

Partisan bureaucracy obstacle to fair polls

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It is a tough task to hold a free and fair election in the present context of the country even if the government meets all the 31-point demand of the 14-party opposition combine, said the speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

They said the caretaker government cannot do much within the three months of its tenure as the four-party alliance government has designed the bureaucracy in its five years in such a way that it is really difficult to conduct a fair election.

The roundtable titled 'Free and Fair election: In the present context and our thoughts' was organised by Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (Bilia) and International Society for Ensuring Fair Election (ISEFE) in the city.

Journalist Selim Omrao Khan presented the keynote paper. The speakers questioned the neutrality of the chief of caretaker government where the judiciary is still under the executive body.

"Reforms of the caretaker government and the Election Commission (EC) would not work much. It needs reforms in politics, political parties and political leaders for holding an acceptable election," said Prof Anwar Hossain.

If the EC could be made independent and strong, there is no need to hold the election under a caretaker government, Ambassador Muhammad Jamir



PHOTO: STAR

Prof Anwar Hossain speaks at a roundtable titled 'Free and Fair election: In the present context and our thoughts'. On his left are Muhammad Jamir, lawmaker GM Quader, HT Imam, Prof Khondkar Ashraf Hossain and Waliur Rahman.

said, adding that the reform of the EC is a must and the voting process should be transparent.

"The government has created disputes over the recruitment of the election commissioners. Besides, the activities of the chief election commissioner (CEC) and the way he was recruited has made the opposition parties suspicious. Now the government has to remove the suspicions by meeting the 31-point demand of the 14-party opposition combine," said GM Quader, a lawmaker of Jatiya Party.

About the on-going dialogue at the secretary level, he said it is not hopeful as the possibility of reaching a consensus is very little in our

political practice. The speakers said the dialogue has become a matter of apprehension which should be removed immediately for the greater interest of the country.

If the dialogue ends in vain, the situation will worsen, they warned.

Editor of the Bherer Kagaj Shyamol Dutta moderated the programme which was addressed by former cabinet secretary HT Imam, Dr Mustafa Nurul Islam, Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, Prof Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah, Ambassador Waliur Rahman and Dr Khondkar Ashraf Hossain.

Chirac hails Prof Yunus

BSS, Dhaka

French President Jacques Chirac yesterday congratulated Prof Muhammad Yunus on his winning the Nobel Peace Prize, terming the recognition as a salute to a great achievement of 'solidarity, development and peace'.

"By paying tribute to you, the Nobel Committee salutes a great achievement of solidarity, development and peace. It also rewards the originality, the soundness and the determination of your action to develop microfinance," Chirac said in a letter addressing Yunus as 'dear friend'.

The honour, Chirac said, gave a new impetus to the 'exceptional tool of solidarity destined to develop more and more in the world'.

"You, the visionary 'banker of the poor', through an intelligent and generous concept founded on human dignity, have managed to combine initiative spirit and social responsibility," the French president said.

Chirac highly appreciated Yunus for placing his priority on women development in Grameen Bank activities as 97 per cent of them benefit from it. "This also proved to be an essential part of the success of your action."

He said France was happy to support Yunus' action that could act for the influence of microfinance and could contribute to its development as a tool of reinserion and struggle against exclusion.

"With my warmest esteem, my congratulations and my sincere friendship," the letter ended with these words.



PHOTO: STAR

Chairman of National Advisory Council for South Asia Prof Bishnu Poudel speaks at a lecture session at Bangladesh Enterprise Institute conference room in the city yesterday. On his right is Political Counsellor of the US Embassy Dundas C McCullough and on his left are Farooq Sobhan and Dr Mizanur Rahman Shelley.

'US for free, fair polls with participation of all parties'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The US is looking forward to a free and fair election with the full and active participation of all political parties in Bangladesh, said Dundas C McCullough, political counsellor of the US Embassy, yesterday.

He observed that all the South Asian countries are facing challenges regarding democracy.

"Our objective in South Asia is to champion change and reform to produce a more stable, prosperous and integrated region through the advance of basic freedoms," he said at a lecture session at the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute conference room in the city.

At the session, former ambassadors and experts on international affairs exchanged views on the US' changing policy towards South Asia.

The US will continue its assistance in developing the democratic base in this region through investment in anti-corruption and trans-

parency projects, support for the rule of law and encouragement of participation of civil society members in decision-making, said McCullough.

Delivering his lecture, Prof Bishnu Poudel, chairman of National Advisory Council for South Asia, a Washington-based think-tank, said the US government wants to ensure that a free and fair election will be held in Bangladesh.

He said the Bush administration is transforming the dimension of its foreign policy to suit the changing global scenario, particularly in the wake of North Korea's nuclear test and growing Chinese economy.

"Diplomats were withdrawn from nine countries and nine political counsellors were engaged for Indian affairs," he added.

He said the Americans are learning, experiencing and readjusting its foreign policy to meet the new challenges and that the unipolar world might not persist and there will

be a change.

Former foreign secretary and BEI Chairman Farooq Sobhan said the expansion of public diplomacy is essential to bridge the gap between the US and the South Asia in the aftermath of 9/11.

Emphasising the formulation of a long-term strategy in the relationship, he said the concept of security in terms of US-South Asia relations should not be limited to military cooperation and strategic assistance.

He also called for easy access of Bangladeshi products to the US market and special attention to the regional relationship through Saarc and Safta.

Dr Mizanur Rahman Shelley, chairman of the Centre for Development Research, also spoke.

Footwear trader, CCC revenue officer found dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two people were killed in Chittagong in last two days. They were identified as Nurul Kabir, son of Abdus Sobhan of Satkania upazila and Mozammel Hossain Chowdhury of Patiya upazila.

Mystery shrouds the death of Kabir, a footwear businessman. Police yesterday recovered the body which was hanging from a tree nearby his home.

Kabir, who had a footwear shop at Reazuddin Bazar in the city, went to his village home on Wednesday. Meanwhile, a gang of unidentified terrorists kidnapped Mozammel, a revenue inspector of Chittagong City Corporation, on Wednesday evening while he was going to his village home.

Police recovered his body at around 10.00pm from Fazlikharhat area under Anwara upazila.

The motive behind his murder couldn't be ascertained. Two separate cases were filed in these connections with the Satkania and Anwara Police Stations.

ANTI-ADULTERATION DRIVE 9 vermicelli factories demolished in Ctg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

A mobile court demolished nine unauthorised Semai (vermicelli) factories at Chaktai during an anti-adulteration drive in the early hours of yesterday.

During the drive, an aggrieved quarter set fire to one of the factories, burning down four factories. The factory was torched in a bid to fuel incitement against the drive, sources said.

During the seven-hour drive that began at around 11:30pm on Wednesday, the mobile court also seized two trucks of vermicelli and a huge quantity of substandard palm oil, vegetable oil and other raw materials from the factories.

Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) Magistrate Mohammad Munir Chowdhury conducted the drive with the help of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) and Bangladesh Standard Testing Institute (BSTI).

Sources in the mobile court said a large pan full of palm oil on the oven of a factory caught the fire at around 12:15am, which soon engulfed three other factories.

At this time a group of people

tried to take out a procession accusing the mobile team of setting the fire.

However, the members of the court along with the local ward commissioner managed to bring the situation under control with the help of policemen who dispersed the mob.

Five fire fighting units rushed to the spot and extinguished the blaze after a three-hour frantic effort.

Later, the mobile court raided five more factories at the adjoining areas and seized huge quantities of substandard vermicelli and raw materials.

The factories were set up illegally and producing vermicelli without obtaining BSTI licence, said the magistrate.

Md Habibur Rahman Bhuiyan, senior Scientific Officer of Bangladesh Centre of Science and Industrial Research (BCSIR) in a statement said that the seized food items contained ingredients detrimental to public health.

The law enforcers were trying to arrest the owners of two factories who went into hiding.



PHOTO: STAR

Sammilita Nagarik Andolon stages a demonstration at Muktangan in the city yesterday demanding reforms in caretaker government and election commission.

Vow to resist polls under Hasan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sammilita Nagarik Andolon, a platform for united citizens' movement, yesterday vowed to resist any election under Justice KM Hasan, probable chief adviser to the next caretaker government, and MA Aziz, chief election commissioner.

At two separate rallies in the capital, the leaders of the platform said they cannot accept Justice Hasan as the chief of the caretaker government and MA Aziz as the chief election commissioner because of their involvement with the BNP politics.

They also vowed to build country-wide resistance if the government makes Justice Hasan chief adviser ignoring the demands for electoral reforms by Awami League-led 14-party opposition combine.

The speakers said they will stage demonstrations, form human chains and hold rallies in the capital from October 28, the day the present government will step down and the caretaker government will take over.

They also urged their activists to come to Dhaka from all over the country on the day when Justice Hasan is likely to assume office.

Dr Qazi Faruque Ahmed, chief of Proshika, said people are now very

much anxious about the next election because Justice Hasan and MA Aziz are not neutral.

Around one thousand people under the platform brought out processions and held rallies at Muktangan and Central Shaheed Minar.

The left-leaning 11-party also held a meeting at the Workers' Party office in the city where the party leaders said an unexpected situation will prevail in the country if the dialogue between Awami League and BNP fails to reach a consensus.

DU to confer 'Doctor of Laws honoris causa' on Prof Yunus

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University (DU) authorities decided to confer 'Doctor of Laws honoris causa' on Nobel laureate Prof Dr Mohammad Yunus at its 43rd convocation, sources said.

The authorities also fixed the schedule of the convocation on December 24, where Prof Yunus will be the Convocation Speaker.

Chaired by DU Vice-chancellor Prof SMA Faiz, university syndicate took the decision yesterday following a recommendation of university's academic council meeting, which was held on Wednesday, sources said.

Ctg RMG workers ransack factory for salaries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Unruly workers vandalised a garment factory at Majhirhat in the port city yesterday demanding payment of advance salaries.

Sources said the workers of Krishan Knitting Ltd. Suspended their work went on a rampage at around 3:30pm as the management rejected their demand.

They damaged a few windowpanes, sewing machines and the switchboard before the police and members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) stepped in.

The workers, however, joined their work after leaders of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) visited the factory and talked them into returning to their work.



PHOTO: STAR

Agitating workers vandalise Krishan Garments at Majhir Ghat in the port city yesterday demanding payment of advance salaries.

BDR-BSF CLASH Situation calm at Jhenidah border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Villagers have started returning to their homes following the improvement of situation at the border upazila of Moheshpur in Jhenidah district.

Those who left their homes fearing shootings by the BSF are returning homes as a calm situation is prevailing there.

Members of the BSF gunned down one Khair Uddin, son of Anwar Uddin of Kachuarputa village while he was cutting grass in the field at around 10:00am on Wednesday last.

Soon both the border security forces were engaged in trading fire between them.

Five hundred rounds of bullets were exchanged when the villagers left their homes fearing further escalation of the gun battle.

After the incident, BSF invited BDR for a flag meeting which was held between the commanders of both the sides at 4:00pm.

Lt Colonel Naser led the Bangladesh side while the Indian side was headed by Lt Colonel Kailash.

They agreed not to open fire at each other.

APPOINTMENT OF TAXATION OFFICERS HC rule on DCC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a rule on Dhaka City Corporation to explain why the appointment of taxation officers of DCC shall not be declared unlawful.

A HC division bench also issued a stay order on the appointments, which will remain effective until the disposal of the rule.

The order came following a writ petition filed by 10 deputy taxation officers of DCC, including Abdul Alim Khan, challenging the appointments.

Barrister Abdur Razzaq moved for the petitioners while Advocate MK Hasan and Barrister Ehsan A Siddiq assisted him.

Memorial plaque set up on grave of Birshreshta Matiur

UNB, Dhaka

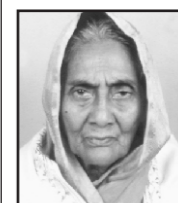
A memorial plaque has been set up on the grave of Birshreshta Matiur Rahman at the Mirpur Martyred Intellectuals graveyard in the city.

The memorial plaque has been constructed under a project for setting up plaques on the graveyards of seven Birshreshta to highlight their contributions in the War of Liberation.

State Minister for Liberation War Affairs Prof M Rezaul Karim yesterday inaugurated the plaque, built at a cost of Tk 11.43 lakh.

Obituary

UNB, Dhaka



Begum Karimunnesa, mother of State Minister for Labour and Employment Aman Ullah Aman, passed away due to old age complications in the city yesterday at the age of 75.

She will be buried at her Hazratpur village in Keraniganj.

BSS added: Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday expressed her deep shock at the death of Karimunnesa.

In a condolence message sent from Saudi Arabia, she prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul.

Khaleda conveyed her sympathy to Aman and other members of the bereaved family.

Death anniversary



Today is the second death anniversary of Abdul Hamid, a former senior assistant secretary of the industries ministry, says a press release.

A milad and doa mahfil will be held at his home at Plot-420, Block-B, Khatgaon Chowdhury Para after Asr prayers.

Qulkhwani



Qulkhwani of Jafreen Naz M u s h s a k e b Juthy, a fashion designer, will be held at Mailbagh Colony Community Centre after Asr prayers today, says a press release.

Juthy, wife of fashion designer Faisal Mahmud, passed away due to meningitis at Ibne Sina Hospital on October 17 at the age of 36.

A Quarkhwani and doa mahfil will also be held at her grandfather's residence at 687/C Mailbagh Chowdhury Para after Asr prayers today.

Notre Dame College club to mark 40th anniversary

Outward Bound Adventure Club (OBAC) of Notre Dame College will celebrate its 40th anniversary this year, says a press release.

On the occasion, OBAC is going to organise a two-day programme on the college premises on November 30 and December 1.

OBAC, a students' platform of Notre Dame College, has been relentlessly contributing to the college's co-curricular programmes by providing its members with the opportunity to develop their skills through various outward activities since 1966, the release added.

Former and present OBAC members have been requested to attend the programmes.

Any further inquiry could be made by calling OBAC Moderator Nirmol C Sarker at 8322224 or at the college at 7100325 and 7100598.

Weather Today Rain likely UNB, Dhaka. Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at a few places over Rajshahi, Dhaka, Sylhet and Chittagong divisions and at one or two places over Barisal and Khulna divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.