

Uphold democratic spirit and HR in Bangladesh

Speakers tell int'l confce in London

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at an international conference in London have expressed concern over recent political developments in Bangladesh and stressed the need to uphold the country's democratic spirit and fundamental human rights.

Policy Exchange, London, in association with the US-based Hudson Institute, The New Statesman and the International Bangladesh Foundation organised the conference on 'The Rise of Political Islam in Bangladesh: What's at Stake in the 2007 Elections' on Tuesday, according to a press release received in Dhaka.

Dean Godson of Policy Exchange and Maneza Hossain of Hudson Institute jointly opened the conference.

Representatives of the three main UK political parties, Awami League leader Saber Hossain Chowdhury and former law minister Moudud Ahmed of BNP attended the conference where the speakers urged the UK government to listen

to the concerns being expressed by the Bengali population in the UK about the forthcoming elections in Bangladesh.

Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, delivered the keynote address while Lord Avebury, Dean Godson and former British high commissioner to Bangladesh Peter Fowler chaired the sessions.

Nicholas Boles, director of the Policy Exchange, said: "Whether the BNP or the Awami League forms the next government is, in a sense, not the point: Bangladesh democracy must be the winner."

"Not least because the UK has a large population with Bangladeshi roots, the British government has an interest in promoting fair elections in Bangladesh. If the British government were to privilege headline Islamist opinion above that of secularists -- as was alleged by several speakers today -- that would be in neither the UK's nor Bangladesh's interests," he added.

Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik, a former justice, and Mohidur Rahman, international coordinator of the UK BNP, Dr Reza Kibria and MA Maik, UK BNP secretary, took part in the discussion.

In the session on UK policy towards Bangladesh, Martin Bright of The New Statesman, Cllr Ayub Korom Ali, Munira Mirza of Policy Exchange and Ansar Ahmed Ullah of International Bangladesh Foundation spoke about Islamists and their network.

Chris Blackburn, an intelligence analyst, and Hussain Haqqani of Hudson Institute gave their presentations at the session on terrorism and security.

In the final session, Abbas Faiz of Amnesty International, Shahria Kabir, acting president of Forum for Secular Bangladesh, Ahmed Ziauddin of Centre for Genocide Studies, and Brad Adams of Human Rights Watch raised their concerns about human rights violations.

Representatives from the Foreign Office, Home office, ODA and diplomats also attended the conference.

CPB, CPI exchange views

Leaders of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) held a meeting with the leaders of Communist Party of India (CPI) in Kolkata on Tuesday, says a press release.

The CPB delegation visited India on the invitation of the CPI.

The CPB delegation members included President Manzurul Hossain Khan and president member Syed Abu Zafar Ahmed while CPI delegation comprised General Secretary AB Bardhan, central secretary member Nandagopal Bhattacharya, member of the national executive committee Manju Kr Mazumder and Secretary of International Department Pallab Sengupta.

The two sides exchanged reports and experiences of the ongoing struggle movements as well as the struggle against the fundamentalist and communal forces and imperialist intrigues in the region, which is of common concern to both countries.

The president of CPB referred in particular to the present people's movement in defence of democracy that is taking place in Bangladesh. He dealt on the unity of the left-democratic and secular forces, which the party is doing everything to strengthen.

The CPI expressed its appreciation for their efforts. CPB president also had a meeting with Comrade Biman Bose, member, politburo of CPI-M which was a continuation of the meeting that he earlier had with Comrade Prakash Karat, General Secretary, CPI (M).

'Do not use children in politics'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh National Women Lawyers Association (BNWLA) urged the political parties not to use the children in political activities.

The association in a statement yesterday expressed concern over the use of children in political activities including meetings, processions and rallies.

The political violence damages the future of the children and hurt their minds, the statement added.

Dhaka Divisional Convention of Nat'l Committee postponed

National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Electricity and Port has postponed its Dhaka Divisional Convention programme, scheduled to be held in Mymensingh on November 18 considering the ongoing situation, says a press release.

The fresh date of the convention will be announced later, read the press release.

Engineer Sheikh Muhammad Shahidullah, convener of the committee and Prof Anu Muhammad, member secretary, yesterday in a statement urged the regional committees to advocate the issue of national resources as one of the major issues before the people in the upcoming election.

'Appoint neutral person as chief adviser'

RU CORRESPONDENT

Pro-Awami League teachers of Rajshahi University yesterday called on President and Chief Adviser to the caretaker government Iajuddin Ahmed to appoint a neutral and non-partisan person as the chief adviser.

Speaking at a rally under the banner of Progressive Teachers' Society, they alleged that the President/ Chief Adviser is implementing the 'blueprint' of the BNP-Jamaat alliance.

They also called for immediate removal of the Chief Election Commissioner in order to resolve the current political impasse.

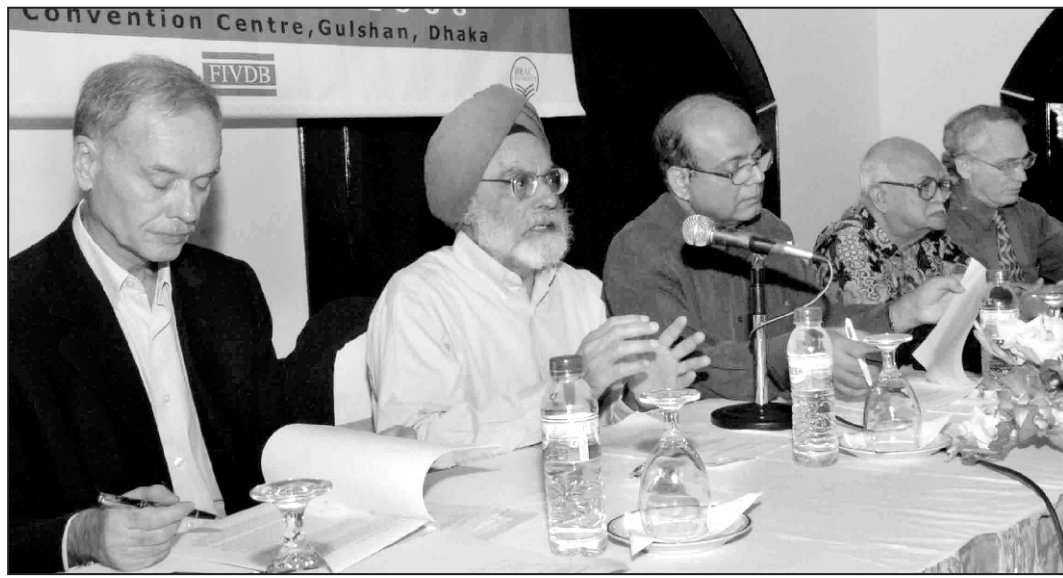
The teachers also called on the Chief Adviser to cancel the controversial recruitments at Rajshahi University.

The university has now turned into an appointment bureau for the BNP-Jamaat cadres and the academic system has collapsed following the mass recruitment by the present administration, they said.

The teachers also threatened to launch a non-cooperation movement against the university and the government and refrain from taking classes if their demands were not met.

Prof Abdus Shobhan, Prof Mukhlesur Rahman, Prof Abdul Latif, Prof Ananda Kumar and Prof Maloy Kumar Bhoumik spoke at the rally.

Earlier, they also took out a procession on the campus and paraded through different streets.



Dr Harbans Singh Bhola speaks at a seminar on adult literacy at Spectra Convention Centre in the city yesterday. On his right is Wolfgang Vollmann while on his left are Dr Manzoor Ahmed, Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui and Dr James Jennings.

Adult literacy must top dev policy agenda

Speakers tell seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Adult literacy programme for the poor and illiterate must be placed at the top of the development policy agenda in Bangladesh, eminent academicians at a seminar observed yesterday.

"Since the adult people are already there in the development process, they should be educated first," said Dr Harbans Singh Bhola, professor emeritus at Indiana University, USA.

"I do not suggest that all the primary schools should be shut down. Rather, adult education is necessary to complement the primary education," he added.

The Friends in Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB) in association with Unesco, the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) and the Brac Institute of Educational Development (BUIED) organised the seminar as part of a literacy week being observed in the city from November 10 to 16.

Dr Harbans presented the keynote paper titled 'Adult literacy development in Bangladesh: Unlocking the people's potential' at the seminar on 'Role of adult literacy

in poverty alleviation and Bangladesh policy perspective' held at the Spectra Convention Centre.

Sharing his experience in the field of education in the country, Dr James Jennings, an educationist, said that until now what has been formulated as policies remained as rhetoric and recently disinterest and antagonism have been witnessed in this sector.

He called for commitment of all the sectors to effective primary education and adult literacy programmes.

Wolfgang Vollmann of Unesco stressed the need for comprehensive research on adult literacy that remains outside the mainstream development. If the literate adults are involved in the economic development, they would contribute a lot to poverty alleviation, he observed.

Tahsinah Ahmed of SDC presented a number of recommendations, including formulating a diversified policy to promote adult literacy.

Claude Bobillier of BUIED suggested adopting good policies to implement the programmes at the national level, as bureaucratic tangle time and again stands in the way of implementation.

CPB warns people of underhand tricks by BNP, Jamaat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) yesterday warned the people of underhand tricks by the BNP-Jamaat alliance, saying that they want to go back to power by all means.

They called on the people and all political parties to keep a close watch on the process of reformation of the Election Commission so that the caretaker government cannot follow the same strategy adopted during the appointment of the Chief Adviser.

Everybody should remain alert so that the initiative to reform the EC cannot be stifled due to the conspiracy by BNP-Jamaat alliance, CPB leaders said at a rally at Paltan during the countrywide blockade programme.

They said the BNP-Jamaat alliance government during its tenure had highly politicised the administration and that there is no alternative to thorough purge of the administration if the caretaker government wants to hold a free and fair election.

About the resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), the leaders said more than one CEC had resigned earlier in accordance with constitutional procedure and that the BNP-Jamaat

alliance is trying to mislead the nation by saying that resignation of the CEC is unconstitutional.

They also vowed to continue their demonstrations until the EC is reconstituted and the CEC is removed.

CPB Secretary Sazzad Zahir, Mahbub Alam, Ahsan Habib Lavlu, CPB Dhaka committee President Abdul Kader and Joly Talukdar also spoke at the rally.

CPB also held rallies in different parts of the country yesterday.

Brac University reopens today

The Brac University will resume its classes today, says a press release.

The admission test of the university for spring 2007, scheduled for tomorrow, has been postponed due to unavoidable circumstances.

Fresh date for the test will be announced later on. Persons concerned have been requested to visit the university website at www.bracuniversity.ac.bd or contact 8853948, 8853949, 9881265 ext. 4000/4003 for updates.

3 sailors held at Ctg port

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

Chittagong Port Magistracy here yesterday arrested three sailors reportedly for travelling foreign ports without valid documents violating Bangladesh Merchant Shipping Law.

Sources said Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) Magistrate Md Munir Chowdhury in a raid at a Bangladesh flagged vessel 'Eid-E-Mostafa' owned by Continental Liner Agency held the three sailors yesterday afternoon.

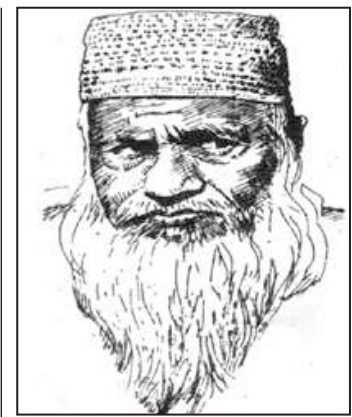
They were identified as Md Harunur Rashid and Mosharrif Hossain hailing from Begumganj of Noakhali and Nurul Hoque from Mongla of Khulna.

The court also seized three passports from possession of the sailors who confessed that they joined the vessel as welders and painters before making the illegal voyages to different foreign ports such as Gujarat, Yangoon and Karachi.

Sources said the sailors had no permission or valid certificates required for travelling foreign ports.

In this regard, Munir Chowdhury said many shipping companies usually hire such persons at low salaries creating scope for illegal voyage to foreign ports without paying revenue.

The evil practice deprives many legal and skilled sailors of the country of jobs, he added.



30th anniversary of Bhasani's death tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 30th death anniversary of Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, a veteran political leader, will be observed tomorrow.

Born in 1880 at village Dhanpara in Sirajganj, Bhasani dedicated his life to establishing the rights of the oppressed and downtrodden.

Bhasani passed away in 1976. He was buried at Santosh in Tangail.

Different socio-political organisations will mark the day with elaborate programmes across the country. They will place wreaths at his grave at Santosh. Milad mahfil, discussion, painting competition and a fair will also be held in Tangail.

BNP has formed a 51-member committee with Tariqul Islam as convener and Shamsuzzaman Dudu as member secretary to observe the day, says a press release.

They will place wreaths at the grave of the late leader. A discussion will also be held at 3:30pm at Maulana Bhasani auditorium at Naya Paltan in Dhaka.

Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani Parishad will hold a photography exhibition on the life of Bhasani on the Central Shaheed Minar premises in Dhaka from 10:00am to 5:00pm. Language movement veteran Abdul Matin will inaugurate the exhibition.

Besides, a rally will also be held at the Shaheed Minar at 3:00pm.

Bhasani Juktfront will hold a rally at Muktangan in the city at 4:15pm to mark the day.

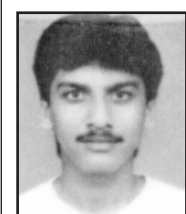
AK Saffullah Khandakar



Today is the 18th death anniversary of AK Saffullah Khandakar, one of the organisers of the War of Liberation and a former official of Pakistan Air Force (PAF) and Bangladesh Consumers Supplies Corporation, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad and doa mahfil will be held at his village house at Gobindapur in Feni.

Joti Huq

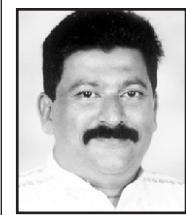


Today is the 13th death anniversary of Joti Huq, a sportsman, says a press release.

Joti, the youngest son of senior journalist Rafiqul Huq Dadu Bhai, was shot dead by a gang of unidentified miscreants at his hostel room on this day in 1993.

On the occasion, Qurankhwani, doa and milad mahfil will be held at his Shantinagar residence in the city and at Kamalkachna in Rangpur today.

Naim Sikder Bindu



Today is the second death anniversary of Naim Sikder Bindu, general secretary of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)

Dhaka City Ward No-90, says a press release.

Bindu was shot dead on this day in 2004 by the unidentified criminals.

On the occasion, Qurankhwani will be held at his residence at 213 Karimullah Bagh at Postagola in the city after Maghrib prayers today. Besides, a milad mahfil will be held and foods will be distributed among the poor at Postagola Mollabari Jame Masjid after Juma prayers tomorrow.

Gazi new Lions Dist Governor



Lion Gazi Kalam, a social worker and businessman, was elected District Governor of Lions Clubs International District-315 B1

Bangladesh for the year 2006-2007 recently, says a press release.

Lion Gazi, director of Kimbarly Fashions Ltd and co-chairman of BGEA Arbitration Committee, joined Lionism in 1994.



A group of senior journalists call on BNP Chairperson and immediate past prime minister Khaleda Zia at her Hawa Bhaban office in the city yesterday.

Concern over 'destructive' politics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of doctors in a joint statement yesterday urged the caretaker government to take stern action against the quarters that are creating anarchy in the name of political programmes and to create congenial atmosphere for free and fair general election in the country.

The statement signed by one thousand one hundred and one doctors also urged the government to ensure security of life and property and maintain law and order by enforcing existing law of the land.

Expressing concern over the ongoing political situation of the country, the doctors also criticised the political parties for their 'undemocratic and destructive' programmes.

The doctors called upon them to stop blockade programmes and accept the solutions as per constitutional procedure. "Otherwise people would teach you a lesson through their ballots in the upcoming election", the statement read.

Prof MA Majed, Prof Md Abdul Hadi, Prof M Nurun Nabi, Prof AB Bhuiyan, Prof Mizanur Rahman, Prof Md Moazzam Huq, Prof A Rashid, Prof MA Mannan Miah, Prof Sultana Jahan and Prof AKM Azizul Huq were among the signatories of the statement.

Pro-BNP, Jamaat student bodies protest anarchy

DU CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of All-Party Student Unity, a platform of student organisations backed by BNP-Jamaat coalition, yesterday vowed to protest 'killings, terrorism, anarchy and conspiracy against the upcoming election by Awami League (AL) and its allies'.

They said the student unity would resist the 14-party alliance in the streets, if they try to prolong the countrywide blockade that affected normal life.

At a rally at city's Muktangan they said if the president/ chief adviser complies with the unconstitutional demand of 14-party about removal of the Chief Election Commissioner MA Aziz he shall have to meet their 10-point.

A number of former Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leaders including Mirza Abbas, Barkatullah Bulu, Amanullah Aman, Nazimuddin Alam, Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Annie, Nasiruddin Pintu, Shah Md Abu Jafar and some other leaders addressed the rally.

The rally was presided by Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS) President Shafiqul Islam Masud while JCD President Azizul Barea Helal, General Secretary Shafiqul Bari Babu and ICS General Secretary Mohammad Jahidur Rahman spoke at the rally.

Arrest misinterpreters of constitution

Demand pro-BNP lawyers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum yesterday urged the caretaker government to arrest misinterpreters of the constitution for safeguarding democracy and take effective measures so that the Election Commission can hold the next general election in time.

They alleged that pro-Awami League lawyers have been continuously misinterpreting the constitution using the banner of Supreme Court Bar and forming human chains and chanting slogans on Supreme Court premises for the last eight months.

"It is completely illogical to demand removal of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz as CEC is a constitutional post," said Justice Habibur Islam Bhuiyan, joint convener of the Forum, while addressing a press conference at Supreme Court Bar Association office in the city.

He also said that the demands of removal of CEC and reconstitution of election commission have no logic and it is not possible to meet their demands by January 25, 2007.

"It is very regrettable that Supreme Court Bar Association suggested ousting CEC through forming Supreme Judicial Council few days ago," he added.

Termining the countrywide blockade 'tantamount to an act of sedition', Shah Khasruzzaman, member secretary of the Forum, said people's right to life and livelihood and their freedom of movement have been violated through paralysing the country.

The closure of mills, factories and business establishments due to the blockade has also hit hard the economy, he added.

The lawyers called on the president/ chief adviser to take stern measures to protect people's life and property, restore normality and to keep the economy on track.

Among others, Forum leaders Advocates Saidur Rahman, Joyal Abedin, Golam Arshad and Firoz Shah were also present at the press conference.

Valuables worth Tk 3.55 lakh looted at Uttara

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A gang of robbers looted valuables worth Tk 3.55 lakh including cash and ornaments at Uttara in the city yesterday.

However, police and Rab members managed to arrest one of the robbers just after the incident.

Police said at around 3:30am about 10 to 12 robbers broke into the room of one Dr Hares at the first floor of a two-storey building at Road No 15, Sector No 14, cutting the grills of the veranda and window and looted the valuables holding the residents at gunpoint.

WEATHER TODAY

No change in temperature likely

UNB, Dhaka

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

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

Highest temperature 32.5 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and lowest 17.6 degree Celsius at Bogra.

The sun sets in the capital at 5.12pm today and rises at 6:15am tomorrow.

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

City/Town	Temperature	Humidity in percentage
Dhaka	31.2	61
Chittagong	32.4	81
Rajshahi	30.2	83
Khulna	30.5	75
Barisal	30.6	89
Sylhet	32.3	70
Cox's Bazar	32.5	75

No election commissioner willing to quit

FROM PAGE 1

newspapers and electronic media that the election commissioners and the EC secretary were unwilling to discharge their duties.

The media published the report in a bid to create confusion, the release said. Termining the Election Commission a constitutional body, the EC secretariat urged all concerned to refrain from creating confusion through running reports that are not based on information.

The three election commissioners -- Justice Mahfuzur Rahman, SM Zakaria and Mahmud Hasan Mansur -- who earlier told reporters that they were unwilling to continue the job amid the volatile political situation, yesterday declined to talk to journalists on the issue.

Journalists sought appointment from the three election commissioners separately through their personal secretaries, but the personal secretaries said the commissioners would not talk to newsmen

on the matter.

To know their opinion about the growing crisis in the political arena centring the demand for reconstitution of the EC, a number of journalists talked to the three election commissioners separately in last couple of days when the election commissioners expressed unwillingness to continue their job.

Two of the election commissioners, who even requested the reporters to write news about their sentiment, told reporters that they would take decision in time if the crisis continues.

The three election commissioners, however, had requested anonymity.

After going through the news published in several dailies yesterday, CEC MA Aziz, who has all along remained rigid on his stance not to resign, reacted sharply and directed the EC secretariat to protest the news, sources said, adding that the three election

commissioners who were present when the CEC directed the EC secretariat to protest the news did not say anything.

EC SECRETARY'S BRIEFING

The preparatory works are going on in full swing as they are prepared to conduct the next parliamentary election within the deadline of January 25, the EC secretary said in a news briefing yesterday.

The election schedule will be declared in between November 20 to 30 and the polling will take place in mid January, keeping at least 10 days for re-polling, he said.

The EC will talk with the caretaker government before declaring the election schedule, he added.

The EC secretary yesterday held a meeting with the Dhaka divisional election commissioner, four election officers of Dhaka district and thana election officers in the capital to discuss the progress of printing the updated voter list.