democracy and helping civil administration in crisis periods as well as participating in activities of establishing and protecting peace at home and abroad.

Bangladesh Armed Forces are no exception in this context. Multidimensionality and changes in the role of the armed forces have come with the passage of time, said Khaleda, at a Darbar of the Armed Forces Division at Dhaka Cantonment.

"We are also implementing

"Vision-2020" programme to make the armed forces time-befitting to meet the demand of new century," She told the function.

She hoped that the programme to upgrade the armed forces would continue in the future.

Army Chief Lt General Moeen U Ahmed, Naval Chief Rear Admiral Hasan Ali Khan, Air Force Chief Air-Vice Marshal Fakhru Azam Khan and Principal Staff Officer Jahangir Alam Chowdhury received the prime minister on her arrival at the venue.

Distinguished personalities and members of the armed forces of different ranks were present.

Ruling parties plotting to foil dialogue

Says Hasina
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina yesterday alleged that the BNP-Jamaat coalition government has been hatching a conspiracy to foil the ongoing secretaries-general level dialogue to force the country into a 'conflict'.

"As we had thought that the government was not sincere about dialogue, it now seems true after the finance minister's statement about the dialogue. Now it appears that the government is pushing the country into conflict without

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Firefighters make frantic efforts to tame the blaze at Islambagh in the capital yesterday which gutted at least 20 plastic factories and 1,000 houses.

20 factories, 1,000 houses gutted in fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A devastating fire gutted over 20 plastic factories and more than 1,000 houses in heavily congested Lalbagh area of old Dhaka yesterday.

At least 50 people including two firefighters were injured in the incident.

Witnesses said it took three hours for the firefighters to douse the fire that started in a hide warehouse at Posta Nama at 12:45pm.

Fire brigade officials said they managed to have the flames under control by 4:00pm, still they continued hosing the site till 5:30pm. Several hundred locals joined the firefighters to battle the blazes with whatever they had at their disposal.

Fire officials said the fire might have resulted from an electric short-circuit. They, however, could not give the exact cause of the fire and neither did they estimate the damage as of late last night.

Fire victims and locals said the incident has caused an extensive damage to the sweatshops worth not less than Tk 50 crores. It also left around 5,000 people homeless and at least 1,000 houses razed to the ground.

Locals alleged that before the firefighting could begin, the flames swept across parts of Shishibotol, Posta Nama, Mourartek and

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Tigers face Zim today

BISHWAJIT ROY from Jaipur

Bangladesh will play for pride when they meet Zimbabwe in the last preliminary round match of the ICC Champions Trophy at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur today.

The Tigers, who were thrown out of the tournament after a ten-

wicket defeat against West Indies at the same venue on Wednesday, will now try to salvage some pride by winning the match against their African rival.

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

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Words are inadequate to express our heartfelt gratitude to all our prospective investors and the facilitators who have made it happen. Thank you.

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