

Nat'l Revolution and Solidarity Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) will observe National Revolution and Solidarity Day today while Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) and Col Taher Sangsad as civil-military upsurge.

Some other organisations, including Awami Swachchasebok League, Muktijoddha Oikya Parishad and Ghatik Dal Nirml Committee will observe it as freedom fighter sepoys' killing day.

The day was observed as National Revolution and Solidarity Day at state-level from 1976 to 1995. Coming to power in 1995, the then Awami League government stopped the practice during its tenure.

After coming back to power in 2001, the BNP-led four-party coalition government resumed the practice. The non-party caretaker government also retains it.

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Council yet to pick up required pace

Advisers meet informally without CA

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The council of advisers to the caretaker government has yet to start functioning effectively as the advisers have not been involved so far in the process of setting up an administration competent enough to hold a fair election.

Some of the advisers feel that the council should sit regularly to take steps in this regard, but the meetings are not being held frequently as the chief adviser does not convene them.

The advisers at an unscheduled meeting in a state guesthouse yesterday without the presence of the chief adviser discussed the overall situation and agreed that the

process of creating a congenial atmosphere for the next parliamentary election should be expedited, sources said.

Except some measures taken by the president cum chief adviser himself in reshuffling the administration, the council of advisers has yet to take any collective decision regarding creating a level playing field for holding the next election, rather it is still stuck in a difficult situation regarding reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC).

"It is true, we have not been able to show any remarkable performance so far but we have also just begun our work," Adviser Dhraj Kumar Nath told The Daily Star yesterday. "We are trying our best to

ensure a free and fair election."

Currently, most of the advisers are not directly involved with the process of making changes in the administration as they are in charge of such ministries which are not so important regarding the election. The president cum chief adviser is in charge of all the ministries which are vital to the next election.

The way of ensuring the advisers' involvement with the vital ministries is through formation of some advisory committees for reshuffling the administration and for improving the law and order situation. But the advisory committees are yet to be formed.

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C'wealth team asked to watch pre-poll env

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) yesterday asked the delegation of the Commonwealth Secretariat (CS) to send election observers as early as possible to observe the pre-election environment in Bangladesh, which the AL termed 'very important'.

AL President Sheikh Hasina made the request when Syed Sharfuddin, special adviser and head, Asia-Europe section, and Julie Broadbent, political affairs officer, democracy section of the Commonwealth Secretariat, met her at Sudha Sadan.

Current political situation and pre-election observers issue came up for discussion at the meeting that lasted about an hour. After the meeting, AL leaders briefed the Commonwealth delegation for more than one-hour on pre-election environment, 14-party's demands for electoral reforms, reconstitution of the 14-

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CEC reaffirms position not to resign anyway

Polls to be held under his authority, Aziz declares after meeting with US envoy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz yesterday cleared his position and reiterated that he will not resign anyway.

The CEC however denied that the council of advisers or any advisers requested or called him to resign. He firmly declared that the upcoming general elections would be held under his authority.

The CEC expressed his firm decision to newpersons after a meeting with US Ambassador Patricia A. Butenis.

The US ambassador yesterday called on the CEC at his office and wanted to be updated on how everything was going regarding the 14-

party's demand for reconstituting the EC.

Asked about her discussion with the CEC, Butenis ignored the journalists and termed their behaviour and attitude "unacceptable".

"The way you behave is not acceptable," Butenis castigated the waiting reporters. "If you don't ask in a civilised way this is the last I talked anybody in a Bangladeshi media," she angrily said.

"The discussion was held about the election preparations and the foreign observers," Aziz told the reporters.

"She wanted to know about our election preparations and whether the election will be held in due time." He termed the 14-party's

demand for EC reconstitution a political matter and said they did not discuss it.

He however admitted that the US ambassador discussed the 14-party demand with him when the journalists informed him Butenis had told them about it.

"I didn't express my opinions about it to the US ambassador," said the CEC. "Who am I to give opinion about this?"

"I am not under any pressure for the demand of the 14-party alliance," he added.

On the advisers requesting him to step down, Aziz said no advisers had ever made any such request to him.

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PHOTO: STAR

Vendors occupy part of the foot over-bridge across the railway lines near Kamalapur Railway Station, much to the trouble of pedestrians.

Political recruit Mokhlesur plays twin roles

STAR REPORT

Mokhlesur Rahman Chowdhury, politically appointed press secretary to President Iajuddin Ahmed, is now functioning as the press secretary to the chief adviser as well although there are allegations of 'objectionable actions' against him.

Mokhlesur attends all the meetings of the council of advisers to the caretaker government defying objections of the advisers, sources said.

He was formerly diplomatic correspondent of the Dainik Dinkal, known as the mouthpiece of BNP. The daily is published by BNP's Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman.

Despite demands from different political parties for Mokhlesur Rahman's removal from the present post, there is still no move from the president, who is also the chief adviser of the non-party caretaker government.

Mokhlesur also tries to influence the administrative decisions of the advisers to the caretaker government, sources said, adding that the advisers to the caretaker government objected to Mokhlesur Rahman's attending the council

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Ershad's U-turn not to join 4-party

Says his party prepares to contest polls independently

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In yet another dramatic turnabout from his earlier decision, Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad yesterday decided not to join the BNP-led four-party alliance following strong opposition from his party lawmakers.

"What I said earlier (about joining the alliance) was not a party decision. I made a mistake," Ershad said. A decision to join any alliance may however be taken after reviewing the political situation, he told reporters.

"We had earlier decided in principle to join the four-party combine. But the decision was postponed after discussing the matter with the party presidium and former members of parliament," Ershad said. They told him that they would not be with him if he joined the alliance, he added.

The former president said they are now preparing to contest the next general election independently and will field candidates for all seats. The new announcement fol-

lowed a meeting of JP leaders, who were members of the eighth parliament, with the party chairman yesterday. All the former lawmakers excluding GM Quader, who opposed joining the BNP-led combine from the beginning, attended the meeting.

Terming his previous decision to join the alliance a 'mistake', Ershad later told reporters that most of the former lawmakers asked him not to go with the immediate past ruling coalition, saying they would leave him if he does so.

JP Secretary General Ruhul Amin Hawlader told The Daily Star, "Fifteen lawmakers out of 16 present at the meeting suggested the party chairman to take time to join any alliances. So, the decision to join the BNP-led combine was changed."

Kazi Firoz Rashid, JP presidium member, said, "Party lawmakers told the chairman that they would not get vote if the party goes with the BNP. The party chairman then

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Clarification, Our Reply

Barrister Omar Sadat, the lawyer who filed a writ petition of a former district anti-corruption officer of now defunct Bureau of Anti-Corruption (Bac), has sent some clarifications to a Daily Star report headlined "Moudud's sudden move stays graft body work" which was published on Saturday.

He said the functions of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has not been stayed by the November 1 order of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court. "The Commission is as able as ever to act against anyone it chooses, within the framework of Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2004. In fact ACC carried on with all its activities and initiated action against various people during the High Court stay order granted exactly in the fashion of the Appellate Division between 5.3.2006-24.8.2006 passed in this very same case," said barrister Omar.

The case is not a step to prevent the ACC from commencing actions against corrupt ministers during the tenure of the caretaker government and that this is simply a case between two groups of Bac, he added.

Barrister Omar further said involvement of former law

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TIB GRAFT INDEX

Bangladesh improves from bottom to third

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh graduated to the third place from below on the corruption perception index (CPI) 2006 prepared by Berlin-based international anti-corruption organisation -- Transparency International (TI).

"It does not mean that corruption in Bangladesh has gone down," said Professor Muzaffer Ahmad, chairman of the board of trustees of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), releasing the report at a news briefing in the National Press Club in Dhaka yesterday.

Bangladesh no longer occupies the last place on the index, which is attributable more to poorer perfor-

mance of several other countries than to a drop in corruption in Bangladesh, TI explained.

"My personal experience is that corruption has worsened in the country," the TIB chairman observed.

In a scale of 0-10, Bangladesh along with Chad, Congo and Democratic Republic of Sudan jointly ranked third from below having scored 2 points.

Among the Asian countries, Bangladesh was mentioned together with Myanmar and Cambodia where lack of political will to strengthen anti-corruption institutions has perpetuated

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EDUCATION

Copying curbed, quality fell

SHEIKH SABIHA ALAM



The BNP-led alliance government during its tenure won acclaim for curbing copying in public examinations but lost credibility for wholesale politicisation, patronising sub-standard madrasa education for political gain and failure to ensure quality education.

Evidence of cronyism in almost all appointments was rife in the last five years. The government awarded recognition to Dawra degree under Kawmi madrasa, though it was ignorant of the number of institutions, curriculum and terms of study.

Teachers from all levels faced appalling torture, some were even killed, beaten up and became the target of frequent threats.

Analysts say the immediate past government actually fanned the poorly performing madrasas serving mostly the poor and proprietary English medium schools serving the elites. These were the potent symbols of the divisive system of the society during its tenure.

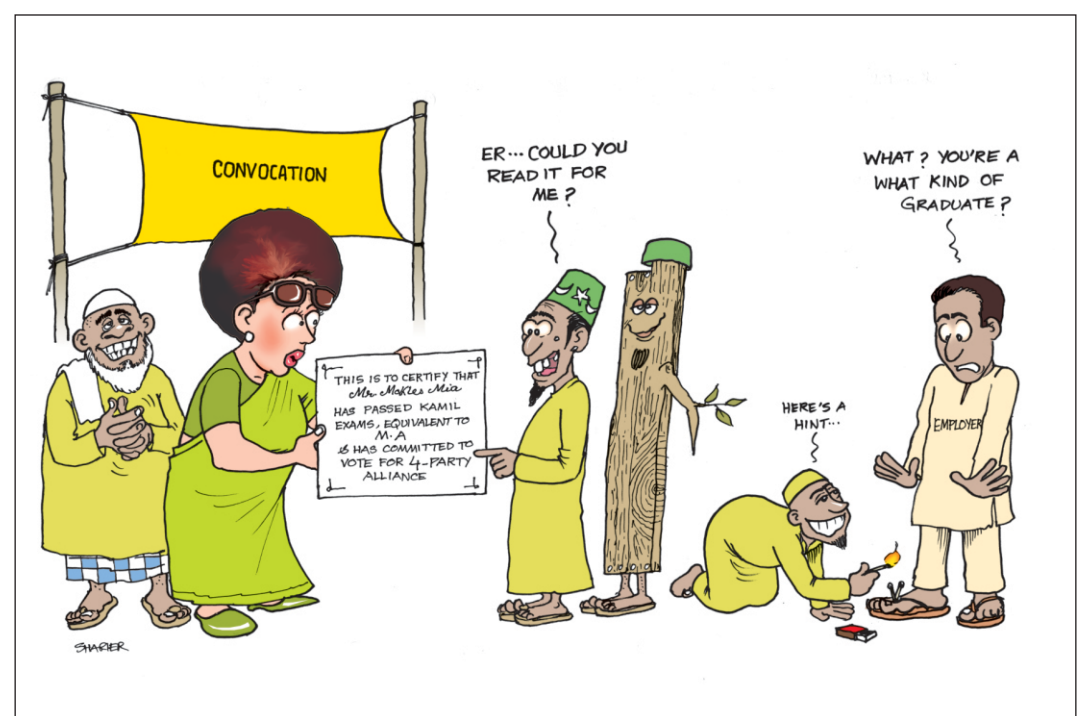
PRIMARY EDUCATION
A steady progress of enrolment (now 90.4 percent, which was 80.1 percent earlier) at primary schools and reduction in gap between gross and net enrolment and drop-out rate (1.7 percent) were wit-

nessed. But the government virtually failed to ensure quality primary education.

A recent study by Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) shows at least two out of three are growing up into adulthood without learning basic literacy and numeric skills. The UNESCO in November 2004 released its monitoring report where Bangladesh was ranked at 106 of the 127 countries.

In a bid to ensure quality education, two projects -- the Second Primary Education Development Programme (PEDP-2) and Reaching Out of School Children (ROSC) -- were undertaken. Sources said the projects might not succeed due to mismanagement

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33 SP-level officers transferred

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday transferred 33 police officials of SP (superintendent of police) and DC rank in another reshuffle move in the police administration.

One of the transferred officials, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Deputy Commissioner (DC-Tejgaon zone) Kohinoor Mia, has been attached to the police headquarters.

Kohinoor Mia took strong flak for leading police atrocities on students at Shamsunnahar Hall of Dhaka University in 2003.

He came in the spotlight again in recent months for his role in

torturing leaders and activists of the 14-party alliance and for allegedly ordering an assault on former home minister Mohammad Nasim in Dhanmondi.

The transfers appear to be eyewash to many, as the transferred officials have been either promoted or will be more or less holding similar positions in other districts. Cases of the officials deprived during the BNP-led four-party coalition government's tenure were not considered in these reshuffles, according to sources.

Meherpur SP SM Rokanuddin, Netrokona SP Abu Nasser M Khaled, Dinajpur SP Delwar Hossain Mia, Rajshahi SP

Abdullah Al Mahmud and Tangail SP Morshedul Alam have been transferred to DMP as DCs.

DMP DCs Mushfiqur Rahman has been transferred to Armed Police Battalion (APBn), Dhaka as commanding officer (CO), Mahbulul Alam to Rajshahi as SP, Rezaul Karim to Gazipur as SP, Rezaul Karim Mallik as SP of Laxmipur, AKM Sahidur Rahman as Bagerhat SP, Abul Khayer to Comilla as SP, Munir Hosain to Netrokona as SP and Israil Hawaladar as Tangail SP.

DC Lokman Hakim has been transferred from Rajshahi

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100 hurt as villagers clash with Rab

200 shops ransacked

UNB, Sylhet

About 100 traders and villagers were injured during a clash with the members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) at Haripur Bazar under Jaintapur upazila yesterday.

At least 200 shops were ransacked and 100 traders and villagers beaten up by Rab men during the clash that started at 2:00pm, said the victims.

The trouble began when two Rab personnel--Sub-Inspector Abdul Ghani and Lance

Corporal Nurul Haq--came to the bazar in plainclothes to gather information about smugglers and smuggled goods. Without knowing

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Shift CA's office from Bangabhaban

14-party asks Iajuddin for neutrality

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL)-led 14-party alliance yesterday demanded that President and Chief Adviser (CA) of the Caretaker Government (CG) Iajuddin Ahmed shift the CA's office from the Bangabhaban and perform his duties as the CA from there to show his neutrality.

"The president has been guided by a number of Bangabhaban officials who are appointed by the previous BNP-Jamaat coalition government and have links with Hawa Bhaban (widely considered an alternative centre of power of the

previous government) . So, it is not possible for the president to perform neutrally his duties as chief adviser from the Bangabhaban," 14-party coordinator and AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil told a press briefing at AL's Dhanmondi office in the capital.

In the past, the Prime Minister's Office was used as the CA's office.

Jalil said the BNP-Jamaat alliance that opposed chief election commissioners (CEC) in the past is backing the present CEC to obstruct creation of a congenial atmosphere for a free and fair election. "Ignoring the people's demand, the BNP-

Jamaat coalition is now pressuring the CEC not to resign just to push the country towards a state of confrontation," he said.

CEC Justice MA Aziz is mentally sick, Jalil said. And he wants to hold an election as per a BNP-Jamaat 'blueprint' despite the people's demand for his resignation, the 14-party leader added.

He hoped the CEC would step down to save the country from confrontations.

Reiterating the demand for immediate removal of the CEC,

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SEDITION CASE Charge-framing against JMB men Nov 23

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday refixed November 23 for hearing on charge framing of the first sedition case against eight Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) leaders and activists from Dhamrai area.

This is for the eighth time the court could not frame charges against the accused due to time petitions from the prosecution and the defence.

Judge (In Charge) Abul Kashem Mohammad Mostafa of the Second Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court yesterday adjourned the hearing following a time

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