

Move to muster support for Azam's trial

By Nazmul Ashraf

A move is underway to gather the widest possible support for the demand to put the Jamaat-e-Islami chief Prof Golam Azam on trial for alleged 'war crimes'.

A hectic move has already begun to unite the political parties, freedom fighters, professional groups, forums of intellectuals and students, trade union bodies and individuals on the issue of the public trial of Golam Azam.

"Ekattorer Ghaatak, Dalal Nirmool Committee" (the committee for uprooting the killers and collaborators of 71) comprising 101 noted citizens on January 19 announced trial of Golam Azam in a people's court on Independence Day (March 26) for alleged war offenses. The announcement followed Golam Azam's 'unlawful' involvement in domestic politics that created a furore in the political circles.

Golam Azam whose citizenship was cancelled by the post-liberation government in 1973 on charges of war crimes, has been living in the country without valid authorisation since 1978.

His election as the Jamaat Ameer (chief) also led to a heated debate in parliament where a government statement reconfirmed that citizenship was not granted to Golam Azam. On Golam Azam's becoming the Jamaat chief, the statement said, the government was studying legal implications.

The 'Ekattorer Ghaatak, Dalal Nirmool Committee' (EGDNC) has meantime bagged the support of some politicians, student leaders and representatives of a few socio-cultural organisations for the demand to try Golam Azam publicly.

The 15-member sub-committee of the EGDNC will soon request the post-liberation political parties to issue directives to their units all over the country to work in favour of Golam Azam's trial, sources

said. Besides, the members of parliament (MPs) who protested the Jamaat's action of electing Golam Azam its chief will also be urged to remain vocal in parliament on the Golam Azam issue.

According to committee sources, the EGDNC is now using its utmost efforts to involve the major political parties and their front organisations, cultural and professional groups and the trade union bodies directly in its plan to try Golam Azam and other 'war criminals' in phases.

The EGDNC has assigned the 15-member body to contact the representatives of political parties and other quarters to gain their agreement for the trial of Golam Azam.

The 15-member body has, meanwhile, met the leaders of the Awami League, the CPB-led Patriotic Democratic Front, the Five-Party combine, a faction of the MuktiJoddha Sangsad and a number of student and cultural organisations that extended their support to the EGDNC.

Headed by Begum Sufia Kamal, the body will also meet the leaders of the ruling BNP, the Sramik Karmachari Otkya Parishad (SKOP), Sammilito Sangskritik Jote, Group Theatre Federation and other progressive forces to seek support.

The support-gaining campaign will be completed by February 1, committee sources said adding that the next phase of the EGDNC action will be to mobilise public opinion on the trial issue throughout the country.

Leaders of political parties and other communities having people's representation would be involved in a public-opinion building campaign.

The EGDNC has planned to form its branches across the country to arrange public rallies in this regard. A signature-collection drive of the EGDNC is also going on.



Power workers pressing for their demands in the city on Monday. —Star photo

UP polls: Voting postponed in eight more centres

By Staff Correspondent

Unwanted incidents led to the postponement of balloting in eight centres on the fifth day Monday of the ongoing Union Parishad elections across the country.

The Election Commission (EC) in Dhaka said that the authorities had to stop the voting in two centres in Dhaka, three in Chittagong, two in Khulna and one in Rajshahi as the situation went beyond its control due to clashes.

The EC said that polling in the rest of the 1775 centres in 351 unions of 42 upazilas in 35 districts was held peacefully.

It was also reported that a school teacher was suspended from his job Monday on charges of vote-rigging in Chittagong. Djendra Lal Majumder, Assistant Teacher of the Latipur Abdul Jalil High School in Sitakunda upazila of the district was caught red-handed while voting illegally in favour of a candidate in Bhatiari Union, Imamnagar Government Primary School centre January 22, he was nominated the presiding officer at the centre.

On the sixth day today (Tuesday), elections will be held in 201 unions in 21 districts. The unions are: 57 in Rajshahi division, 33 in three districts of Khulna division, 48 in six districts of Dhaka division and 63 in seven districts of Chittagong division.

An EC press release said that the Chief Election

Commissioner Justice Abdur Rouf visited some polling centres in Teghari and Basta unions of Keraniganj upazila in Dhaka during Monday's elections. During his visit, Justice Rouf exchanged views with the voters.

Our correspondent from Munshiganj said that polling in two centres of Strajdikhan upazila was postponed following clashes between supporters. The supporters of the rival groups exploded bombs and chased each other. However, none was injured.

Police foiled bids to snatch ballot boxes from the centres during polling.

Voting was suspended at Shekhnagar union of Shekhnagar High School centre and Ghoshkand Primary School centre of Baluchar union. Polling in other 11 unions of the upazila was held peacefully.

Our DMCH correspondent reported that Rawshanuzaman Shamim (26) of village Shekhnagar was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital after being injured in a poll clash in Strajdikhan upazila of Munshiganj district. He was hit with bamboos and rod during the clash.

Our Narayaniganj correspondent said: Over 16 persons were injured in a pre-election clash at Kalagachhia union of Bandar upazila Sunday night.

City corp tenure

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activities of the corporations. Besides it is expensive to hold elections in every three years. Under the circumstances, amendments were brought to the provisions of the term of office to expedite the process of taking over charges by new corporation. So, provision has been made that the corporations shall be deemed to have been duly constituted after the election of 75 per cent of the total number of its elected commissioners has taken place, the statements added.

Winding up the debate the LGRD Minister said the promulgation of the ordinances was democratic and constitutional under parliamentary system when the House was not in session.

He said the government might bring a complete bill of city corporations in future. Replying to the demand of Opposition members to make the office of the Mayor effective, he said there was no mention that it would be

otherwise. Refuting the allegations that the government was enacting laws bypassing parliament, he cited the examples of promulgation of ordinances in 1972. He said the then government dissolved the Union Parishad bodies and replaced the same by relief committees immediately after liberation.

Dismissing the accusations that there were moves to nominate mayors in an autocratic manner like during the past autocratic regime, the LGRD Minister said those things were never practised by the present government.

All told 26 Opposition member participated in the debate on the city corporations bills, pleading for electing all local bodies including the city corporations to make them accountable to the people. The participants included deputy leader of Opposition, Abdus Samad Azad, Matia Chowdhury, Sudhansu Shekhar Halder, Suranjit Sengupta, Sharfuddin Khasru.

After the passage of the four city corporations bills, the Law Minister Mirza Gholam Hafiz moved the Code of Criminal Procedure (amendment) bill for immediate consideration by the House.

Teachers' demands
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Referring to the demands of the teachers, the minister said there was no allocation in the current budget to meet their demands. However, he pointed out that the government would discuss with the teachers as to how far the demands of the teachers could be met in the next budget.

Barrister Sircar said the government had already talks with Principals' Association, College Teachers' Association, Non-Government Teachers' Federation and Government Teachers' Federation.

He said discussion would also be held with the College University Teachers' Association.

The minister said a strike without notice is like a bolt from the blue.

Barrister Sircar said the situation in the educational arena at the moment was more or less peaceful.

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AL, PDF, 5-Party lend support to plan for Golam Azam's 'trial'

By Staff Correspondent

Three political alliances and the Awami League on Monday extended their support to the move of the 101-member committee to try Golam Azam in 'peoples' court' on March 26.

AL leader Abdur Razzak, Haider Akbar Khan Rono, Sharif Nurul Ambla and Golam Mahmud, Patriotic Democratic Front leader Saifuddin Ahmed Manik and Democratic Revolutionary Jote leader Abu Mahmud Monday held a meeting with the 'Ekattorer Ghaatak, Dalal Nirmool Committee' at the residence of a committee member and conveyed their all-out support to the effort.

The leaders also said that they would direct their respective party activists to muster support to the move and build public opinion against Pakistani citizen and an arch-collaborator of Pak occupation army during the War of Independence, Golam Azam.

The leaders also assured the committee that from now on they would boycott all the functions — arranged by the government or the diplomatic missions — where Golam Azam would be present.

The meeting, presided over by committee chairperson Jahanara Imam, was attended, among others, by Phanna Kaiser, Hassan Imam, Mamunur Rashid, Col (Retd) Nuruzzaman and Shahrar Kabir.

Meanwhile, some prominent personalities including Prof Zilur Rahman Siddiqui, Justice Debesh Chandra Bhattacharya, Justice K M Sobhan, Prof Mosharraf Hossain, Prof Salahuddin Ahmed, Santosh Gupta, Wahidul Huq, Sanat Kumar Saha, Bazlur Rahman and Abdul Gafur on Monday expressed their solidarity with the committee and its move to try Golam Azam.

In a separate press release Bangladesh Federation of Film Societies extended its support to the committee.

Dr Shamsur Ali appointed open university VC

The government has appointed Dr Shamsur Ali, Professor of the Department of Physics of the Dhaka University to the post of Project Director; /Vice-Chancellor of the Open University for a term of four years reports BSS.

Troops, loyalists fight in Georgia

POTI (Georgia), Jan 27: One person was killed and at least two were injured as new fighting broke out between government forces and supporters of ousted Georgian president Zviad Gamsakhurdia today, a local official said.

Police lift barricade of DU roads

The plugged entrances to the often-troubled Dhaka University campus were opened Monday for normal traffic after 132 days of restriction as authorities apparently felt relaxed, reports UNB.

Road blocks were removed and police on guard withdrawn from all entry points of the campus which seemed to be calm following the arrest of some ace troublemakers.

Fire leaves two dead in Barisal

BARISAL, Jan 27: A devastating fire raged through the shopping centre of Torkey-bandar in Gournadi upazila of the district early today leaving two people dead, reports UNB.

Bhutan's FM

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Praising Bangladesh's role in carrying forward the SAARC to its cherished goal, he said that the Colombo Summit was a turning point in the history of SAARC as it marked a change in the thinking of the leadership for more meaningful regional cooperation.

He said that the region would be left behind unless cooperation among the South Asian nations was increased in the light of the changing global scenario.

He hoped that the SAARC summit in Dhaka this year would move in that direction. Asked why Bhutan was not holding the summit, he said that his country did not have the infrastructure to hold the summit and could not accommodate the large number of delegates.

The Foreign Minister told newsmen that he had invited his Bangladesh counterpart A S M Mustafizur Rahman to visit Bhutan and that the visit was likely to take place sometime in March.

Tearing the first Foreign Minister to visit Bangladesh in 1972, will return to Bhutan Wednesday.

Biman employees

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A series of negotiatory meetings between the authorities and the union leaders since January 19 failed to resolve the crisis, the source said adding that another such meeting was continuing till Monday midnight.

The management proposed a 'considerable' rise in various allowances without revising the pay-scale but the employees were insisting on removing the 'anomalies' which created a stalemate, the source added.

Bridge completed

SIRAJGANJ, Jan 27: The construction of an 18-meter Bailey bridge on the Baidyanath-Koyelgati-Shibnathpur road in the district was completed Monday.

The Midnight File

France agrees to sign NPT

PARIS, Jan 27: The French government agreed today to sign the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Government spokesman Jack Lang said the cabinet had approved a draft law in line with an ambitious global arms control programme announced last June by President Francois Mitterrand, reports Reuter.

US praises Yeltsin but keeps its targets

WASHINGTON, Jan 27: The United States on Monday welcomed President Boris Yeltsin's statement that nuclear missiles in the former Soviet Union would no longer be aimed at this country, but said US nuclear targets would not be changed immediately. "We welcome any measures which reduce the threat and the risk to the United States and their allies from the states of the former Soviet Union", White House spokesman Martin Fitzwater said, reports AFP.

UNHCR to examine abuses in Tibet

GENEVA, Jan 27: The UN's top human rights watchdog opened its annual session Monday, pledging to examine Iraqi abuses at home and in Kuwait and, for the first time, Chinese rule in Tibet. J Kenneth Blackwell, the US representative, said he would press for condemnation of Cuba, but also was concerned about serious violations of human rights in Burma, Iran, Iraq, China and Afghanistan, reports AP.

Power workers

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the September 25 agreement between the labour unions and the government.

However, the Jatiya Bidyut Sramik Karmachari Union (JBSKU), backed by the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party, opposed the strike-call.

Earlier, member-employees belonging to the Bangladesh Bidyut Sramik Federation, Bangladesh Bidyut Sramik Union and Dhaka Electric Supply Workers' Union (DESUW) observed a 24-hour strike that ended at 6 am Monday.

The schedule for the fresh movement was announced at a rally Monday in front of the Jatiya Press Club.

Talking to The Daily Star DESWU General Secretary Ashraf Ali Khan said that the government's indifference even after a 24-hour strike had compelled the labour unions to go for the fresh movement programme. The "long outstanding demands" of the power employees were completely 'non-political', he said.

There was no logic for delaying implementation of the September 25 agreement which aspired to resolve the problems of the PDB and DESA employees, Khan added.

Some 20,000 employees of PDB and DESA belong to the three agitating labour unions.

Kazi Mosharraf Hossain, president of the pro-government Dhaka Electric Supply Authority Workers Union (DESAWU), said that the fresh programme of the movement aimed at disrupting the CBA (Collective Bargaining Agent) polls of PDB and DESA scheduled for February 26.

The programme was a conspiracy to foil the government efforts to bring back discipline in the heavily losing power sector, DESAWU chief said.

Ershad's corruption case: Judgement on Feb 3

The special court holding trial of former President Hussain Muhammad Ershad Monday set February 3 for delivery of judgement in the corruption case, reports UNB.

The judgement, earlier scheduled for Monday, was stayed by the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court till Thursday.

Corruption case against two

By Staff Correspondent

Anti-Corruption Bureau Monday filed a case against the former chairman and the former secretary of Dhaka District Council with Sutrapur police.

Hungriest region

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poverty and improve nutrition and health for all in the region should not be left to government alone", he added.

Dr Shen Chunming, President, Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine was elected Chairperson of the meeting while K M Rabbani, Secretary of Bangladesh Agriculture Ministry was elected Vice-Chairman.

A five-member Bangladesh delegation is attending the meeting.

Other nations attending the regional meeting are: Bhutan, China, Cook Islands, Democratic Republic of Korea, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Kiribati, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Western Samoa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Vietnam.

More Rohingyas arrive

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overnight stay at Teknaf. Meanwhile, the Muslim refugees from across the border reported of systematic elimination campaign against them by the Myanmar authorities.

They alleged that the troops in their homeland in Rakhaine had launched the "operation phythaw" (kingdom of peace) to drive out the Muslim citizens, who constitute 16 per cent of Myanmar's 42 million population.

The refugees said that the campaign initially began at four townships and feared that the operation would also start soon at the rest 13 townships of the province.

The frontier towns are Busidong, Rachidong, Mongdu, and Akyab with predominantly Muslim population.

Bangladesh authorities here are struggling hard to cope with cumulatively increasing number of Rohingya refugees from across the border.

According to an unofficial tally, some 70 thousand refugees crossed the border since December 21 and took shelter at different bordering villages in the district.

BSS adds: More than 2,000 Rohingyas crossed into Bangladesh through different frontiers of Bandarban and Cox's Bazar districts during the past three days.

They have taken shelter at

different refugee camps of the districts, official sources said.

Of them 43 families from Thaimongkhali and Chhotabil entered Teknaf. So far Cox's Bazar district administration has distributed Taka three lakh and 80 metric tons of rice and wheat among the refugees.

Meanwhile, the district administration has completed the enlistment of 25,000 Rohingya Muslims. Five medical teams are working to facilitate the medicare service in that region.

Sayed Nur (50), who came from Thaimongkhali, told BSS at Teknaf that Myanmar troops evicted 600 families of his village, of whom 200 families crossed into Bangladesh Sunday. Sabir Ahmed (46) of Chhotabil under Buchidong said that more than a hundred out of a total of 480 families in his village also crossed into Bangladesh through different border points of Bandarban district during the past two days.

Sayed Nur who arrived here on foot further said that more than a hundred youngsters were forcefully taken to unknown places and 35 young women were molested. Of them, Nurunnahar (14), Hafeza Khatoon (17) and Julekha (17) were later killed.

The Rohingyas Muslims are crossing into Bangladesh in batches following severe scarcity of foodstuff and medicine.

AL bill

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would, however, be decided after the party chief Sheikh Hasina's return home from abroad. Hasina is now attending her ailing brother-in-law in Singapore.

Another resolution adopted in the AL PP meeting yesterday, according to sources, maintained that it was surprising that the foreign missions in Dhaka were frequently inviting Golam Azam, a foreign citizen staying in the country illegally, and entertaining him as a Bangladeshi citizen. According to the AL PP, this is a violation of diplomatic norms and practices. The AL PP has decided to ask the government to clear its stance on this issue soon.

JP stages demonstration in city

Jatiya Party supporters, including some women, Monday staged a demonstration in front of the Jatiya Press Club demanding release of former president and party chairman HM Ershad, reports UNB.

The JP supporters, mostly arriving in trucks, squatted on the busy Topkhana road for sometime and chanted anti-government slogans disrupting normal traffic in the area.

Ershad, serving a 10-year imprisonment for possessing illegal arms, was forced to step down in the face of a mass upsurge against his rule in December 1990.

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