

CEC controversial

Says audience at BBC Dialogue

UNB, Dhaka

Most of the audience at a 'BBC Bangladesh Dialogue' yesterday viewed that the Chief Election Commissioner became controversial and expressed doubt if free, fair polls are possible under him and Prof Iajuddin-led caretaker government.

More than 200 audience at the dialogue held at Bangladesh-China

Friendship Conference Centre in the evening gave their verdict by raising hands.

"No free, fair and neutral election is possible under the present caretaker government and Election Commission," said Awami League leader Abul Mal Abdul Muhit.

Renowned film star Ilias Kanchan and women activist Maleka Begum who took part in the discussion panel were also sceptical about free and fair polls.

About the CEC, Muhit said, "What can we expect from a liar?" He said three election commissioners are also controversial.

But refuting the three discussion panel members and views of the audience, BNP leader and former education minister Osman Farooq said anybody could make anyone controversial.

"The demand for reforms just before the election is nothing but to foil the election," he added.

Replying to another audience query, Kanchan said, in the context of increasing political unrest the Army might takeover the state power.

Disagreeing with him, Osman Farooq said the president could ask the army to assist the civil administration to maintain law and order. That will not mean army's taking over the power, he added.

About blockade enforced by Awami league led 14-party alliance, Muhit said they would definitely go ahead with the programme from tomorrow (Sunday) peacefully. "We have to take uncivilised method to protest the uncivilised circumstances that emerged during the last five years."

Training for election agents

FEMA is going to organise 40 training courses to train 1200 activists of major political parties -- BNP, Awami League, Jamaat-e-Islami and Jatiya Party (Ershad), says a press release.

Three hundred election agents from each party will be imparted training throughout the country, with the financial aid from the European Commission.

The first training has been held in Satkhira.



Makeshift houses stand testimony to the encroachment of Gulshan lake in the city.

PHOTO: STAR

Expulsion orders on 8 JU BCL activists go

JU CORRESPONDENT

The expulsion orders issued earlier on nine Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) activists of Jahangirnagar University (JU) for taking part in anti-organisational activities were withdrawn yesterday.

The expulsion orders were withdrawn for the greater interest of the party and considering the contribution of the expelled for party, says a press release.

The activists include Mahfuzur Rahman, Zahid Parvez Khan Pulok, both joint secretaries of BCL, Iqbal Hossain Khan, organising secretary, Mahbubul Alam Sujan, office secretary, Khan Md Daiyan Khan Shamir, Md Nahidur Rahman, S M Shamim, Md Osam and Sobail Ibne Hamzabin.

The root-level activists of BCL have been demanding withdrawal of the expulsion orders for the last few months, forcing the BCL to meet their demand.

AMIR-UL ISLAM REFUTES MOUDUD'S REMARKS

'Process of forming caretaker govt unconstitutional'

UNB, Dhaka

Dismissing the remarks of former law minister Moudud Ahmed that the constitution would not exist if the general election is not held by January, Supreme Court Bar Association President M Amir-Ul Islam yesterday said the process of forming the caretaker government

was itself unconstitutional.

"The national election has to be held only after appointing a new chief adviser as per the constitution as the president assumed office of the CA jumping the constitutional options," he told reporters at a press conference at the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) Hall Room. Barrister Amir-Ul Islam accused President and Chief Advisor to the caretaker government Prof Iajuddin Ahmed of taking important decisions keeping his advisors in the dark, which is also a clear violation of the constitution.

The SCBA President said, 'The president has turned out to be the most powerful man by abusing the constitutional power and acting at the dictates of the immediate-past 4-party alliance government of Khaleda Zia. He has proved himself as 'yes man' of the four-party alliance.'

Reiterating SCBA's earlier demand for appointing a new CA, Amir said, "Still there is time for the president to appoint a new chief adviser to the nonpartisan caretaker government in compliance with the constitution by relinquishing his additional responsibility as the CA."

Echoing the views of the 14-party alliance, Barrister Amir said, "The president has so far failed to create a level playing field for holding free and fair elections. He is

ignoring the demands of reforming the Election Commission by removing CEC MA Aziz and his colleagues."

Underscoring the need for unity among the lawyers and the people at this "critical" political situation, he said everybody should join the movement for a free and fair election.

Advocates Ozair Farooq, Mahbubey Alam, Yusuf Hossain Humayun, Abdul Mannan Khan, AM Amin Uddin, M Enayetur Rahim, Bashir Ahmed and KM Saifuddin Ahmed were, among others, present at the press conference.

1,453 more held

UNB, Dhaka

Police arrested 1,453 people, including three listed criminals, from across the country on various charges in the last 24 hours ending at 6:00am yesterday.

During the drive, the law-enforcers also seized 15 firearms, nine cocktails and 62 bullets, said a police headquarters release.

Meanwhile, police seized some 417 motorcycles without registration or valid documents across the country and filed 1,097 cases under Motor Vehicle Act.

DU exams postponed

DU CORRESPONDENT

All the examinations of Dhaka University (DU) scheduled up to November 18 have been postponed due to unavoidable reasons, says a DU press release yesterday.

Schedules of other examinations will remain unchanged.

Fresh dates for the deferred examinations will be announced later.



Lions Club of Dhaka South, District 315-B1, Bangladesh, organised an Eid reunion in the city recently. Ln. MS Shekil Chowdhury, Ln. RM Khan and Ln. Nishat Parveen Huq, among others, attended the programme.

President's clarification

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The question naturally arises then what did he say? The relevant paragraph started with the words "I want to remind everyone..." which assumes that something had already occurred and the President was just reminding us, meaning reiterating a fact. Are we interpreting this sentence correctly? How else can we interpret the sentence "... the present government has become a Presidential form of government." The truth is a serious misjudgement has occurred by no less a person than one who combines at the moment the powers of both the President and Prime Minister. We in the media have promptly pointed it as our national and democratic duty.

Therefore, with due respect we are forced to reject the blame that has been put on the media.

It is with the same spirit of serving democracy we urge the President to be aware that by indicting the media an attempt is being made to put the blame somewhere other than where it belongs -- to those who mislead him by drafting an extremely controversial speech and using words and terms that were most likely to create confusion. The President needs to investigate this matter and identify the culprits and punish them. This he needs to do for his own sake.

We want to further point out that no mention was made in the Bangabhaban press release about criticising his staff, which he termed as amounting to interfering with the functioning of the State. Did the media also misinterpret this statement? There was no answer to the question we raised as to how a President can term "undesirable" any criticism about a government servant, and how can that, most absurdly, constitute interfering in the functioning of the State? Does the silence mean that the President has accepted our point? If yes, then we expect severe action against those who inserted that paragraph and embarrassed the Head of State and Government in this unfortunate manner.

Honourable President Iajuddin must put his house in order. He must be extremely careful in choosing the best possible team to help him. As is proven by the latest incidence, people who are making drafts of his speeches may not have his best

interest in mind and as such he should scrutinise them far more carefully. Given his trusting nature and professorial attitude he may not be used to people who have led him to the recent embarrassment.

We have said so in the past, we say it again, President is our last hope. He represents the highest of the Constitutional post that retains power at the moment. We must do everything to keep him above controversy. But blaming the media is not the method to do so.

US wants free, fair, non-violent polls

Boucher tells journo

UNB, Dhaka

The United States yesterday assured further cooperation in Bangladesh's long standing demand for greater market access and capacity building for anti-terror campaign.

The assurance came during a meeting between Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin and US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard Boucher at the state guesthouse Padma.

"We've excellent bilateral relations...we discussed a number of things regarding our bilateral ties," Boucher told reporters after nearly 45-minute meeting.

In his brief remarks, he said the US supports free, fair and non-violent elections in Bangladesh.

Briefing newsmen, Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin said the US attaches strategic and political

importance to Bangladesh being a major democracy, highest contributor to UN peacekeeping missions and an active partner of war on terror.

He said Boucher assured cooperation in expanding bilateral trade, access of Bangladeshi products to American market and logistic support to enhance capacity in countering terrorism.

Boucher expressed satisfaction over the growing relations between Dhaka and Washington and Bangladesh's commitment to fight against terrorism, Hemayet said.

About coming general elections, he said Washington likes to see free, fair and non-violent elections with participation of all political parties.

Additional Foreign Secretary Touhid Hossain and US Ambassador Patricia A Butenis were present in the meeting.