



Jahanara Imam addressing a Nirmul Body meeting in city yesterday.

— Star photo

700 delegates voice dissent against govt Myanmar junta fails to hold constitutional convention

RANGOON, Feb 2: Myanmar military junta failed today to hold a formal session of its constitutional convention, reconvened on Monday amid tight security after a three-week suspension, reports Reuters.

Some of the 700 delegates privately voiced their dissent against the military government that brutally suppressed pro-democracy demonstrations in 1988 and refused to hand over power after losing elections in 1990.

The military portrays the convention as leading towards democracy but opponents see it as a way of keeping the generals in power for years to come.

"There is no meeting today," a Myanmar official said at the convention site at Yangon's old-horse-racing course. "The delegates are taking rest or going out for sightseeing or shopping in the market."

The convention was abruptly halted three weeks

ago when the junta's draft constitution met with opposition. The generals said the participants needed time to study proposals.

Monday's session lasted just half an hour.

Extra troops have been deployed in Yangon to make sure there are no protests, a diplomat said on Monday. He said SLORC had also recently transferred to the provinces some university lecturers suspected of plotting demonstrations.

"We have a dark future to look forward to," a delegate who asked not to be identified said today.

"Nobody can tell how long the convention will last but if you are waiting for democracy you will have to wait for a very long time," he said privately.

A delegate told Reuters on Monday: "The delegates and people are strongly opposed to the draft of the SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Council) constitution, especially clause Number six."

Clause six states that the military must have the leading role in Myanmar politics.

SLORC is the latest manifestation of the military oligarchy that has ruled Myanmar for 30 years. It assumed direct rule in 1988 after the crackdown.

A second official said the delegates had been broken into small groups to discuss the junta's "first basic principle," which is that no autonomy can be given to ethnic minorities who have been fighting the central government for decades.

"They could take years to draft a constitution and the military will continue to control everything in this country for many more years," another diplomat said.

The opposition National League for Democracy led by Aung San Suu Kyi won a landslide victory in the May 1990 election. She is under house arrest and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991.

Hitler, Stalin, Kennedy in Meghalayan fray

NEW DELHI, Feb 2: Adolf Hitler, Frankenstein and John Kennedy are among the 290 candidates in the fray for February 15 elections in the Northeastern Indian state of Meghalaya, AFP reports.

Also in the race are a Mountbatten, a Stalin, a King George, a Truman, a Rockefeller, a Tony Curtis and as many as three Chamberlains, the Telegraph reported today from Shillong, capital of the mainly-Christian state.

Such famous names had been appropriated by the parents of the candidates, who include one named "I don't know" for reasons not known, the daily informed its readers.

Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, who visits the picturesque state Wednesday on a pre-election tour, will be calling on voters to support Adolf Hitler R Marak and Frankenstein W Momin, who are nominees of his Congress (I) party.

The list of candidates in the elections to the 60-member state assembly reads like a "Who's Who" of past dictators, monarchs and statesmen, it said.

In one constituency, King George Rynnai will be taking on Stalin Stephen.

One candidate explained why his parents had named him Britain-War: "I was born during the Second World War. Since we were then still under British rule, my folks named me Britain-War."

Commentary

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Regardless of the number of such passports issued to the refugees from Myanmar, the Review report would suggest that there is a racket working here arranging "spurious" travel documents for people who have the means and the will to make a journey for the labour-scarce Gulf region.

According to one informed source here, such travel documents can be either complete forgeries or issued by the Department of Immigration on the basis of false papers.

Unless it is conversant with the situation, the Bangladesh government should indeed treat the Review report with concern. After all, a holder of a Bangladeshi passport in a foreign country is a responsibility of the country's diplomatic mission. When he (or she) runs foul of the local law, it is the mission that is obliged to sort out the problem.

When some fake Bangladeshi passports are known to be in circulation, immigration authorities in various countries become suspicious even of genuine ones, causing undue inconvenience to Bangladeshis travelling abroad.

The Review report provides a break-down of Rohingyas employed by Saudi Arabia and other countries in the Gulf. There are now as many as 200,000 in Saudi Arabia alone, some 20,000 in the UAE, 1,500-2,000 in Qatar and 3,000 to 5,000 in Jordan. The report puts the figure of Rohingyas now living in Pakistan at 200,000.

Troops

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tary staff, including five officers, and 224 civil police monitors, including 19 officers. He said that, they are in Cambodia for a one year term which may be extended and the personnel can be replaced.

A seven member military unit is attached with UNICOM at the Kuwait-Iraq border while one member of the Army is with MINURSO in Western Sahara, five with UNOSOM in Somalia and an Army member is attached with OMOUMZ in Mozambique.

In Yugoslavia, he added, an 18 member Army team along with a six member Air Force team and 45 police monitors are attached with UNPROFOR. "We could not send any navy personnel as nothing has yet happened at sea," he quipped, "while providing the detailed breakdown."

Janata Tower Case 'Khas land changed hands to benefit Raushan'

The Special Judge's court trying former President HM Ershad for misuse of power and charges of corruption in the Janata Tower Case was told that government's khas land swiftly changed hands to eventually benefit former First Lady Begum Raushan Ershad, reports BSS.

Abdur Rahman Bhuiyan, prosecution witness No 10, who continued his deposition for the second day yesterday, told the court that Md Shahinur Islam and two others who got allotment of khas land in Kauran Bazar later transferred it to Janata Publishers Limited. Shahinur and 12 others — all accused in this case got allotment of 2 bighas and 2 kathas by declaring themselves as affected persons in a land acquisition.

The total land was divided into four plots — 49, 49a, 49b and 49c, according to the deposition. Shahinur and two others, who were allotted 12 katha, having plot number 49, immediately after getting the land applied for its disposal. In less than two weeks it was first transferred to Janata Publishers and then through mutation Begum Raushan Ershad became its owner.

Former President Ershad, his wife Raushan Ershad, former minister MA Sattar, former Rajuk Chairman MM Rahmatullah and 16 others are accused in this case which began last year. Special Judge and Additional Session Judge Dhaka Anwaruddin Sikder is presiding over the court.

Bhuiyan, who is the Director Estate Rajuk in his deposition said the prayers for allotment of land to 13 recipients was initiated on 28.8.89 by an order of the then President Ershad (persons being affected by land acquisition). The accused got provisional approval from Rajuk on the following day, the PW said in his deposition conducted by Attorney General Aminul Haq.

Court restrains Mizan, 5 other JP leaders from functioning

The court of the Second Assistant Judge, Dhaka yesterday issued an ad-interim injunction against six office bearers of the Jatiya Party restraining them from functioning in their alleged respective posts until the disposal of the temporary injunction, reports BSS.

The Court issued the injunction against the Acting Chairman of Jatiya Party Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, and five other office bearers of the party following a declaration suit filed by plaintiff M Sajjad Hossain Joint Secretary General of Jatiya Party alleging violation of the party constitution by the six defendants.

The five other office bearers against whom the injunction has been issued restraining them from functioning in their alleged posts are Jatiya Party Acting Secretary General Hasanuddin Sarker, Secretary General Khaledur Rahman Tito and President members Tajul Islam Chowdhury, Col (Retd) Zafar Imam and Saeed Tareq.

Road accidents

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4957 of Sohag Paribahan reportedly met the accident when its driver lost control. Both the driver and helper, however, escaped unhurt.

UNB from Bogra reports: Six people were killed and 25 injured when a minibus turned over on the Bogra-Shantihar road at Teghar in Adamdighi thana yesterday.

Witnesses and police said the driver and the helper of the Bogra-bound bus from Shantihar were among the dead.

The accident occurred as the tyre of a wheel of the passenger-crammed bus punctured.

Five of the dead were identified as driver Ataur Rahman 35, passengers Abdul Latif, 30, Dr Ragibul Islam, 40, Mozai Sardar, 30, and the helper whose name could not be known.

The injured, seven of them stated in critical condition, were admitted to Adamdighi thana hospital.

Our DMCH Correspondent adds: Two persons were killed and another one was injured in two road accidents in the capital Tuesday.

Following a road accident a mob held a minibus at Shantinagar, set it on fire and reportedly stabbed its driver Alamgir Hossain Nantu at around 5 pm yesterday.

A rickshawpuller who could not be identified died on the spot and rickshaw passenger Fatema Begum, 30, was injured in the accident.

Fatema, 42, who was travelling by the rickshaw was knocked down by the bus and dragged away several hundred yards up to the Malibagh crossing.

Battle for Mirpur

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polls at 16.

By-polls in the current parliament were held to 10 seats — four vacated by the BNP chief Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and four by Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, one each by Awami League leader Tofael Ahmed and Abdur Razzak elected from the now defunct BKSAL.

The death of AL MP Elias Ahmed Chowdhury left the Madaripur-1 constituency vacant which was won by the AL.

The first Speaker of the Fifth Parliament Abdur Rahman Biswas' becoming the President of the republic rendered the Bakerganj-5 seat vacant which the BNP retained.

Later, the consecutive deaths of three AL MPs rendered the JS seats in Rajbari-1, Mymensingh-3 and Bhola-4 vacant. All the seats were won back by AL candidates.

Today's by-election to the Dhaka-11 constituency, would be the 16th of its kind. In the last 15 by-polls under the present Parliament,

The Midnight File

Rao rejects BJP demand for mid-term polls

MAU (UP), Feb 2: The Indian Prime Minister, PV Narasimha Rao today rejected the BJP demand for a mid-term poll saying that his government was going to last the full term, addressing a rally for communal harmony in the town of Mao of eastern Uttar Pradesh, about 200 kms from Ayodhya. Rao said developments on the Ram Temple issue in order to grab power in the centre, reports PTI.

Major to meet Clinton Feb 24

LONDON, Feb 2: British Prime Minister John Major will meet US President Bill Clinton in Washington on February 24, government officials said today. They said problems holding up the GATT world trade talks, the situation in the former Yugoslavia and in Iraq and other bilateral and international issues would be discussed, reports Reuters.

British aid package to remain at £ 54.1m

Britain has indicated its bilateral aid package for Bangladesh during the current financial year will remain at last year's level of 54.1 million pound sterling.

A delegation of British Overseas Development Administration (ODA) during a meeting with officials here last week also held out the assurance of continued British assistance for Bangladesh's development efforts.

Competent sources at the Economic Relations Division here told UNB that the ODA delegation during the talks put forward certain conditionalities for the maintenance of the level of British bilateral aid.

The conditionalities include continued progress with economic reforms, practical implementation of agreed poli-

cies to promote economic activities in the private sector and effective utilization of available aid funds.

Both sides agreed that the future British aid should focus on such priority objectives of poverty alleviation, human resources development with particular emphasis on health and family planning, education with particular emphasis on health and family planning, education and a greater role for women in the development process.

Reforms in public administration, efficient use of energy, sustainable exploitation of natural resources and improved collection and use of revenues etc must have preponderance in the future programme of British assistance to Bangladesh.

Hartal observed in Jessore

From Our Correspondent

JESSORE, Feb 2: A dawn-to-dusk hartal was observed here today demanding a fresh election cancelling the result of the Jessore Pourashava polls held Saturday.

Shops, markets, educational institutions and commercial organisations remained close during hartal hours.

Bus, trucks and scooters were off the road. But rickshaws and tri-rans were allowed to move.

Two buses and four motor bikes were damaged in different places of the town by the hartal activists.

A public meeting was held by the opposition parties at Town Hall maidan at 3 pm today. The opposition also called for a broom procession Wednesday as part of their next programme.

Malaysia

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With Indian logistical back-up and expertise, Malaysia can go ahead to buy them at bargain prices," he said, declining to be named.

In remarks before signing the agreement with Pawar, Najib called the Malaysia-Indian memorandum a milestone in relations between the two countries.

Through this agreement, I hope India would assist Malaysia in areas such as military training, logistics support and defence industry," he said.

N'ganj: 50 hurt

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College and Government Women's College brought out a procession welding brooms in support of the Nirmul body programme. The male supporters of the Nirmul body also brought a procession in the town on the same day.

The processionists however dispersed after police assured them that there would be no "mahfil" or rally on the venue.

Later, the Jamaat-e-Shibir-Freedom Party activists began marching towards the venue blasting bombs and breaking the police barricades. Police then baton-charged and tear-gassed the processionists and later fired warning shots.

The fundamentalist activists fought a three-hour pitched battle with police from 3 pm.

During the clashes, police sub-inspector Abdul Bari assaulted Inqilab Staff photo-journalist Shaifuddin Bitu and ordered his forces to throw him in a nearby ditch. Bitu was rescued by local reporters, witnesses said.

A local Jamaat-e-Islami leader preferring anonymity said Saidee was in the town but did not disclose his whereabouts.

He said that the mahfil would now be today (Wednesday).

Later, in the evening the Nirmul Committee organised a rally at the Chashara Square with its local leader Giasuddin Birpratik in the chair. The committee leaders urged the people to resist the activities of "communal and controversial element" Saidee across the country.

The rally was addressed, among others, by Tamiuddin Reza and Shamim Osman.

17,129 Rohingyas

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the right to "broadcast azaan (call for prayer) through loud-speakers."

The 10-point assurances received from the Myanmar side as listed by the Foreign Minister also include return of the homesteads and jobs of the repatriated refugees, right of the refugees for unrestricted travel in Rakhain province and allowing the boatmen or headmen living in the camps to go and observe the situation across the border.

Terming these assurances as a "success", Rahman said that designated and alternate officials of the government could also, from time to time, visit the homesteads of the repatriated refugees and inspect the transit camps across the border.

He noted that the Rakhain Muslim had also been exempted from forced labour. "This is particularly important because all other national entities still have to provide compulsory labour."

The repatriated refugees will be able to apply for the Myanmar nationality card immediately he said, and not only that "the repatriated Myanmar citizens are getting the nationality cards quickly and in the meantime a number of the repatriated refugees, carrying the nationality card and the passport of Myanmar, came to Bangladesh and took the rest of their family members and relatives home."

Furthermore, the minister said, from now on the Muslims will not have to bow their heads to show respect to the national flag as per existing laws of Myanmar.

Rahman added that upto January 29, the government had handed over a list of 2,46,966 refugees to the

3 nor'westers in Feb likely

By Staff Correspondent

Cold wave and nor'wester may lash the country this month, Meteorologists forecast Tuesday.

After analysing the available data, the Met office said that a mild cold wave would sweep the country during the first half of the month while two or three nor'westers may hit several districts including Pabna, Bogra, Faridpur and Dhaka.

There will be slight rainfall during the month, the forecast said.

Poetry festival concludes

By DU Correspondent

The seventh two-day National Poetry Festival '93 concluded yesterday (Tuesday) at the Teacher Student Centre (TSC) crossing of the Dhaka University.

On the concluding day, a seminar on "Spirit of Liberation: Our Poetry" was held during the morning session while in the afternoon, poets recited self-composed poems.

In the morning session at 10 am Saifuddin Ahmed presented the key-note speech at the seminar presided by Kabir Chowdhury. Muhammad Nurul Huda, Professor Abu Bakar Siddique and Mofidul Huq discussed the topic.

Kabir Chowdhury in his speech said that the rise of terrorism and communalism were the two main enemies impeding the development of Bangla poetry.

Saifuddin in his speech said that the trial of the anti-liberation forces must be held in this country with the inspiration of poetry composed in the spirit of the Liberation War.

More than two hundred poets from different parts of the country took part in the two-day poetry festival.

A large number of people including students attended the festival.

Mill workers in Comilla threaten rail-road block

From Our Correspondent

COMILLA, Feb 2: Workers of Halima Sutakal, a spinning mill which was closed down eight years ago, today staged a token hunger strike in demand of the reopening of the mill in front of the Comilla Town Hall today.

About 150 workers of the mill took part in the day-long hunger strike and brought out a protest procession in the town and held a rally in front of the town hall.

Leaders of the workers in the rally said that Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Textiles Minister had earlier promised to reopen the mill but so far took no steps in this regard.

The rally presided over by labour leader Abdul Gafur Majumdar threatened to put barricade on the Dhaka-Chittagong Highway and on the rail road for an indefinite period if the government did not take steps within February 20 to reopen the mill.

The rally was also addressed among others by Mamtaj Mia, Kazi Abdur Razzak, Shah Alam, A Matin, Local Chhatra Dal President Alauddin, BSD leader Liyakat and others.