

Second Day of Non-stop Blockade



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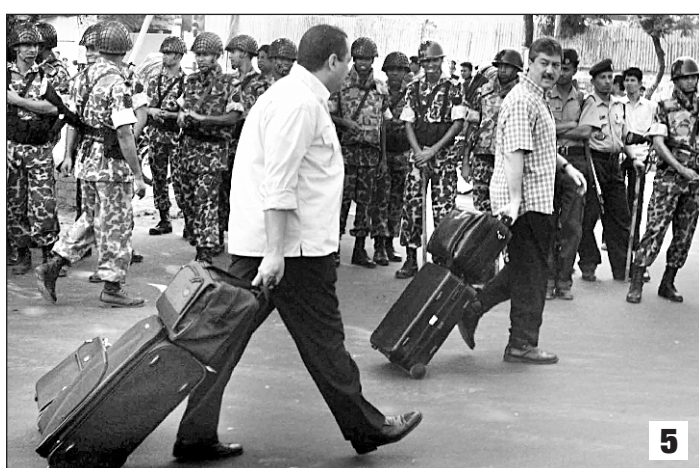
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1) Inscripting a slogan on his back, an activist of 14-party alliance joins a demonstration at Pantha Path in the city yesterday demanding removal of the chief election commissioner. 2) Pickets burn a tyre on a road near Karwan Bazar in the city. 3) Leaders and activists of 14-party alliance march down a road at Jatrabari during the blockade programme. 4) Rickshaws rule the city streets as motor vehicles were off the roads during the blockade programme enforced by the 14-party alliance. The picture was taken from Motijheel area. 5) Two foreigners walk past BDR members who keep vigil near the Sonargaon Hotel in the city during the blockade programme. 6) Activists of 14-party alliance hurl bricks at the police near the Karwan Bazar in the city. 7) The police use water canon to disperse agitating activists of 14-party alliance near the Karwan Bazar.

PHOTO: STAR

Seminar on 'Rise of political Islam in Bangladesh' today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An international seminar on 'The Rise of Political Islam in Bangladesh: What's at Stake in the 2007 Elections' will be held in London today.

The US-based Hudson Institute in association with Policy Exchange, London, and the New Statesman, UK, is organising the seminar, which will also focus on the repression on minorities.

Former law minister Moudud Ahmed, Editor and Publisher of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam, Acting President of Forum for Secular Bangladesh Shahrir Kabir and Awami League leader Saber Hossain Chowdhury will attend the seminar.

Prominent journalists and academics from the UK and the USA will also take part in the seminar.

Roundtable on adult literacy today

A literacy roundtable meeting on 'The Role of Adult Literacy in Poverty Alleviation and Bangladesh Policy Perspective' and an exhibition of easy-to-read adult literacy materials will be held at Spectra Convention Centre, House-19, Road-7, Gulshan-1 in the city from 9:00am to 1:00pm today (November 14), says a press release.

The Daily Star is a partner of the roundtable programme. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) contributed to the funding of the seminar.

The roundtable is a part of the programmes of the Literacy Week organised by FIVDB, UNESCO and Brac University Institute of Educational Development (BUED) that began on November 10.

The main objective of the event is to create critical awareness among policymakers, development partners and NGOs about the significance of adult literacy and learning in institutionalising democratic practices and economic uplifting.

A seminar will also be held on 'The Potential of Adult and Lifelong Education for Poverty Reduction' at the Spectra Convention Centre from 9:00am to 2:00pm tomorrow (November 15).

Dr Harbans S Bholia, a renowned literacy expert, will be the principal invited guest speaker. Dr Bholia is currently Professor Emeritus at Indiana University, USA.

Accept reasonable demands

Professionals urge CG

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of people from different professions yesterday urged the caretaker government (CG) to accept the reasonable demands of people so that a free and fair election can be held.

Combined Citizens Movement (CCM) and Peshajibi Samonny Parishad organised the rally at the Institution of Engineers Bangladesh (IEB) in the city where 24 other front organisations also participated.

Before the rally, the members of the organisations marched through city streets including Banglamotor, Shahbagh, Swadhinata Stamba, National Press Club and the High Court.

Speakers at the rally urged the

CG to remove the BNP-Jamaat recruited officials from the administration and reinstate the qualified officials who were made Officer on Special Duty (OSD) during previous regime in order to make the administration non-partisan and neutral.

Criticising the activities of the chief adviser, the speakers said people would not accept the election of blueprint left by the BNP-Jamaat alliance.

The speakers also said they will continue to protest until a decision is made by the CG advisory council regarding creating a supportive environment for holding a free and fair election.

'CA busy implementing BNP-Jamaat blueprint'

RU CORRESPONDENT

Awami League backed teachers of Rajshahi University under the banner of Progressive Teacher's Society (PTS) in a statement yesterday said the chief adviser/president is busy implementing the blueprint of BNP-led four party alliance ignoring the opinion of the advisers.

The teacher's body strongly protested the attempt of army deployment in the country, which was a

heinous effort to make the role of the armed forces controversial.

Expressing grave concern over the country's turmoil political crisis, the teacher's body demanded removal of the CEC and immediate hand over of power to a neutral person to get rid of the crisis.

The statement was signed by PTS Convener Prof Abdus Sobhan, Mokhesur Rahman, former VC prof Saidur Rahman Khan and Prof Entajul Haque.



PHOTO: PID

UNDP Resident Representative Renata Lok Dessallien calls on President/Chief Adviser to Caretaker Government Iajuddin Ahmed at the CA's office in the city yesterday.

POLICE BRUTALITY

Judicial probe demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different organisations yesterday strongly condemned the incident of a police van ploughing into agitating activists of the 14-party alliance that left at least one person dead and several others critically injured.

Killing of political activists in such a way in a democratic country is unimaginable, said Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) in a statement.

It also called on the caretaker government to form a judicial commission to probe the incident and make the probe report public.

In another statement, Sammilta Samajik Andolon said such police atrocities are designed to confuse the real issues and divert the democratic movement to a different course.

It also called on all demonstrators and the people to continue their movement until the demands are realised.

The police van ploughed into 14-

party activists at noon yesterday when they were demonstrating near the Karwan Bazar in the city as part of their indefinite blockade programme to press their demand for the reconstitution of the Election Commission.

CU classes from Nov 16

CU CORRESPONDENT

Chittagong University (CU) authorities decided to resume the academic activities of the university on November 16 after the extended vacations.

Special security measures have been taken to maintain congenial academic atmosphere on the campus.

and business establishments due to the blockade has also hit hard the economy, they added.

The lawyers called on the President and Chief Adviser to the caretaker government to take stern measures to protect people's life and property, restore normalcy and to keep the economy on track.

They also urged the political parties to withdraw the blockade programme.

The signatories to the statement included former vice-president of Supreme Court Bar Association Nawab Ali, former secretary Gias Uddin, Barrister Akbar Amin Babul, Barrister Shaheen Ahmed, Barrister Ahsan Abdullah Siddique, Advocate Nazrul Islam, Barrister Tanvir Parvez and Barrister Belayat Hossain.

President must trust his Advisers

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decision taken in secrecy keeping the Advisers in the dark? The plot thickens when one considers that the home secretary had already sent a written notification to the district administration early in the evening while the Adviser's meeting that ended at 8.30 p.m. was not told about it. To think that a more than two-hour cabinet-level meeting of the caretaker government took place with the President and Chief Adviser in the chair without even a mention of such a vital decision already in the process of being put into action (see our report of yesterday), leave alone discussing the issue of army deployment, indicates a total sidelining of the Advisers which is completely contrary to the parliamentary system of government that the president indicated just the other day that he adheres to. His action also violated the rules of business as to how the caretaker government is to function.

Thirdly, yesterday's event indicates that the President does not seem to think much of his cabinet and, more dangerously, does not seem to trust them. Otherwise how can he explain his conduct? Shouldn't he have consulted his Advisers before making such a fundamental claim? Shouldn't he, at least, have asked Akbar Ali Khan, a veteran bureaucrat and former cabinet secretary, whether or not such a decision can and should be made. Regrettably, he preferred his own coterie of bureaucrats who have already disgraced him by misleading him to say that his was a 'presidential' form of government necessitating a clarification the following day.

Sunday night's incident is a far more serious violation of the Constitution and Rules of Business of the government than what has happened so far. Deployment of the armed forces in aid of the civil administration is of course permitted by our Constitution but only as a last resort. It is only permitted on an area-by-area basis at the request of district administrations. We are not aware that such request came from any specific district or area.

Finally, such a decision has enormous implications for the civilian government and also for the armed forces. Given the sensitivity of the issue, our past experiences with military regimes, and the enormous and highly creditable job that the armed forces have done over the last fifteen years to create a pro-democracy image of itself, one has to think very seriously before a decision to deploy the armed forces is made. Were serious deliberations undertaken before the decision was made? If so, we are not aware of them. It is also said that the armed forces themselves were consulted before the decision of the home secretary was sent out. So who is running the

administration?

The very fact that the cabinet was totally kept out of this particular decision indicates either of two things -- that it was made frivolously or it was made mischievously (the appropriate word is conspiratorially but I don't want to use it, as we are given to too many conspiracy theories). We have repeated that the "President is our last hope" and that he is a honourable, simple, trusting man devoted to academic pursuits and totally unused to the vagaries of power politics. We really want to believe that it was done in good faith but on bad advice. But, in all sincerity, can we? This paper has so far advocated more time and continued trust on the President. But how long can we continue in that vein when the Presidential actions are becoming more and more arbitrary, whimsical and secretive. We'll soon have to draw the line and that time is very near.

We could have perhaps lived with the blunder of the decision, but how can we accept the secrecy with which it was done? First, the Advisers were not consulted when the decision was made; secondly, they were not informed after it was made; and thirdly, the proverbial straw on the camel's back is that so much effort was made to hide this decision from the cabinet as exemplified by the fact that during a two-hour meeting of the full cabinet the decision of army deployment was not disclosed.

We had posed a question to the President in one of our earlier commentaries as to whether he would "Serve the Nation or his benefactors". At that time it was asked with hope, expectation and an assumption that the question does not arise for a man who was and is a "Teacher" to serve his benefactors, and that it was axiomatic that he would serve the Nation.

Mr. President Sir, in all our sincerity, today we are no longer sure. Your actions have brought about this doubt in us. Before we become convinced otherwise please take actions that benefit the Nation. Start by taking your Advisers into confidence.

We have written several times already that his personal staff and the officials he is depending on have proven over and over again that they are not up to the job. They are not only embarrassing him but are also dragging him into one controversy after another. So far they have been instrumental in driving a wedge between the President and his Council of Advisers. In fact, they also frustrated the Advisers yesterday as the President decided to deploy the army, authorised the home secretary to send written instructions to the district administration and then reversed the decision around midnight.

The Cabinet was deliberately bypassed. Does it not constitute a

violation of our Constitution according to which we are still in a parliamentary form of government in which the ministers (now advisers) are heads of their respective ministries and the Chief Adviser must operate through his cabinet?

Obituary

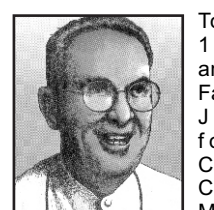
Bss, Dhaka

Syed Muniruzzaman, deputy director of National Youth Centre, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at Holy Family Red Crescent Hospital in the city on Sunday at the age of 44.

He is survived by his wife, one daughter and one son.

His namaz-e-janaza was held in front of the BNP office at Nayapaltan after Asr prayers yesterday.

Death anniversary



Bangladesh, says a press release. He died on this day in 1988 in a road accident in front of National Press Club in the city.

On the occasion, Cooperative Credit Union League of Bangladesh Ltd (CCULB) takes different programmes, including paying homage to him.

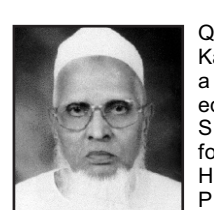
Christian Cooperative Credit Union Ltd Dhaka will offer a special prayer at 4:30pm at its Tejjaga office.

Iftekhar Uddin Ahmed

Today is the first death anniversary of Iftekhar Uddin Ahmed, son of Anwar Uddin Ahmed, says a press release.

On the occasion, doa and milad mahfil will be held and foods will be distributed among the destitute today. A milad mahfil will also be held at his Banani residence on November 17 after Asr prayers.

Qulkhwani



Kulhwani of Kazi Abdul Haq, a veteran educationist of Sylhet and founder of Al Harmin Perfumes in Dubai, will be held at Charkhai village at Bani Bazaar in Sylhet today, says a press release.

He passed away in Dubai on November 8 at the age of 87.

He was buried beside the mazar of Hazrat Shah Paran (Ra).



Fall in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

Weather is likely to remain mainly dry over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Night temperature in Khulna and Rajshahi may fall slightly, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 33.0 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sylhet and lowest 17.4 degree Celsius at Jessore.

The sun sets in the capital at 5.13pm today and rises at 6:13am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	30.4	20.2	81	66
Chittagong	32.2	22.3	76	81
Rajshahi	29.3	18.6	84	84
Khulna	28.1	18.8	89	82
Barisal	30.3	19.4	97	87
Sylhet	33.0	20.7	66	70