

Move to narrow BNP-AL gap

By Staff Correspondent

Smaller groups, parties and independents in parliament are likely to work to narrow the gap between the majority Bangladesh Nationalist Party and the opposition Awami League to make the House work.

An informal meeting of MPs representing some smaller parties was held at the residence of BKSAL chief and MP Mohiuddin Ahmed on Sunday evening to plan a common strategy for the purpose.

Bangladesh Awami League stands for restoration of parliamentary democracy, while Bangladesh Nationalist Party stands for a presidential system with adequate power to the parliament, but no amendment to effect either of the changes is possible without mutual cooperation.

AL leaders have already announced that they will introduce a bill in parliament for amending the Constitution for changing to a parliamentary system.

BNP leaders have remained tight-lipped and have insisted that parliament take the decision.

Meanwhile, differences between the two parties have sharpened over the question of the formation of a council of minister and the transfer of power.

Smaller parties are planning to tell both BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia and AL chief Sheikh Hasina that parliament cannot work if they remain rigid in their stand.

MPs of such parties are confident they could act as catalysts since both the leaders will need their support to be effective in parliament.

One such MP believes that BNP leaders could be persuaded to accept the demand for making the government accountable to parliament — meaning the government should enjoy the confidence of the House without affecting the presidential form they stand for.

Exchange of ideas between smaller groups and parties was still in a preliminary stage when this report was filed Sunday night. BKSAL chief Mohiuddin Ahmed said that nothing concrete has yet emerged.

There was no meeting. Some MPs-elect had just visited his house, he said.

The BKSAL leader, however, emphasised that there should be some understanding between the two major parties in parliament to democratise the Constitution in keeping with the spirit of the mass movement that ousted the government of H.M. Ershad.

Sources say, MPs interested to take part in the move include Suranjit Sengupta of Ganatantri Dal, Shahjahan Siraj of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury of National Democratic Party, and Abdul Razzak of BKSAL. They also want to enlist the support of five MPs of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB).



Delights of democracy A smiling Mohiuddin Ahmed, the BKSAL chief, along with a grand daughter on way to take oath as MP on the first day of oath taking Sunday, left, Salahuddin Kader Chowdhury exchanging pleasantries, with a fellow member moments before taking oath, top, Suranjit Sen Gupta and Abdur Razzak, above.— Star photo

Four killed, 29 hurt in accidents

By DMCH Correspondent

Four persons were killed and 29 injured in accidents at Adamjee and Bhabherchar on Sunday.

One person was killed and four others injured when a truck hit a baby taxi near Adamjee at 12.30 noon.

An unidentified woman riding the taxi died on the spot. Four other co-passengers including the driver were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with serious injuries.

One of the injured is Ilumayun Kabir (18).

Three persons were killed and 25 injured when a truck and a minibus collided head on at Bhabherchar between Daudkandi and Meghna ghat.

Name of the three persons who died on the spot could not be known. Of the injured eight were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. They are: Chinmoy (20), Archana Biswas (45), Rina (5), Shamsunnahar (21), Runu (10), Abdus Salam (45), Jahir (28) while another person, aged 35, could not be identified.

Other injured persons were admitted to P.G. Hospital and local Sadar Hospital.

The accident occurred when a minibus (6995) belonging to Jhatika Express bound for Dhaka from Companyganj was hit by a truck coming from opposite direction at 2:45 p.m. The bus was smashed.

12 MPs sworn in

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The twelve MPs read-out the 47-word oath conducted by Justice M. A. Rouf standing, their faces beaming with joy and confidence about the restoration of democracy.

The 10-minute oath taking ceremony began with recitation from the holy Quran.

Administering of the oath took only one and a half minute. The members then embraced each other and shook hands with the Chief Election Commissioner.

The formalities of the oath-taking were completed with the signing of a list of MPs in the room of the Parliament Secretary Abdul Awal.

After the signing the MPs posed for parliament photographers to take snaps that would be used for their identity cards.

They then had informal talks about the inaugural session of the House.

Article 148 of the Constitution requires a Member of Parliament to subscribe an oath before assuming office.

Chief Election Commissioner Justice M. A. Rouf was designated by Speaker of the Fourth Parliament Shamsul Huda Chowdhury to administer the oath on his behalf.

According to the Rules of Procedure of Parliament, MPs-elect are to take oath from the outgoing Speaker or anybody designated by him.

Those who took oath on Sunday were Mohiuddin Ahmed, Abdur Razzak, Abdur Rahim and Mohammad Ishaque of BKSAL, Shahjahan Siraj of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (Siraj), who was also a member of the Second, Third and Fourth Parliaments, Suranjit Sen Gupta of Ganatantri Dal (Siraj), who was also in the First, Second and Third Parliaments, Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury of National Democratic Party, who was also in the Second and Third Parliaments, Prof. Abdul Hafiz of National Awami Party (M), Moulana Obaidul Huq of Islami Oikya Jote and three independents — Redwan Ahmed, Major (retd) Hafizuddin and Nurul Islam Moni. Redwan Ahmed was a member of the Second and the Third Parliaments, Major (retd) Hafiz was in the Third and the Fourth Parliaments, while Nurul Islam Moni was in the Fourth Parliament.



Envoys of Bhutan and Sri Lanka called on BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia in her Cantonment residence Sunday. — PID photo

Envoys of Bhutan, Sri Lanka call on Khaleda Zia

The Ambassador of Bhutan and the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in Dhaka called on BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia at her cantonment residence Sunday afternoon, reports UNB.

Sri Lanka High Commissioner Alfred K. David handed over a message from President Ranasinghe Premadasa felicitating the BNP leader over her and her party's victory in recent parliamentary elections.

Bhutanese Ambassador Karma Dorjee also congratulated Begum Khaleda Zia on winning all the five seats she contested and BNP for emerging the majority party.

The two diplomats expressed the hope that relations between their countries and Bangladesh will strengthen further in future.

Another report says — Dr Kennedy A. Simmonds, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of St. Kitts and Nevis of West Indies, has congratulated BNP leader Begum Khaleda Zia on her victory in the parliamentary polls.

Gherao programme withdrawn

Bangladesh Krishi Bank Karmachari Sangsad on Sunday withdrew its gherao programme following the permission of the Ministry of Finance for giving incentive bonus to the employees and officers of the bank, a Karmachari Sangsad press release said, reports BSS.

A rally of the officers and employees of the bank was held at the end of a "ananda michil". The rally was addressed, among others, by Chairman of the Board of Directors of Krishi Bank Dr. Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir.

No compulsion to change form of govt

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The Acting President, who is under oath to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court cannot assent to constitutional bills, they opined.

The Joint Declaration is a political document and cannot override the Constitution, they said.

The members elected to the Fifth Parliament are not bound in any way by the November 19 Declaration.

They are to take oath under the Constitution to preserve, protect and defend it, and not under the Joint Declaration.



Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina garlanding the portrait of Bangabandhu Sunday. — Star photo

The Parliament, (even if Awami League extends support to BNP for any amendment) cannot change the form of government discarding the principle of basic characters' enunciated in the 8th Amendment.

The Awami League, they said, took the election as a referendum on what the system of government would be and failed to muster even the simple majority.

By taking recourse to the Joint Declaration, the Awami League wants to gain what it lost in the election, the lawyers commented.

They further said the present government is a link in the chain of the constitutional continuity towards a democratic transition. Anything less than that will bring undesirable results for the country.

Hasina

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Sheikh Hasina, accompanied by the central party leaders garlanded Bangabandhu's portrait and observed a minute's silence to pay tribute to the late leader.

Abdus Samad Azad, Sheikh Abdul Aziz, Begum Sajeda Choudhury, Amir Hossain Amu, Mohammad Nasim, Dr. Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Advocate Shahara Khatun, Abdul Mannan, and Rashed Mosharrar were present.

Bangabandhu Parishad held a children's rally in the afternoon.

Parishad chairperson Poet Begum Sufia Kamal, chaired the rally.

Writer Shawkat Osman and artiste Lucky Inam spoke at the rally about the patriotism of Bangabandhu and called upon the children to be inspired by the ideals of the great leader.

The Midnight File

Dalai Lama begins British visit

LONDON, Mar 17: The Dalai Lama arrived in Britain Sunday, beginning a six-day visit which includes a meeting with a high government official and an address to a scientific conference. Supporters of the Tibetan cause have complained because Prime Minister John Major will not meet with the Dalai Lama. However, the Chinese government, which rules Tibet, has protested because the Dalai Lama will be meeting the Lord Chancellor, who is a member of Major's cabinet and chief legal official in England and Wales, reports AP.

Rally for polls in Sofia

SOFIA, Mar 17: Fifty thousand people rallied in central Sofia today to demand parliamentary elections in June to contest the absolute majority of Bulgaria's ruling Socialist (PSB, ex-Communist) Party. The demonstrators carried slogans reading "no more PSB majority" and "elections," calling for the application of an agreement drawn up at the end of last year by parliamentary parties that envisaged fresh elections in June, reports AFP.

Rebel leaders meet Chamorro

MANAGUA (Nicaragua), Mar 17: El Salvador's leftist guerrilla leaders met Nicaraguan President Violeta Chamorro on Saturday and announced a proposal aimed at a breakthrough in ending 11 years of Salvadoran civil war. "Our fundamental proposal is to produce a breakthrough in the negotiations that brings results as quickly as possible," said Joaquin Villalobos, commander of the leftist rebel Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLM), reports Reuter.

Fierce fighting in Ethiopia

NAIROBI, Mar 17: Thousands of people were reported killed or wounded in large battles across northern Ethiopia in the past week as government troops fought to drive back rebel offensives. The radio of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) said today that 4,600 government troops were killed or wounded when they tried to recapture Gojamb province, reports Reuter.

US county to import water

WASHINGTON, Mar 17: A drought-stricken county in central California Friday made an unprecedented decision to import water from Canada. The coastal county of Goleta, 140 miles north of Los Angeles, is expected to run out of water next spring if California's five-year-long drought continues, reports Xinhua.

Costner wins Directors award

NEW YORK, Mar 17: First-time director Kevin Costner won the Directors Guild of America award for best director of 1990 Saturday night for his epic western, "Dances with Wolves." Costner also starred in the film, a three-hour account of a U.S. cavalry officer living with American Indians. The film won him the Golden Globe award as best director earlier this month, reports AP.

Holy Ramzan

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Government has ordered closure of restaurants and other eating places during fasting hours every day.

Government has ordered closure of restaurants and other eating places during fasting hours every day.

Authorities concerned have ordered hotels and restaurants closed in daytime to maintain the sanctity of the month. Eating, drinking and smoking are prohibited in public places at daytime during the month.

Prices

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against Taka 30 last week. The price of onion rose by Taka two a kg to Taka 14. Ghee (A-1) was sold on Sunday at Taka 140 a seer. Last week, its price was Taka 132 a seer while Butter oil (Red Cow) and ghee were sold at Taka 85 and 400 a pound respectively.

"Khesari" - a variety of pulse - sold on Sunday at 20 per kg, "motor" at Tk 24, while at Tk 28.

Prices of rice which rose by Taka 20 to 30 per maund last week over, however, did not rise further. The government has started Open Market Sales (OMS) of rice to help maintain stable prices. Medium quality rice was sold Sunday between Taka 13 and Taka 15 a kg. The coarse varieties were sold at Taka 11 to Taka 12. Finer varieties sold between Taka 17 and Taka 20.

The prices of meat also remained stable. Beef was sold at Taka 60 a kg while mutton at Taka 90 per kg.

Eggs sold at Tk 11 (a set of four). Wheat (atta) sold at Taka 11 per kg, flour at Tk 12, garlic Tk 32, Turmeric Tk 35 to Tk 48, "Dhania" Tk 28, Ginger Tk 24, Bean Tk 7, Dry chilli Tk 70, Potato Tk 40, salt Tk 8 and Molasses Tk 18.

Ladies finger was sold at Taka 10 per kg. Last week it was sold at Taka 8.

Row over cattle thieves : BSF shoots 11 to death in Nadia

NEW DELHI, Mar 17 : At least 11 people were killed today when Indian border guards fired rifles at farmers in a village near Calcutta, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, says AFP.

Troopers opened fire after the farmers accused them of not helping police in catching local cattle thieves.

Eight others were seriously injured in the early morning incident. Soldiers from the elite Border Security Force were involved in the firing, it said.

Gunfight

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sociates. But it could not be confirmed whether the rally will be held or not.

Police of Milkhet outpost near the campus however did not resort to any action.

When contacted, the Provost of Mohsin Hall told The Daily Star that he was aware of the incident, but was unwilling to say any thing.

AL leader joins JP

contested as an independent from Narsingdhi, told The Daily Star he did not leave Awami League just for his failure in getting nomination. He said he joined Awami League in 1968 and since then contested election only in 1988. But, he said, he played a very vital role during 1975 to reorganise Awami League.

He said Awami League has no ideology. Those who are still associated with Awami League would ultimately become isolated from the mainstream politics, he observed.

He said he did not join BNP because he would not be able to adjust with their politics, which "flourished" after the death of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

In his resignation letter addressed to the General Secretary of Awami League, Khasru said six of the Awami League MPs who won the elections in 1986 failed to get party nominations due to conspiracy of a coterie led by "Amir Hossain Amu and Abdul Jalil."

He alleged Awami League leaders Abdul Mannan, Dr Kamal Hossain, Zillur Rahman, Syeda Zohra Tajuddin and Abdul Momen also created obstacle in obtaining party nominations. He said party president Sheikh Hasina has virtually become a pawn in the hands of two diametrically opposite groups within the party.

Khasru said, in 1986, Awami League and Jatiya Party MPs in parliament agreed to go back to parliamentary form of government or to create a provision for check and balance between presidential and parliamentary systems through necessary amendments to the Constitution. But the move failed due to opposition by a group of presidium members of Awami League who demanded resignation of Awami League MPs from parliament.

He said the election results of Awami League in 1991 elections have also frustrated the Awami League workers and supporters.

Jatiya Party arranged a meeting on the occasion of his joining the party which was presided over by Mizan Chowdhury.

Mizan's regular visitor

By Staff Correspondent

A U Ahmed, who filed a damage suit of Taka 12 crore against deposed president Ershad and Raushan Ershad, has become a regular visitor to the temporary office of Jatiya Party located at the Gulshan residence of Mizan Chowdhury.

Ahmed, was put behind the bar during Ershad regime allegedly for denying to provide funds to Jatiya Party. He alleged two of his houses in Dhaka were also illegally occupied by the Rajuk at the behest of the highest authority of the country in 1988.

When asked A U Ahmed said he will pursue the case against Ershad.

The case is being conducted by Dr Kamal Hossain. He said he lodged the damage suit as he had to suffer a huge loss in his business during Ershad regime.

Ahmed introduced himself as a journalist.

Gorbachev

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be fully guaranteed for all nationalists?"

Public opinion polls indicated that up to 70 per cent of those casting ballots would answer "yes" to the main referendum question. Even Gorbachev's critics believed that most voters would vote "yes," but the vague wording of the referendum left them guessing exactly how the President might translate a victory into policy.

The governments of six separatist republics are refusing to take part in the referendum. The Soviet news agency Tass hinted on Sunday that officials may face criminal prosecution for interfering with the vote.

JPPP seeks permissions to meet Ershad

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Party Parliamentary Party has sought permission to meet party chairman H.M. Ershad from the Home Ministry.

A letter has been submitted to the Home Ministry, in this connection, by the JP Parliamentary Party Secretary Monirul Haque, MP-elect from Comilla.

Monirul Haque said they also sought the permission of Acting President to allow them to call on him.

He said the party in its extended meeting nominated five MPs of Jatiya Party to meet deposed President Ershad, now interned in a house at Gulehan.

Monirul Haque said the JP Parliamentary Party in a letter to the Parliament Secretariat demanded immediate release of Ershad for creating a congenial atmosphere so that the JP MPs could take oath.

He said the extended meeting took a decision that the JP MPs would go for affirmation of their party chairman took oath.

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