Political decision needed for solving CHT problem

By Staff Correspondent

Justice Abdur Rahman Chowdhury on Monday said that the insurgency problem created by the so-called Shantibahini in Chittagong Hill Tracts was being fuelled by a neighbouring country to destabilise Bangladesh.

He was addressing as chief guest a seminar on "problems of Bangalees and tribals in CHT and present Bangladesh" at the auditorium of the National Press Club.

Among others noted journalist Gias Kamal Chowdhury, Secretary General of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) Amanullah Kabir, Dean of the Law Department of Dhaka University Dr Ershadul Bari, DUCSU Literary Secretary Niamat Elahi, human rights activist Saiful Islam Dildar, Rahman Moni, Rafiqul Islam and Rezaul Karim Helal addressed the seminar presided over by A K M Moksud Ahmed, editor of the Daily Giri Darpon published from Rangamati.

Montruzzaman Monir, Deputy Commander of the Muktijoddha Sangsad, Rangamati hill district and Joint Convener of the Chhatra Gana Parishad, a hill districts organisation, presented the key-note paper. Chhatra Gana Parishad organised the seminar.

In an oblique reference to India, Justice Chowdhury said "this neighbouring country wants her neighbours to remain unstable and so it creates various troubles inside those countries".

He however said the insurgency problem was a political one and called for concerted efforts inside by the government in cooperation with all political parties and also diplomatic efforts to solve it.

He observed that the Local Government Council Bill for the Chittagong hill districts, passed in Parliament in 1989 has curbed civil rights of the mainland people. As a citizen of Bangladesh one can settle in any part of the country. But this Bill bars one to settle in the hill districts, he said adding this was contradictory to our Constitution.

He criticised the role of the Foreign Ministry and said it should take urgent initiative to solve the problem immediately because blood is being shed there.

Gias Kamal Chowdhury said that the issue should be considered from a humanitarian point and be solved through united efforts of the government and all political parties. He was also critical of what he called the shaky role of the Foreign Ministry in handling the issue.

Amanullah Kabir said that it was proved that some misled youths were working against the sovereignty of the country at the instigation of a neighbouring country.

As the largest country in the region, India always showed "big brotherly attitude" toward her neighbouring countries, the BFUJ Secretary General said. The people including those in the hill districts would never tolerate such attitude. They are peace-loving but would shed blood for country if sovereignty is threatened, he added.

He also mentioned that India played such games in Sri Lanka and the Maldives. The Tamil problem would someday be India's, not Sri Lanka's, he observed.

Political decision of the Bangladesh government is needed to solve the problem, he observed.

Dr Ershadul Bari said that the Shantibahini forced the Bangladeshi people to flee their homes to refugee camps in Indian Meghalya and Tripura states where they are detained. It is only because India wants to keep this crisis unsettled, he said.

Montruzzaman in his paper said that the tribal people were enjoying more facilities than others but they made propaganda that they were deprived. He demanded equal share for the Bengali-speaking people of three hill districts after proper study and investigation.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia inaugurating a seminar on World Habitat Day arranged by Housing and Building Research Institute at Mirpur on Monday. — PID photo

Divisional investment committees soon

The government will constitute four Investment Promotion Committees, one each for four divisions, to attract prospective entrepreneurs for industrial investment, reports UNB.

Sources at the Industries Ministry said Monday picking up new generation of entrepreneurs is the main objective of the step.

The proposed committees will identify impediments to industrialisation of respective zones and recommend to the authorities measures to remove those, the sources said.

The divisional investment committees will meet at least once a year to review progress and work out further measures for promoting investment.

The Minister for Industries will be Chairman of the committees which will comprise as members the ministers hailing from respective areas, members of parliament, district council chairmen, divisional commissioners, Bangladesh Bank representatives and local chamber representatives.

Hearing of Ershad's wealth amassing case deferred

Hearing in the case against former president Ershad for amassing wealth beyond his known sources of income, was deferred yesterday till October 9, reports BSS.

Judge of the Special Tribunal, Mohammad Ali Khan, sat briefly only to adjourn the case and fix date for the hearing on October 9.

Shelter for all

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would be able to achieve the UN-declared target of "Shelter for all by 2000 AD" through sincere efforts and proper management.

Begum Zia urged the country's scientists to come forward in innovating techniques of constructing durable and low-cost housing by using indigenous materials.

Presided over by Mohammad Enamul Huq, Secretary Ministry of Works, the function was addressed by Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah, RAJUK Chairman Anwarul Alam and UNDP Resident Representative in Dhaka Charles Henri Larsimont. AKM Khorshed Alam Director incharge of HBRI gave vote of thanks at the function.

The Prime Minister said the housing condition in Bangladesh remained unsatisfactory due to population explosion and scarcity of resources.

Most of our houses have been kutcha or thatched, she said adding that the structure of most of the rural houses remained so weak that those could not withstand the onslaughts of natural disasters like cyclone and floods.

In urban areas, 65 per cent of the population live in congested slums or in railway stations, footpaths or under the open sky as floating population, she said.

Begum Zia said the country's population is expected to cross the 13 crore, giving the cities and towns to bear additional pressure of two crore more people.

The Prime Minister said her government was aware of the housing problem and determined to solve it to improve the standard of living of the people and accelerate the pace of national progress.

She said this year's World Habitat Day has a special significance when the SAARC member countries had also taken up programmes for relieving the plights of the homeless and shelterless.

Observance of the day demonstrates Bangladesh's keenness in resolving the problems of homeless, besides expressing solidarity with the international commitment for creating a better living environment for all shelterless around the world, she added.

Citing United Nations figures, Begum Zia said one fourth of the world's total population remained shelterless.

The UN General Assembly declared the first Monday of October till 2000 AD as World Habitat Day with an objective to creating awareness about the poor state of human habitat.

Begum Zia said the government, despite the economy being in a ravaged condition, had taken effective steps to ensure five basic rights of the people as envisaged in the Constitution.

"We have numourous problems, but limited resources", she said adding the government had got assurance of active cooperation from the allies and donor agencies for the removal of the problems.

She also sought the cooperation of all quarters including the educationists, researchers, architects, planners and policy-makers to resolve the country's problems and place the nation on a seat of honour in the world arena.

The Prime Minister also went round different stalls of an exhibition of low-cost housing materials arranged on the occasion at HBRI.

In his speech Rafiqul Islam Miah said the present democratic government was committed to ensuring improved habitat, safe and permanent home, clean atmosphere, access to safe drinking water and sewerage, garbage disposal and expansion of mass literacy.

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The Midnight File

Transfer of Tin Bigha discussed

CALCUTTA, Oct 7: The Indian High Commissioner in Bangladesh, K Srinivasan, today discussed the transfer of Tin Bigha corridor to Bangladesh with the West Bengal Chief Secretary, N Krishnamoorthy. K Srinivasan, on his way from Dhaka to New Delhi, however, declined to divulge the details of the discussion, reports PTI.

Amputation appeal hearing Oct 14

PESHAWAR, Oct 7: An appeal by two American brothers against a Pakistani court's Islamic sentence to amputation of a hand and a foot has been set for October 14, their lawyer said today. Deniel and Charles Boyd were sentenced last month by a one-judge special court in the northwestern town of Peshawar for a bank robbery they deny, reports Reuter.

UN inspectors start destroying 'supergun'

BAGHDAD, Oct 7: UN inspectors today started destroying components that Iraq used to build "superguns," the head of a UN ballistic missiles team announced here. Douglas Englund said Iraq had constructed a 350-millimetre cannon and had been building two 1,000-millimetre cannons with barrels 150 meters (500 feet) long, reports AP.

Writ rejected

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Members of Parliament at the Parliament chamber, and the serving of notice to MPs by the Election Commission.

On the same day Moudud Ahmed of the Jatiya Party filed the third petition against the Act.

Meanwhile Jamaat's Sheikh Ansar Ali who had filed the second case decided not to pursue it following the repeal of the Election of President (amendment) Ordinance.

The Election of President Act, 1991 provides for election through an open ballot by the Members of Parliament.

The Election of President (amendment) Ordinance (repealed subsequently) had sought to treat the election as part of the proceedings of Parliament so that the provisions of Article 70 of the Constitution (against floor-crossing) were applicable. Under this Article an MP is liable to vacate his seat on the charge of floor-crossing.

The petitioners had argued that the provision of open election would subvert democracy because it was against the concept of election which, they said, essentially meant 'casting of votes through secret ballot'.

The Election of President Act which provided for election through open ballot was intended to commit mischief. By exposing the voters it would make them vulnerable and as such the MPs would not be able to cast votes on the basis of freedom of conscience. The Act was thus violative of the fundamental rights.

In the supplementary prayers the petitioners submitted that the Secretary of the Election Commission had no authority to call a sitting of the House. Again the Parliament chamber which cannot be used for any purpose other than sessions of the House. The Rules of Procedure of Parliament could not be used for holding election of the President. The sanctity of the chamber would be violated, they argued.

The petitioners also challenged the use of the word 'baithak' in the notice served by the Election Commission Secretary Ayubur Rahman for the election. 'Baithak' meant sitting which the secretary could not call, they argued adding that the word was used on the basis of the Ordinance which had already been repealed.

They thus submitted that holding of the election under such a situation would only endanger the constitutional process. Again there was no constitutional compulsion to hold the election on October 8.

Against this Attorney General Aminul Haque that said ballot could be both secret and open. The President of the United States was being elected through open ballot for two hundred years. Open ballot was not violative of fundamental rights because the MPs were to vote under self-imposed restrictions and limitations. After accepting Article 70 of the Constitution by consensus they could not make such an argument.

He continued, the petitioners were not aggrieved when they filed nomination papers for their candidates on September 25. It was only after the promulgation of the Ordinance that they filed the Writ petitions. The Ordinance had already been repealed. And apprehension could not be the ground of grievance.

He further submitted that the meeting of MPs for the election was called seven days before the date of election after duly consulting the Speaker very much a part of Parliament. Again election of President was not such an act that could violate the sanctity of the chamber. Otherwise Parliament chambers could not have been used for such election in India and Pakistan.

The Rules of Procedure comprised rules which were applicable only to the proceedings of the Parliament. On the other hand an Act was a law, and as such the latter should take precedence over the former. The Election of President Act 1991 was very much under Article 48 of the Constitution, he said.

The Attorney General concluded his submission by saying that the entire country would suffer from uncertainty if the election was stayed. That would lead to a vacuum. At this stage democracy needed to be nursed, he said.

The Court refrained from making any observations about the merit of the Writ petition but observed that the balance of convenience and inconvenience at this stage was against the petitioners. The Writ petitions will come up for hearing before the regular Bench on re-opening of the Supreme Court on October 20.

Aminul Haque, Attorney General, who appeared for the state was assisted by Salemuzzaman, HF Hasan Arif, Deputy Attorneys General, Fakhrul Islam and Husne Ara Ahsan, Asstt Atorneys General.

The petitioners were represented by Amirul Islam who was assisted by Gaziul Huq, Zakir Ahmed, F M Mesbahuddin and Baset Majumder.

Moudud Ahmed moved his petition in person.

Last-minute efforts

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Quamruzzaman.

In the meeting, Jatiya Party leader Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury first gave a broad outline on how to work together inside and outside parliament.

However the Jamaat leaders emphasised the need to form a third political platform keeping a distance from both the Awami League and the BNP.

Jamaat leader Abul Ahsan Mujahid informed the meeting that the behaviour of the Awami League was not at all democratic. He regretted that the Jamaat leaders in parliament were not even allowed to sit in parliament with the Opposition members, and that's why Jamaat MPs in parliament sat with the Treasury Bench members.

However, the two parties discussed whether they would vote for the Awami League candidate Badrul Haider Chowdhury or abstain from voting.

The Jamaat leaders expressed the view that it would be wise to abstain from the voting for the cause of creating a third force in politics.

On the other hand the Jatiya Party did not categorically say anything about what it would do in the presidential election.

Later talking to this correspondent at an informal gathering leader Moudud Ahmed said that a decision would be taken at the JP Parliamentary Party meeting this morning at the Parliament house.

He however said that the Awami League was advocating Badrul Haider Chowdhury as a consensus candidate. When asked if they thought Badrul Haider Chowdhury was a consensus candidate or not, Mizan Chowdhury replied saying, "You will know it in time."

Insiders said that there were three currents in the Jatiya Party. While one group opted to vote for Badrul Haider Chowdhury, another group said that it would be better to vote for the BNP candidate so that they could negotiate with the BNP on other issues.

The third group probably led by Secretary General of the party Shah Moazzem Hossain was preferring to abstain from voting.

In the meeting with the Jamaat, Shah Moazzem said that the Jatiya Party might have cast its votes for Badrul Haider Chowdhury but one had to keep in mind that the Awami League should not get any upperhand in the process.

However the Jamaat leaders present in the meeting kept silent on his comment.

According to sources in the Jatiya Party Parliamentary Party, the JP decision would be greatly influenced if Kazi Zafar Ahmed, allowed to participate in the president election on parole, were to attend the parliamentary party meeting this morning.

A former minister of the Jatiya Party told The Daily Star that it would be too difficult for the party to take any decision favouring Badrul Haider Chowdhury at this stage.

The Awami League yesterday called a meeting of all opposition MPs at 10 pm in the office of the Leader of the Opposition. The meeting was attended by Jatiya Party leaders Mizan Chowdhury, Moudud Ahmed, Shah Moazzem Hossain, Monirul Haque Chowdhury, NDP leader Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury and Ganotantri Party leader Suranjit Sengupta. Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina was also present in the meeting.

The Awami League in the meeting wanted to chalk out a programme in connection with the presidential election today.

Some of the Awami League MPs and the Ganatantri Party leader Suranjit Sengupta, when contacted, told The Daily Star that the Opposition should not allow the sanctity of parliament house to be damaged. When reminded that in 1974 when Mahmudullah was elected president of the Awami League government, the Election Commission called a meeting of Parliament members at the parliament house, Suranjit Sengupta said that that election was held under Second Schedule of the Constitution.

Insiders of the Awami League said that they were actively considering the possibility of asking the Chief Election Commissioner not to conduct the election of the president inside Parliament house.

But when asked, the Deputy Leader of the House Abdus Samad Azad said that no decision had yet been taken in this regard.

Armed demos

From Page 1 Col. 8

pus and other institutions in the country.

They also demanded arrest of all armed hoodlums to restore congenial academic atmosphere.

Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina presiding over a meeting of her party's parliamentary group at the Sangsad Bhaban on Monday. —Star photo

Badrul calls Salam liar

From Page 1 Col. 5

that they would not be able to cast their votes beyond party decision. He was accompanied by his relatives and a few mid-level leaders of different political parties.

His press conference was also attended by former BKSAL leader Moanek Sarkar, Awami League leader Laisuzzaman, and Professor Abu Syeed.

"I want to play a definite role at this juncture of the nation's transition to democracy by rising above all fear and temptation," he said.

"A non-partisan personality of national consensus should be elected to the office of the President for greater national interest when the strength of the government and the Opposition in Parliament is almost equal", the former Chief Justice said.

Justice Chowdhury, the Awami League-backed candidate, termed the President Election Act as undemocratic and demanded repeal of all undemocratic provisions forthwith.

"The Presidential Election Act, 1991, with open ballot provision is not only undemocratic but also unconstitutional", he said. "I can't perceive why this open ballot provision ?"

Justice Chowdhury said he wanted to assure all that he always fought for the cause of free, fair and impartial elections, rule of law and the independence of judiciary.

Justice Chowdhury expressed confidence about his victory in tomorrow's election, saying "I'm a born soldier and contesting the election for victory".

Replying to a question, Justice Chowdhury said that besides opposition support, he also hoped to get support from a number of ruling party MPs. He said, 6 of the BNP MPs were his relatives, while 23 of them his direct students.

He told a questioner that he met leaders of the Jamaat-e-Islami to seek vote from them as a non-partisan candidate. The question of citizenship of Prof Golam Azam was not discussed, nor raised at the meeting, he said.

Justice Chowdhury told another questioner that he was offered a diplomatic job like that of Permanent Representative in the United Nations by the Prime Minister herself during his meeting with her.

In reply to another question, Justice Chowdhury said if elected (president), he would request repeal of all undemocratic laws in the country.

CPB

From Page 1 Col. 8

ment to form a national-patriotic-democratic front with democratic, secular and nationalist political parties, forces and individuals with a view to establishing a patriotic-democratic government in the country.

The Congress amended Article 13 of its Constitution which says, the CPB will lead all its works and determine party policies from the scientific point of view. In this regard, the party will follow the scientific explanation by Marx, Engels and Lenin and consider the flourishment of the party ideological trend.

On the concluding day of the six-day Congress of the party today, the delegates will elect the central committee of the party.

Jamaat contradicts report

By Staff Correspondent

Publicity Secretary of Jamaat-e-Islami Muhammed Kamruzzaman Monday said that the meeting of Justice Badrul Haider Chowdhury with Prof Golam Azam was arranged at the "repeated request" on behalf of Justice Chowdhury.

He contradicted part of the report titled 'presidential poll tomorrow' published in the Daily Star Monday, saying it contained some "confusing and untrue" informations quoting Awami League leader Tofael Ahmed.

The part of the report had quoted Tofael Ahmed and some other AL leaders as telling Sunday's ALPP meeting that the Badrul-Golam Azam meeting had not been scheduled earlier.

UAE

From Page 1 Col. 4

of BCCI, which was closed worldwide in July following charges of massive fraud.

The Bank of England, which led the move against BCCI has given the institution until December 4 to submit a rescue formula that could involve changing management and paying billions of dollars.

So far, Abu Dhabi has not made clear if it intends to revive the bank, but majority shareholders said in a statement in London last week they saw little hope for restructuring.

According to the UAE English-language daily Khaleej Times, BCCI shareholders would need 12 billion dollars to restore the bank to its previous position.

"But the majority shareholders are keeping their distance from the crisis and are unlikely to agree to make such a payment," it quoted an official Abu Dhabi source as saying Monday.

Bankers and economists here said the move against Abedi and the sacking of most of the BCCI staff in the UAE last week indicated that the shareholders had opted for liquidation.

Tk 105 cr JB loan exempted

Janata Bank has exempted agricultural loans of another 177488 farmers amounting Tk 105 crore, reports UNB.

With this, official sources said, the JB's exemptions totalled Tk 140 crore, 90 per cent of its outstanding loans deserving waiver.

Earlier, the bank waived Tk 35 crore under the government programme for waiving agri-credit upto Tk 5,000 along with interest accrued to the main.

The latest exemption was decided at a meeting of the Board of Directors of the bank on October 5.

The BOD meeting also directed JB branches for quick review of the rest waiver-deserving loans.

AL opposes

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for the purpose.

The AL meeting also maintained that the calling of the parliament session by the Election Commission was the violation of Constitution which was a move to curb the authority of the President.

The AL meeting called upon all members of the parliament to play their due role in favour of the Indemnity Ordinance (Repeal) Bill during the ensuing session of the parliament. The meeting said the passage of the bill was essential for ensuring democracy and rule of law in the country.

The meeting was addressed by Abdus Samad Azad, Abdul Mannan, Pulin Dey, Abdur Razzak, Amir Hussain Amu, Tofael Ahmed, Mohammad Nasim, K M Jahangir, Col (Retd) Shawkat Ali, Rashed Mosharraf, Abdul Matin Khasru and others.

The ALPP will meet again today (Tuesday) at 12 noon at the office of the Leader of the Opposition in Sangsad Bhavan.

Presidential poll

From Page 1 Col. 3

lobby within the party told The Daily Star that the CPB would prefer to abstain. But if they decide to vote, all the five MPs of the party might join the AL ranks. The AL and its allies have a total of 99 votes.

The Jatiya Party was undecided about its participation in the presidential election till Monday night. But there was a strong indication that if the JP decided to vote it would vote for Justice Chowdhury as a matter of protest against the ruling party. The Jamaat may abstain from voting.

Out of 330 (MPs), there are two independents and one each from six small parties — NAP (M), Workers Party, Ganatantri Party, JSD (S), NDP and IOJ — in the parliament. Workers Party MP, Rashed Khan Menon is now on a tour of North Korea. It is not sure whether he will be available during the voting.

The presidential election that could be an uneventful occasion became a subject of controversy in the political circles due to the promulgation of an ordinance by the Government to check floor-crossing on September 30. The BNP leadership itself came under severe criticism by its own members because the move was seen as a manifestation of lack of confidence in the party MPs. In the face of strong resentment the ordinance was withdrawn on October 4.

Two of the three writ petition filed by the opposition members of the parliament were heard for three consecutive days before passing the judgement Monday disallowing the plea for stay on the holding of the presidential election.

Lu

From Page 1 Col. 8

time of flood.

The Prime Minister said the friendship between Bangladesh and China was traditional and, it was further consolidated at the time of Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman. She said the present government would always make efforts to further strengthen the ties between Bangladesh and China.

Begum Zia thanked the Chinese government and people for cooperation and assistance extended to Bangladesh

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