

Mayhem at peaceful Karwan Bazar

FROM PAGE 1 of the port. **THE CAPITAL** Residents of the capital woke up to find the entire city blockaded and its streets free of everyday traffic jam yesterday as 14-party activists took to the streets to enforce the blockade.

Blocking the city streets at different points, the activists were singing patriotic songs at intervals of speeches by their leaders to keep the tempo up standing on makeshift podiums.

As the blockade was going ahead peacefully in the capital, unlike other traditional violent political demonstrations, suddenly Karwan Bazar erupted into violence around 11:30am.

Led by AL leader HBM Iqbal, 14-party activists were holding a rally at Saarc Fountain intersection blocking the busy street. The leaders were delivering speeches from a truck used as a makeshift stage.

All of a sudden, a police truck fitted with a water cannon started jetting hot water from the direction of Panthapath on the activists who were singing songs at intervals of the speeches without provoking any violence.

Members of police and Armed Police Battalion started to club the demonstrators mercilessly prompting the demonstrators to retaliate with bricks.

Dispersed, the demonstrators attacked the law enforcers while police fired teargas shells and rubber bullets to scare the demonstrators away.

As the whole area turned into a battlefield, a police truck from the direction of Farmgate drove through the activists at Saarc Fountain and sped away towards Bangla Motor critically injuring two blockade supporters, one of whom was identified as Wazuliah, 40, AL publicity secretary of unit 2 of the party under ward no 37.

Enraged by the incident, the demonstrators set fire to a police van in front of TK Bhaban there.

As the situation gradually calmed down, police took the injured two to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared Wazuliah dead.

AL leader HBM Iqbal was taken to Samoria Hospital with injuries.

Leaders of 14-party coalition alleged that police deliberately drove the van through the crowd to create a situation for army deployment.

"It was a totally peaceful rally until police doused us with water, clubbed us and fired teargas canisters at us," said Delwar Hossain, a folk singer who was singing songs on the podium.

Several others echoed Delwar.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday evening, Deputy Commissioner (Tejgaon) Kohinor Mian admitted to ordering the police to turn water cannon on the demonstrators. "I gave the order to disperse the demonstrators for clearing the busy street after the demonstrators had refused to free the street despite repeated requests," he said.

Meanwhile, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) authorities formed a three-member committee headed by Deputy Commissioner (Motor and Transport) Faruq Ahmed to investigate yesterday's violence at Karwan Bazar and the incident of driving a police van through the crowd.

"Punitive measures will be taken against those responsible for the incident as per the recommendations of the inquiry committee," said a news release issued from the public relations section of the Detective Branch of police.

The release claimed that the two demonstrators were injured when a police truck unintentionally hit them while it was being driven to a safer place towards Bangla Motor from Farmgate area after being attacked during chase and counter chase between police and "illegal public".

A case was lodged with Tejgaon police station in this connection, the release added.

In Mirpur, law enforcers and demonstrators locked in a clash at Mirpur-10 roundabout when police charged batons and chased some demonstrators who were vandalising an auto-rickshaw there at 11:00am. The demonstrators threw stones at the law enforcers.

Normally was restored in a few minutes after intervention by 14-party leaders and top police officials.

Demonstrators broke windshields of some auto-rickshaws also on Dhaka-Chittagong highway.

In Savar, hundreds of activists gathered at different points. They vandalised 15 vehicles at Savar Bazar bus stop.

COUNTRY In Narayanganj, at least 20 people were injured when 14-party activists clashed with police on Dhaka-Sylhet highway at Tarabo point under Rugganj upazila around 11:00am.

A police obstructed an AL procession at Tarabo, the pickets threw bricks, breaking the windshield of the vehicle of Police Superintendent Shahabuddin Khan.

Police clubbed the pickets, lobbed 20 teargas canisters and sprayed 70 rubber bullets, leaving 20 people

injured.

In Mymensingh, at least 50 passengers were injured when three compartments along with the engine of Seven-9, a Bahadurabad Ghak bound passenger train from Dhaka, derailed and fell into a roadside ditch at Golabari village between Mashakhali and Kawridh railway stations at 2:15am yesterday.

The train derailed as 126 feet of railway tracks had been uprooted at Golabari, railways sources said.

Fifteen of the injured were rushed to Gafargaon Upazila Health Complex for treatment.

Rescue trains from Dhaka and Mymensingh reached the spot at 8:00am and reinstalled the damaged railway tracks and train compartments at 1:30pm.

In Netrokona, 11 people were injured in two incidents. At Golora on Netrokonakalmakanda road, pickets threw stones leaving five injured while six people were wounded as a passenger bus was torched at Razur Bazar.

In Brahmanbaria, pickets threw stones at the Bhoirab bound Balla local train at Poyertala outer signal of Brahmanbaria Railway Station. At about 10:00am, they stopped Dhaka bound Mahanagar Express. Later, all the services were cancelled.

Meanwhile, Akhaura land port remained paralysed.

In Rajshahi, demonstrators stopped Titumir and Mochumoti intercity trains at Arani of Bagha upazila. Goods-laden trucks remained stranded at Sona Mosque land port.

In Sylhet, activists forced Dhaka bound Joyontika Express train to a halt at Longla Station of Kulaura upazila. They vandalised the train until police brought the situation under control.

In Khagrachari, pickets vandalised a vehicle of a pharmaceutical company at Alutlia and beat up the staff. They also vandalised a truck at Bhaibonchhara and later set fire to an effigy of the chief election commissioner.

The blockade programme was observed peacefully in other parts of the country, report our correspondents.

Decision withdrawn

FROM PAGE 1 the president and chief adviser on the unilateral circulation of the decision to deploy army.

At this stage, the home secretary was summoned to the meeting who told the council that he had issued the circular in consultation with the law secretary. Apparently enraged, the advisers asked for bringing in the law secretary.

But the law secretary failed to give any satisfactory explanations that further annoyed the advisers. And they told the meeting that it would not be possible for them to continue work if decisions were taken without following rules and keeping them uninformed.

"At (yesterday's) council meeting, we have ascertained that the process of taking the decision and purpose of it were all wrong. Such a gross mistake is not acceptable in such a sensitive matter," said Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury.

Sources said the advisers pointed out that if troops are deployed now and they creates any controversy, it will be hard for the army to work when they will be deployed during the next elections.

Though the whole episode left the advisers bewildered, they did not take any step yesterday to find out those behind this move and bring them to task.

When the home ministry circular had already reached various authorities concerned and even the media Sunday afternoon, the advisers were unaware of this decision. In the evening, when the advisers had a meeting with the chief adviser (CA) and president, who is also in charge of the home ministry, they were still not informed about it.

"Such a decision cannot be taken by a ministry on its own. This must be discussed at the council," said former army chief and Energy Ministry Adviser Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury yesterday.

"The most embarrassing thing is that although we were at the advisers' council meeting Sunday evening, we were not informed about it," he pointed out while talking to The Daily Star.

"At (yesterday's) council meeting, we made sure that the process followed and purpose of taking this decision were all wrong. Such a gross mistake is not acceptable in such a sensitive matter," he stressed.

"The rules of business clearly explains how such a decision should be taken through involving the council," Mashhud noted. "If the authorities need the army, this must at first be suggested from a local level of the administration. Such an instruction cannot be imposed from the central level on a wholesale basis."

"We will remain alert about

repetition of such embarrassing incidents in the future," the former army chief said.

Asked whether they would take action against those involved in the process, he said, "It is the job of the home ministry high command to find out them. We are examining whether this was deliberate or not."

In reply to a question on the presence of a government within the present government, Mashhud said, "There is no gap inside the government."

He however said there were some initial glitches of lack of communication but now this has been taken care of. "Now, we all (advisers) can hear each other," he quipped.

Talking to The Daily Star, Finance and Planning Adviser Dr Akbar Ali Khan said, "We have cancelled the decision (to deploy army) because this kind of plan is unnecessary. The laws of the land give a clear cut direction to the district administration about how to take help of the army."

Replying to a question on how such a decision was taken, he said, "The president and chief adviser has told us that he would look into it."

Asked about punishment of those responsible, he said, "If an official violates service rules, a committee is formed and the official is given chance twice to defend himself in writing. After this, an action is taken. I was a government servant. I don't want to comment on this matter further."

On the question of the home secretary being a controversial person and whether he would be removed, Akbar said, "There is an advisory committee on administration headed by the chief adviser and aided by two advisers. I hope they would surely look into this matter."

He went on, "Our main statement is that this kind of decision did not comply with the rules of business, which clearly states that any vital political decision cannot be taken without the approval of the council... You might want to credit us for cancelling such a wrong decision."

Housing and Fisheries Adviser Dhiraaj Kumar Nath felt the same way and expressed his embarrassment. Asked how such a decision was taken bypassing the advisers, he said, "Please don't ask me that kind of question."

Information Adviser Mahbub Alam said the circular was not necessary. "If army deployment is necessary for any particular areas, the district magistrate can do the same under the existing criminal procedure code," he added.

Sources said yesterday's council meeting held between 11:00am-1:00pm at the CA's office saw a lot of debates on this issue. All the advisers expressed their surprise on the

matter. **SUNDAY'S CONTROVERSIAL MOVE**

On Sunday, President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed decided to deploy army across the country in aid of the civil administration to maintain law and order.

A letter was sent to the divisional and deputy commissioners to facilitate matters for the military forces. The letter signed by Home Secretary SM Jahurul Islam reads, "The government has decided to deploy military forces to aid the law enforcement agencies in maintaining the law and order."

But a late night handout signed by a joint secretary of the home ministry said: "In fact, regarding the army deployment the government has decided that the troops might be deployed after taking into consideration the situation. Since no such situation has arisen, the decision to deploy the army has not yet been taken."

The president/chief adviser did not mention even for once the decision to deploy army during two and half hours of his meeting with the advisers.

Just when everyone was preparing to sign off, he said he wants to invite the home secretary to hear about the latest situation regarding the 14-party blockade. The home secretary came in and casually said the Chittagong Port has become inoperative and this may necessitate military deployment.

The suggestion greatly annoyed the advisers, who said the implications of any such decision might be very grave both nationally and internationally. The secretary did not tell them that the decision to that effect had already been made and communicated to the local administration. The advisers left the meeting with the impression that it was just a plan and came to learn about the truth from the media afterwards.

Govt to import

FROM PAGE 16 also relaxed the procedure of Public Procurement Regulation (PPR) so that the products can be imported within shortest possible time.

"There is no shortage of food in the country but we have taken the decision as a precautionary measure," the finance adviser said while talking to the reporters.

"By following the PPR, it would have taken some six months to import, but now it would only take 2 weeks," he added.

In another meeting of Cabinet Committee on Purchase chaired by Law Adviser Justice Md Fazul Haque, a decision was taken to import 1.27 lakh metric tonnes of fertiliser in two installments.

Keep patience

FROM PAGE 1 the politically appointed officers in charge (OC) of police were not removed after repetitive demands.

Jail accused Deputy Commissioner (DC) of police Kohinur Miah of masterminding yesterday's attack on demonstrators at Sonargaon intersection in the capital that left one person killed. He demanded immediate punishment of the DC and other police personnel responsible for the attacks on 14-party leaders and activists yesterday.

Although a non-party caretaker government (CG) assumed the office, it has failed to act neutrally. The CG also failed to ensure neutrality in the police," said the 14-party leader.

Jail alleged the home secretary of keeping the council of advisers in the dark about the decision to deploy army and demanded the home secretary to disclose the name of the person behind the directive. Jail also demanded the CG to take disciplinary action against the secretary and track down his patrons.

The home secretary must be removed. He has been working in favour of a political party. He conspired to deploy the army to make it controversial and misuse them for political purposes, Jail explained.

The AL leader was relieved as the conspiracy was not been successful. Referring to BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan's announcement that the BNP would declare counter programmes, the AL general secretary questioned Bhuiyan against whom the BNP would declare programmes.

Jail reiterated that their blockade programme is only to protect the people's democratic rights.

Bhuiyan has been trying to create chaos in the country by taking a stand against the demand of reconstitution of the Election Commission (EC) and removal of the chief election commissioner (CEC). He has been patronising the CEC to hold a "blue-print" election to return to power, Jail lashed out.

The AL leader also accused BNP of not letting the president/ chief adviser (CA) functioning effectively. He demanded immediate separation of the staff of the president and the CA for neutral operation of the CG and urged the CG to hold a free and fair election within the 90 days. He also asked the president to appoint a non-partisan individual as the CA to create a congenial atmosphere if he fails to perform effectively.

To create a neutral environment for a free and fair election, Jail also demanded immediate removal of Home, Establishment and Cabinet secretaries, cancellation of all contractual appointments, removal of all present DCs, Superintendents of Police (SP), Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNO) and Ocs and replace them with the officials deprived and made OSDs (Officer on Special Duty) by the previous 4-party alliance government.

AL Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader said the state run Bangladesh Television (BTV) is still running by instructions from Hawa Bhaban - BNP Chairperson Khaleeda Zia's political office. Quader demanded immediate removal of the top officials of BTV to ensure its neutrality.

He also alleged that although the AL President Sheikh Hasina is no more the leader of the opposition, her residence is under strict vigilance of different intelligence agencies and telephone conversations of 14-party leaders including the AL chief is being tapped. Quader demanded tele-

phone conversation tapping to stop.

He also demanded immediate removal of the president's press secretary for leaking out sensitive information from Bangabhaban and punishment of the corrupt ministers and lawmakers of the last government of the BNP-Jamaat coalition.

Among others, senior 14-party leaders Abdur Razzak, Tofail Ahmed, Saranjit Sengupta, Sheikh Fazul Karim Selim, Rashed Khan Menon, Hasanul Haque Inu, Sultan Mohammad Mansur Ahmed, Bimal Biswas, Pankaj Bhattacharya, Nurul Islam and Dilip Barua were also present at the press briefing.

Interim govt

FROM PAGE 1 the election and represent the people in future," Information Adviser Mahub Alam said at a news conference yesterday.

Adviser Akbar Ali Khan told reporters that the dialogue is aimed at reaching a consensus on ways to hold a free and fair election. "We will take a decision as soon as possible. However, we don't want to impose anything on the political parties. We just want to help them sort out a solution regarding the present situation," he observed.

The caretaker government that was formed last month has been in extreme difficulties regarding reconstitution of the EC following the chief election commissioner's (CEC) refusal to stand down.

No other caretaker government faced such a complex political crisis since inception of the system in 1996.

The AL-led 14-party alliance has been calling for electoral reforms for over a year. The demands were first raised during the run of four-party alliance, but the onus to resolve the issue has been put on the interim government.

Things got more complicated after the much-vaunted dialogue between the BNP and AL in October failed to settle the deadlock.

Amid a volatile situation, the caretaker government assumed office on October 29.

The council of advisers at its very first meeting on November 1 took a number of initiatives to make the EC effective.

It sent an adviser to CEC MA Aziz to know whether he would resign if requested by the caretaker government. But the CEC stubbornly refused to resign and instead announced that the next parliamentary election will be held under the present EC.

Following the refusal, the council of advisers held three meetings but could not find a way out of the trouble.

Information adviser Mahub Alam termed the decision to have talks with the political parties an important step towards getting things started to change for the better.

At a jam-packed news conference at the conference room of Press Information Department (PID), he said the advisory council will talk on a wide range of issues including those relating to the free and fair conduct of the upcoming general election.

The advisers have very little time in hand and they must work faster, he added.

Asked whether any decision has been taken on the CEC or his deputies, Mahub said, "If we already had a decision, then why would we be having talks with the political parties. We are sitting with them as different political parties have different opinions."

Iajuddin

FROM PAGE 1 Tejgaon office.

Iajuddin told Renata that the Election Commission is an independent constitutional body and assured the UNDP resident representative that free, fair and neutral elections would undoubtedly be held in Bangladesh.

The UNDP representative expressed concern of the UN secretary general to the president about the recent political violence in Bangladesh.

The president hoped that the UN, like in the past, would send election observers to Bangladesh.

Renata responded positively, saying that the United Nations will extend "all-out cooperation" to Bangladesh in holding free and fair elections.

Why me worry

FROM PAGE 1 During the meeting with the UN delegation, different aspects of providing the international observers with facilities to observe the next election were discussed, the EC secretary said.

"The Election Commission has finalised a policy for the international observers with a new provision for ensuring the neutrality of the interpreters. Politically biased persons will not be allowed to do the task of interpretation for the international observers," he said.

Deputy commissioners and superintendents of police will ensure security for international observers, said the EC secretary who had held a meeting with the secretaries of the foreign, home, health and information ministries yesterday morning and discussed the issue of foreign observers.

The printing task is going on in full swing, he said when asked whether the task of printing the voter list has been stopped on grounds of faults in the updated electoral rolls.

Vendors sent a letter to the EC secretariat on November 6 seeking guidelines to remove the faults in the updated voter list before printing, sources at the EC secretary said, adding that the vendors cited faults that include some names of male voters in the list of female voters and inconsistency in the serial number of voters.

The EC secretariat on November 9 directed the district election officers to correct the faults.

"The district election officers will be responsible as the registration officer for preparing the voter list, if the guidelines are not followed to correct the manuscript of the updated voter list," the EC secretariat circular said.

Meanwhile, following purchase of four new cars costing Tk 72 lakh by the EC secretariat, rumour spread among the EC officials that a few election commissioners may be appointed to make the EC effective.

Economy looks down

FROM PAGE 1 rent of \$18,000 per day.

Expressing concern over the situation, the business community has urged the political leaders to keep the port and export sector out of the purview of political programmes.

A delegation led by Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) President Mir Nasir Hossain will call on the President and Chief Adviser to the caretaker government Iajuddin Ahmed today to urge him to take steps for resolving the political impasse immediately for the greater interest of country.

Losses due to sudden closure of ports and other business activities will be colossal, Nasir said.

The sudden political stalemate will hamper in achieving this year's target of 6.2 per cent Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth, he said.

The FBCCI chief called upon the political leaders to keep the port and export-oriented sectors out of the purview of political agitation.

"The dream for increasing the amount of annual garment exports up to \$15 billion from the existing \$8 billion is going to be shattered due to sudden political unrest," said SM

20 killed

FROM PAGE 16 years, emergency workers said.

All the victims died at the scene of the crash near Croydun, about 40 kilometres (25 miles) east of Cape Town, said Chris Botha, a spokesman for the Netcare 911 rescue services.

Botha said that a total of 20 people had been killed in the crash and six others had been either seriously or critically injured.

Cape Town emergency services spokesman Johan Minnie said the truck was on a level crossing when it was hit by the train shortly after 7:00 am (0500 GMT).

The vehicle had been sliced in half by the impact of the collision and the wreckage was widely scattered around the tracks, said an AFP photographer at the scene.

The railway safety regulator (RSR) said that an immediate investigation had been launched to determine the cause of the crash.

"The RSR has dispatched inspectors to the scene of the accident to work alongside the operator in investigating this incident," it said in a statement.

"Preliminary investigations suggest that the immediate cause of the accident was that the driver ignored warning signals and proceeded to cross the level crossing resulting in the collision with the train."

A police spokesman said that it was too soon to give an exact cause for the crash.

"We don't know whether to blame it on a mechanical failure or a failure to stop," Superintendent Billy Jones told AFP.

He put the death toll at 19 - 11 men and eight women. Twelve others were injured, Jones said.

The group had been on their way to work at a wine farm in the area.

"This is a terrible day. It is a great disaster. They were just innocently coming to work," a staff member of the farm which employed the workers on contract told the South African Press Association.

The government-owned rail passenger service Metrorail said the level crossing "conforms to legal requirements in terms of statutory warning signage and is protected by stop boards, road warning signs and train whistle boards".

The crash is one of the worst in South Africa in recent years. Nine people died and 59 were injured in April last year after a bus rammed into a freight train in the northern Limpopo province.

The worst crash in recent years came in 2002 when 24 people, mainly school children, were killed near the eastern city of Durban in the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

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World's poor shown

FROM PAGE 16 around the world to attend the summit.

Campaigners say microloans, which average 100 dollars and require no collateral, can help the critically poor expand a basic food-selling or handicraft-marketing business and enable them to lift themselves out of poverty.

"Today we are already 100 million, so it's not even double the size, so that way it's not the same challenge. We have created the momentum already," Yunus told AFP on the sidelines of the summit.

Yunus, who was awarded the Nobel prize last month for his decades-long work in advancing microcredit, was referring to a target set in Washington in 1997 to advance microloans to 100 million poverty-stricken people by the end of 2005.

Campaigners concede they are not there yet, but say they are on track to reach that goal by the end of this year, and are now setting their sights wider.

The Nobel peace laureate said he envisages a world where future generations would have to go to "poverty museums" to discover what poverty was.

"It's not the money that's the