

Tofael misinterpreting Constitution : Rafiq

BNP Joint Secretary General and Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah yesterday blamed Awami League leader Tofael Ahmed for "misinterpreting" the constitutional provision regarding democratic rights and asked him to refrain from such vain attempts at misleading the people, reports BSS.

In a statement, Rafiq said it was hardly credible on the part of any politician to make misleading statements with an ulterior motive.

He said that the statement of Tofael Ahmed had no relevance in dealing with his (Rafiq's) statement. Tofael, rather deliberately, invited public danger by misquoting Articles 36 and 37 of the Constitution with a view to misleading the people, he said.

"Nowhere in Articles 36 and 37 siege, sit-ins, walkouts and prolonged boycott of Parliament have been guaranteed, as claimed by the Awami League leader," Rafiq said.

Clarifying the constitutional provisions, the BNP Joint Secretary General said a politician should not make himself ridiculous to the believers of constitutional provisions by putting his own words in the name of Articles 36 and 37.

Article 36 guarantees every citizen the right to move freely throughout Bangladesh whereas Article 37 allows the right to assemble and participate in public meetings and processions peacefully and without arms, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of public order or the republic's health, Rafiq pointed out.

Rafiq said the intentional and willful misinterpretation of the constitutional provisions demonstrated an utter disregard for the sacred Constitution.

Rafiq said that he had categorically stated in his interview with BSS and UNB on March 28 that the threat of the Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina to unseat a democratically elected government through gherrao, coercion and intimidation was unconstitutional.

"I would be happy if Sheikh Hasina, the Leader of the Opposition, could show any constitutional provision to justify her threat," Rafiq said.

Rafiq referred to Tofael's

contention that there was no alternative but to go for an all-out agitation to remove the government. This was nothing but a demonstration of the intolerant attitude of the Awami League, he said.

He said in a democratic society, government can be changed only through elections, not by any other means.

He said there was no force which could disturb the BNP from implementing its election pledges.

Regarding the allegations that the government had made the parliamentary standing committees ineffective, the Works Minister said it was the Awami League leadership which is making futile attempts to make the important parliamentary standing committees inoperative by asking its members not to attend the standing committee meetings. By doing so, the Awami League was violating its election pledges to the people, he said.

Rafiq said the Awami League was making "motivated and calculated attempts" to undermine the elected government through bringing unfounded allegations of corruption against the ministers. This is a deliberate design to impede the healthy growth of parliamentary democracy.

Freedom of press and freedom of expression do not authorise anybody to bring unfounded allegations of corruption against any ministers or Member of Parliaments, he said.

Dismissing Tofael's allegations of rigging in the Magura by-election, Rafiq said the Magura by-elections were absolutely free and fair. The foreign polls observers including those of the US embassy had categorically confirmed the fairness of the election.

Quoting press reports Rafiq said it was the Awami League members under the leadership of their party MP Harunur Rashid who looted ballot boxes from one centre where the Election Commission had to cancel the elections.

He urged the Awami League leadership to refrain from "negative and disruptive designs and actions" and to engage themselves to the service of the people by upholding the constitutional provisions and parliamentary democracy.



Riot policemen were massed on an empty Topkhana Road to prevent a religious group from staging a set-in before the Bangladesh Secretariat (left, background) yesterday morning. — Star photo

Demonstration in front of Secretariat foiled

By Staff Correspondent

Police yesterday foiled a planned demonstration in front of the Bangladesh Secretariat by the members of the Majlis-e-Tahafuz Khatme Nabuyat who were demanding that the government declare the Ahmadiyyas non-Muslims.

A number of demonstrators were hurt as police fired tear gas shells and resorted to baton charge to disperse the protesters. The demonstrators brickedbatted the police after they were stopped at different points. However, nobody needed to be hospitalised.

After the nearly four-hour long clash and chase and counterchase between the police and the demonstrators, the leaders of the Khatme Nabuyat gave a week's ultimatum to the government to declare the Ahmadiyyas non-Muslims.

According to witnesses, the demonstrators, mostly teachers and students of madrasahs from different parts of the country, started gathering in the morning at all entry points towards the Secretariat. The protesters blocked all roads towards the Secretariat disrupting the movement of traffic for about four hours.

During the agitation, the Khatme Nabuyat members, aided by the workers of the Jamaat-e-Islami, the Islami Shashantana Andolon, the Khelafat Andolon and other Islamic organisations clashed with police near the Gopalshah Mazar, the Purna Paltan crossing, the Matsya Bhaban and the Railway Hospital. The protesters carrying sticks, placards and banners chanted slogans against the Ahmadiyyas better known as Qadianis and termed them 'kafir'.

Riot police and BDR men guarded the Secretariat and the central mosque of the Ahmadiyyas.

PLO-Israel agree on size of police force in Hebron

CAIRO, Mar 30: Israel and the PLO have agreed on the size of a Palestinian police force for the West Bank town where a Jewish settler last month massacred 30 worshippers at a mosque, PLO sources said Wednesday, reports AP.

The two sides agreed 100 Palestinians would join Israeli forces in Hebron, sources at PLO headquarters in Tunis said. The PLO has demanded protection of Palestinians as a condition for continuing peace talks with Israel.

The sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said negotiators were still working out the number of foreign observers to be sent to Hebron, but might reach agreement later Wednesday.

The Palestine Liberation Organization and Israeli delegates met on Wednesday, after Tuesday talks dragged past midnight.

Egypt's Middle East News Agency also set the number of Palestinian police at 100, and reported Israel would accept 70 foreign observers. It said decisions in Cairo would need approval from PLO leaders in Tunis.

The Hebron talks are aimed at restarting overall negotiations on Palestinian autonomy, halted since Feb. 25 when the settler opened fire in a mosque at Hebron's Cave of the Patriarchs, a site holy to both Muslims and Jews.

In Washington, Secretary of State Warren Christopher renewed an offer to go to the Middle East but ruled out more than a US advisory role in the talks. "We don't want to get in their way," he said.

The delegates in Cairo took pains to keep their meetings secret. On Tuesday, Israeli negotiators sneaked in and out of their hotel to avoid journalists.

PLO chief Yasser Arafat initially threatened to cancel the Cairo talks, but then officials at PLO headquarters in Tunis said Arafat authorized talks, but only on Hebron.

On Tuesday, a 17-year-old Palestinian was killed and more than 50 other people wounded in clashes with the Israeli army that erupted over the killings Monday of six militants from Arafat's Fatah PLO faction in the Gaza Strip.

Resist 'corrupt' govt unitedly, says Hasina

Sheikh Hasina yesterday called for a united resistance against the "incompetent, inefficient and corrupt" government to protect democracy and people's life and property, reports UNB.

"There's no security to public life. There is no rule of law. The hard-won democracy is at stake under the vote dacoit and corrupt government," said the Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament.

In a statement, she alleged that BNP's armed terrorists attacked a procession of Magura district Awami League after half-day hartal on March 23 and wounded 5 people, including Meherpur AL general secretary Ismail Hossain.

Ismail Hossain is now under treatment at the Pangu Hospital. Despite filing of a case, no accused has yet been arrested, she said.

Hasina said the BNP government being alienated from the people was unleashing a reign of terror on Awami League leaders-workers to stick to power.

She demanded arrest and punishment of the attackers on the processionists in Magura.

The BCL at a press conference yesterday also questioned the neutrality of the VC.

The leaders said that for smooth elections to the Dhaka University Central Students' Union (DUCSU), the authorities should allow organisational activities in all the residential halls, take steps to insure peaceful coexistence of the students and arrest the armed hooligans irrespective of their party affiliation.

The conference held at Madhu's canteen on the DU campus was attended by Moinuddin Hasan Chowdhury, Iqbalur Rahim, Pankaj Nath, KHM Liza and Swapnan Bashu.

The BCL leaders alleged that the campus might turn into a battle field any time due to the serious disagreement between the two factions of the Jatiyatadabi Chhatra Dal and their repeated clashes.

The leaders also urged the university authorities to take necessary measures to rid the campus of armed terrorists and restore peaceful atmosphere.

Earlier, the Jatiyatadabi Chhatra Dal (JCD) at a rally at Dhaka University yesterday demanded announcement of a fresh date for the DUCSU and hall union polls. JCD also demanded holding of the polls within a month.

The university authorities postponed the April 12 schedule of the DUCSU polls because of an uneasy situation on the campus. The authorities had taken the initiative of holding the polls after a lapse of about for years.

The JCD will observe a protest day in all the educational institutions on April 2

The Midnight File

S Arabia, Pakistan sign cooperation pact

ISLAMABAD, Mar 30: Saudi Arabia and Pakistan signed Tuesday an agreement aimed at enhancing cooperation between the armed forces of the two countries, it was announced. A defence production team of the Saudi Armed Forces is already engaged in discussions with Pakistani officials to expand the areas of cooperation, the announcement said, reports AFP.

EU issue divides Tories

LONDON, Mar 30: Cabinet ministers lined up to support Prime Minister John Major Wednesday as speculation raged about a possible revolt within Conservative Party ranks. Two Conservative lawmakers called for Major to resign because they believe Major backed down in fight about voting within the European Union. John Carlisle said the "debacle" of recent days "has finally put the nail in his coffin ... I think his going is now inevitable and I would think it will probably be before the summer is out." But Michael Heseltine and Kenneth Clarke, the Cabinet ministers most often mentioned as possible successors, said they expected Major to lead the government for some time, reports AP.

10 die in French nuclear submarine accident

PARIS, Mar 30: Ten sailors were killed in an accident Wednesday on a submerged nuclear attack submarine off the coast of Toulon, the defence ministry announced, reports AP.

A ministry spokesman said the accident aboard the Emeraude was confined to the sub's turbo-alternator compartment, which produces steam-powered electricity.

The accident did not affect the nuclear security of the vessel or the environment, said the spokesman. He could not be identified by name in keeping with French rules. A news conference was scheduled later in the day. The victims were all present in the turbo-alternator chamber when the accident occurred; the spokesman said.

The Emeraude, a Rubis-class attack submarine, was able to resurface and was reported earlier to have been returning to port on its own power, expected late in the evening.

The vessel, which normally holds a crew of 66, was on a training exercise with other subs at the time of the accident.

Clashes continue at Syedabad terminal

By Staff Correspondent

In a bid to take control of the Syedabad bus terminal, two feuding factions of transport workers continued exploding crackers in the presence of the police personnel deployed to maintain peace in the area.

According to security men at the terminal, some 30 crackers were exploded yesterday evening. However, no injuries were reported.

Only a few buses left Dhaka for Comilla and Chittagong. Services on the remaining routes remained suspended.

On Monday, two transport workers were killed and many others wounded in a clash at the terminal.

Satkhira clash

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ernment had failed to run the country.

Golam Azam in his speech called upon all to pave the way for establishing the rule of law in the country.

He also said, the next national elections should be held under a caretaker government after "the ruling BNP's" failure to maintain neutrality" in the elections in the Magura-2 JS constituency.

Chairman of the Bangladesh MuktiJodha Sangsad Abdul Ahad Chowdhury in a statement has condemned the attack on the Sangsad office in Satkhira allegedly by the supporters of the Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday.

Ahad, in his statement, alleged that the Jamaat-Shibir activists also attacked the residences of Farida Rahman MP and local Juba League president Maminullah Mohan and looted property from the houses.

3 die in separate incidents

By DMCH Correspondent

Two persons reportedly committed suicide and one was killed in a road accident in the capital and Savar during the last two days.

Chhabi, 17, a maid servant, reportedly committed suicide at her employer's house at Bara Magbazar in the city yesterday morning.

Acting on a tip, police recovered the body and sent it to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) morgue for autopsy.

Hanufa, a housewife, also reportedly committed suicide by hanging herself at Savar Tuesday night.

A woman was killed when a speeding truck knocked her down at Bashir Uddin Road, Kalabagan, in the city at about 2:30 pm yesterday.

The victim, Khatun, 19, was seriously injured and rushed to the DMCH where doctors declared her dead.

In another incident, one Mukta Miah, 45, was injured when a local *mastaan* stabbed him at his house at Natun Bazar slum in Gulshan at about 11:30 pm Tuesday.

The victim received wounds in his head and was admitted to the DMCH.

India apologises to Nepal for weekend raid

NEW DELHI, Mar 30: India apologised to neighbouring Nepal on Tuesday following allegations that Indian policemen carried out an armed weekend raid in the Nepali capital Kathmandu, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said, reports Reuter.

The Nepali government, summoned India's ambassador in Kathmandu earlier on Tuesday to deliver what Home Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba called a "strong protest letter" over Sunday's alleged raid in search of an Indian fugitive.

Opposition deputy Salmi Miyani told the Nepali parliament on Monday that a group of 17 to 18 people claiming to be Indian policemen raided houses in Kathmandu and held occupants at gunpoint.

PTI quoted an Indian Foreign Ministry spokesman, as saying New Delhi expressed its regrets to the Nepal government and stressed its policy of non-interference in Nepal's affairs.

India had ordered an immediate investigation and severe disciplinary action would be taken against anyone involved, the spokesman added.

It was not clear if India confirmed the raid took place.

UK troops to join 5-power exercise in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Mar 30: Britain's navy and air force will take part in a five-power defence exercise in Malaysia despite strained relations between London and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's defence ministry said today, reports Reuter.

The exercise, involving members of the five-power defence agreement (FPDA), will be conducted at Butterworth air force base opposite the northern island of Penang on April 26-29, the ministry said.

PM urges investors

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attractive investment opportunities in Bangladesh.

Later, at a seminar, Begum Zia today expressed her country's readiness to work with Japan as partners in progress.

"We have created excellent opportunities for you to invest... We invite you to share with us the economic promises that a stable Bangladesh offers today," she told the Japanese business and industry leaders at the seminar on "Investment in Bangladesh" here.

Introducing a different Bangladesh, "a Bangladesh of stability, democracy, promise and investor-friendliness," Begum Zia urged the business leaders to respond positively to her invitation to invest in Bangladesh.

The establishment of the Export Processing Zones (EPZs) are attracting foreign investors including the Japanese while the creation of Board of Investment is offering prompt services to the investors, she said. The newly created Securities and Exchange Commission will bring a higher level of discipline in the stock market, she added.

She also said Bangladesh is now planning to develop a special industrial area solely for Japanese investors if there is sufficient response from their side.

Begum Zia said Bangladesh had become a member of the Multi-national Investment Guarantee Agency in order to inspire a higher sense of security in foreign investors.

At this moment, she said, Japanese investors are fully protected by the overseas investment insurance scheme offered by the Japanese Ministry of Trade and Industry. Bangladesh is also pursuing its proposal for signing an investment protection and promotion agreement with Japan.

She said during her talks with Japanese leaders of government and industry she had proposed special and differential measures by Japan for Bangladesh and creation of a special investment fund for encouraging private Japanese investments in Bangladesh.

Begum Zia also proposed for granting special tax advantages to Japanese private investors by Japanese government.

She expressed optimism that these proposals would be favourably considered by the Government of Japan.

Bangladesh will enjoy special and differential access opportunities in the attractive markets of the United States, Canada and Europe for the next decade and may be, beyond, Begum Zia said, urging the Japanese investors to avail these opportunities by making export-oriented investments in Bangladesh.

She also said the Japanese investors could join Bangladeshi entrepreneurs in

PM urges investors

joint ventures or they could make their own investment with total ownership in the areas of textiles and ready-made garments which will enjoy special market access in Europe and America during the next decade.

Begum Zia pointed out that her government also offers a range of special economic concessions for export-oriented industries.

She asked the Japanese entrepreneurs to consider the bright opportunities offered by Bangladeshi industrial peace, specially in EPZ, and cheap manpower and attractive financial advantages while planning their next project under the "hollowing out" process.

Referring to the creation of the SAPTA (South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement), a new trading area in South Asia, Begum Zia said "As the current Chairperson of the SAARC we are moving ahead with the implementation of this agreement."

The convenient location of Bangladesh makes it possible to serve the whole of South Asia by industries set up in Bangladesh, she added.

Bangladesh's economy is being rapidly opened up to the world while the industries are being opened up to the market forces through a determined programme of privatisation, she said.

Referring to Bangladesh's liberalised economy, the Prime Minister said, a sound and profitable investment climate has been created.

Describing the relations between Bangladesh and Japan as excellent, Begum Zia said the early days of this century witnessed significant cultural, technological and commercial interactions between the peoples of the two countries.

In recent times, the Prime Minister said, the relations between the two countries gathered further meaning and momentum following the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971.

Japan stood by the people of Bangladesh in their difficult days while Bangladesh stood by Japan in uneasy moments like the hijacking of a Japan Airlines jumbo-jet which ended in Dhaka airport in 1977.

During her busy schedule today, Begum Zia also spoke at a luncheon co-hosted in her honour by various Japanese economic organisations.

The Bangladesh Prime Minister said she felt honoured to be present at this lunch with the distinguished leaders of Japanese business and industry and extended her sincere thanks to them for their traditional Japanese hospitality.

While you have the capital and the experience, Bangladesh offers attractive opportunities, she told the Japanese entrepreneurs.

Passenger with undeclared cash off-loaded at ZIA

By Staff Correspondent

Zia airport security men yesterday seized more than two lakh and 830 US dollars from a Dubai-bound Bangladeshi woman passenger.

Sayedara Motahara Begum, wife of a Biman official working in Dubai, was off-loaded but later released, because the amount was 'negligible,' one Customs official told The Daily Star.

A departmental case would, however, be started against the woman's husband Sheikh Abu Hanifa, a Biman official posted at the Dubai Office. Motahara Begum did not declare the currency she was carrying, the airport official said.

As a result of the incident Biman's Dubai flight took off belatedly at 6:30 pm yesterday.

Meanwhile, Customs sources said they had been facing problems in checking the incoming passengers because all the four scanning machines at the airport have been out of order for quite some time now.

"Even the machine in the green channel has not been functioning for about a month," the sources said.

"We face problems when two to three flights land at a time," the Customs officials complained. "We had to let go many passengers without checking."

Between five and twenty five flights land at ZIA every day.

The Customs authorities have sent requisitions for new machines to the National Board of Revenue but no action has yet been taken.

2 killed in Ctg

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60 mm of rainfall were recorded in Chittagong in the fast 24 hours until six this afternoon.

The rains have forced most people to stay indoors and traffic movement have become thin on the roads and highways.

Chittagong port sources said cargo handling at the jetties was hampered due to the heavy downpour.

Chittagong airport officials said the second Biman flight between Chittagong and Dhaka was delayed for three hours due to the heavy rain.

CEC decision

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moving the petition on behalf of the AL nominee in the by-election Shafiquzzaman last Saturday, had urged the EC to declare the results of the polls held on March 20 null and void and demanded polling in the constituency.

Meanwhile, Sobhan, Bar-at-Law, who assisted KS Nabi in moving the petition Saturday, had informed the EC Tuesday that the petitioner was no longer interested to press the issue, especially following the gazette notification of the results.

According to the official results, the ruling BNP nominee Kazi Salimul Huq Kamal was elected with the AL candidate as his nearest rival.

Koirala to resign

From Page 1 Col 7

Meanwhile, AFP says a ruling party committee has asked Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to step down by Friday voluntarily or face expulsion, a highly placed party source said Tuesday.

"If Koirala does not resign on Friday, the NCCWC (Central Working Committee) might expel him, the source said, and order the election of a Nepal Congress parliamentary party leader who will eventually become the new Prime Minister, the source said.

The NCCWC members met on Monday for nearly three hours and discussed what action to take against Koirala for his alleged deceptive role against party president and contender for the February 7 parliamentary by-elections in Kathmandu Krishna Prasad Bhattarai.

The NCCWC meeting was chaired by Bhattarai and attended by Koirala, Nepali Congress Party supreme leader Ganesh Man Singh and 25 other party members, the source said.

Koirala has been attacked by his own party members and others for his uncooperative attitude towards Bhattarai.

Bhattarai supporters said Koirala's scathing remarks against the party president led voters to support a Communist candidate.

Had Bhattarai been elected, he might have been able to replace Koirala in the event that he resigned.

Many of the NCCWC members had urged Koirala to step down in order to consolidate democracy and party unity and for his alleged "conduct" against Bhattarai.

Nona Koirala, a close relative of the Prime Minister, said that Koirala should be allowed to remain in office for the present to avoid throwing the country into chaos, she also said that his resignation could weaken the ruling party.

But Singh insisted that Koirala should either says yes or not to his resignation before the NCCWC takes stringent disciplinary action against him, the party source said.

But Koirala has not yet made up his mind about whether to resign, the source said.

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