

## Street agitation must not overtake Parliament: Rafiq

BNP Standing Committee member and Works Minister Rafiqul Islam Miah said in Dhaka yesterday that parliamentary democracy could be institutionalised only by making Parliament the most effective organ, and not by any other means.

Talking to BSS at his Secretariat office, Rafiq said that the elected government should not be threatened with removal by force or intimidation or through hartals and gheraos. In a democratic society, street agitation must not overtake Parliament.

Referring to the demand of Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina that the BNP government should test its popularity through holding elections under a caretaker government, Rafiq said the people had given their mandate to the BNP to run the affairs of the state for a five-year term as per constitutional provisions. To test its popularity, the BNP does not need further mandate during this five-year tenure. If the Awami League wants to test its popularity, it would have to wait for the next general elections, which will definitely take place in due time.

"I would like to congratulate Sheikh Hasina for realising the fact — that the popularity of a party is tested through polls by the people. A mandate is determined by ballots and not by hartals, gheraos, siege or street agitation." The nature and character of agitation against an elected government cannot be similar or compared with the tactics employed against an autocratic government. The opposition leadership must not allow the enemy of democracy to dictate the terms of politics, he said.

Rafiq said "We all need vision, farsightedness, tolerance, mutual respect, consensus, understanding and adjustments for the growth of a healthy parliamentary democracy."

Quoting noted social thinker and economist Dr Mohammad Yunus, Rafiq said only 5 per cent organised force was

enough for observing a hartal. But this does not mean that the party which called the hartal has got the people's mandate. Elections are the only means to express the people's mandate, he added.

Dismissing the Awami League demand for cancellation of the Magura by-election, Rafiq said asking the government to cancel the Magura polls results tantamounts to interference in the independent exercise of authority by the Election Commission. The Election Commission enjoys independent authority as per Articles 118 to 126 of the Constitution.

He said that there must be consensus to maintain the credibility of the Election Commission, failing which the newborn parliamentary democracy will face a crisis.

Election disputes are resolved by election tribunals and higher courts, not by the government, he said.

Rafiq said that the nation had seen a ray of hope in achieving parliamentary democracy through an unprecedented impartial elections. Time has come for all to concentrate on creating an atmosphere congenial to investment, both domestic and foreign, and poverty alleviation.

The minister said, "In the past we had committed a lot of mistakes and we should learn from those mistakes."

Instead of criticising each other for past mistakes, the politicians should concentrate their activities on social integration through generation of employment and poverty alleviation. Otherwise, how long will the people of the country suffer? he asked.

Rafiq noted the shifting of the Awami League's stand towards a free market economy and said many countries in the South and Southeast Asia, particularly Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and Taiwan had made tremendous economic development through consensus and understanding among their political parties.

Rafiq said, "As the elected government, our foremost duty is to fulfill the election pledges

and the government of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia has been working relentlessly to fulfill all election pledges."

He pointed out that under BNP rule, Bangladesh today is recognised by the international community as a country that is progressing rapidly towards self-reliance in all respects.

Rafiq said bringing back discipline in the economic sector was the major achievement of the BNP government. "At present, we are contributing 37 per cent to the annual development programme from our domestic resources, the highest ever in our history," he said.

He pointed out that the government was constructing thousands of primary schools, developing hundreds of high schools and colleges, roads, bridges and culverts. Besides, healthcare centres are being constructed, electricity supply is being expanded for the benefit of the rural people.

Rafiq urged all concerned to put in their sincere efforts in realising the hopes and aspirations of the people by ensuring for them a better future.

"The opposition political parties have a great role in this connection," he said, and pleaded that they must help create an atmosphere for massive investment in the economic and development sector.

### Love letters show at RU

From RU Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Apr 16: A day-long exhibition of love letters was held on the Rajshahi University campus today in celebration of the Bengali New Year 1401.

Biswapremik (the universal lovers), a students' organisation advocating love and peace, organised the show.

Hundreds of amused students went to the campus to see about a thousand love letters and epistles gathered by the organisers of the unique show, mainly through contributions.

A similar show with 300 letters was organised here last January.

### Barisal Medical

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said, adding that both warring groups used lethal weapons in the clash that was confined to the three hostel areas.

The academic council of the college held an emergency meeting with Principal Abdul Latif in the chair and decided to close the college indefinitely in a bid to restore congenial atmosphere. All the students left the hostels by 3 pm deadline.

Later in the afternoon police raided three hostels and recovered three pipe-guns, two pistols and a considerable quantity of ammunition. However, none was arrested. Superintendent of Police, Barisal Range, Anisur Rahman Khan was present during the raid.

College sources said that violence flared up in the three dormitories early Saturday after two days of tension following a strike call by the BCL (M-I) demanding immediate elections of the college students' union.

The BCL (M-I) tried to enforce the strike which the JCD resisted.

Of the injured persons Palash, Sohel, Shameem and Maksud were hospitalised with serious bullet wounds. However, their conditions were stated to be improving at the college hospital, sources said.

One rickshaw-puller of the Shagardi area, where the college of 1,200 students is situated, was also hit by a stray splinter, hospital sources said.

The students union of the Sher-e-Bangla Medical College, jointly dominated by the BCL (M-I) and the Bangladesh Chhatra Union, was dissolved a year ago.

The college re-opened on January 16 after a one-and-a-half-month unscheduled closure.

### Sirajganj hartal

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During the hartal hours police fired one shot and lobbed six teargas shells to disperse the picketeers.

The violence occurred at the Jamtoll railway station where the picketeers detained two trains. Magistrate Sirajuddin, who went to the station to ensure the release of the trains, was hurt pelted by the agitators.

The picketeers also ransacked the Station Master's room and smashed the windshields of the locomotive engines.

In the ensuing police action 15 people were seriously injured. Four policemen were also hurt in the fracas. All of the injured were admitted to the Sadar Hospital.

Earlier, Kamarkhanda police Friday arrested six persons in connection with the murder of Jamat Ali.



A dancer performing a Manipuri number at the Shilpakala Academy auditorium yesterday. — Star photo

## Oli for coordination among JMB partners

Communications Minister Oli Ahmed yesterday underlined the importance of effective coordination among the government of Bangladesh, the donors, consultants as well as contractors for smooth and timely implementation of the bridge across the river Jamuna, reports BSS.

Inaugurating a three-day workshop, participated by the engineers and executives of the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Authority (JMBA), the representatives of the co-financing donors, the consultants and contractors at the JMBA conference room, the Communications Minister also underscored the need for 'close supervision' of the project with the same objective in view.

The workshop is intended to identify and provide the necessary guidance for the smooth implementation of the project.

The Communications Minister expressed the confidence that the participants at the workshop will deliberate upon the major issues relating to timely implementation of the JMB project in order to resolve them through in-depth discussions, interaction and exchange of thoughts and ideas.

The Communications Minister described the long-cherished 'Jamuna bridge as a unique' for being, among other factors, the biggest-ever project of Bangladesh, even in terms of the money involved, and said that the nation was eagerly awaiting its timely completion.

The construction of the bridge to integrate two geographical zones of varied socio-economic conditions of Bangladesh, split by the mighty river Jamuna, he said, naturally creates "a very high degree of emotion and aspiration."

Through the collective endeavours of the co-financiers, the consultants and the government of Bangladesh over a long period of time, he said, "We have crossed many hurdles."

## Teachers to boycott

From Page 1 Col 8

office today at 11 am, an aide of the minister told The Daily Star late last night.

The minister informed the Star through his Personal Assistant that he was unwilling to talk to the press before the scheduled meeting.

When contacted over telephone, the coordinator of the liaison committee of six teachers' organisations, Kazi Faruk Ahmed said, "We'll not attend the meeting."

Explaining the reasons for the boycott he said they did not receive any formal letter from the minister.

Beside, he added, "We are not interested to participate in the meeting of all the teachers' bodies. We are ready for a dialogue between the authorities and the liaison committee purely on our 15-point charter of demands," he said.

"The planned meeting of the minister with the 1.75

### Tripura governor

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delegation members find the rehabilitation of returnees satisfactory, then steps will be taken soon to initiate the next phase of repatriation of Chakma refugees now staying at the camps across the border.

In the first phase, over 1800 Chakma refugees returned home through Rangbar and Tabalchari reception camps of Khagrachari district.

## Bangladeshi cops in Rwanda moved to Nairobi

By Staff Correspondent

All five members of the Bangladesh police force deployed in Rwanda as part of the UN peace-keeping mission have been shifted to Kenya under the supervision of the United Nations, says a police press release.

The police personnel are now staying in Nairobi and are safe.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Bangladesh Embassy in Nairobi are maintaining constant communication with the Bangladeshi policemen, the release added.

### 70 houses gutted in Cox's Bazar

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Apr 16: More than 70 houses were gutted in a fire that broke out near Kuroshkhool in Cox's Bazar Sadar thana this afternoon.

## Rule issued on Health Secretary

By Staff Correspondent

A Division Bench of the Supreme Court comprising Justice Ismail Uddin Sarkar and Justice Md Hamidul Huq on April 12 issued a rule nisi on the Health Secretary and the Director of Drug Administration to show why the validity of the order restoring the registration of the banned medicines including B-complex syrup and increasing medicine prices by 5 per cent should not be declared illegal.

The rule was made returnable within four weeks.

Staff Reporter of Daily Lal Sabuj Mollah Jalal filed a writ stating that all the drugs banned through the Drug Control Ordinance of 1982 cannot be restored without enactment of fresh laws. Besides, there is no legal validity of the drug pricing committee, the petitioner argued.

The plaintiff stated that only the government could determine the prices of drugs through gazette notification.

Barrister Amirul Islam and others appeared for the petitioner.

### Mujibnagar Day

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This day in the presence of international media, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, languishing in a Pakistani prison, was named the President and Supreme Commander while Syed Nazrul Islam was made the acting President.

Tajuddin Ahmed was named the war-time Prime Minister, a post he held till Sheikh Mujibur Rahman took over as the PM in early 1972.

The other members of the provisional cabinet were Captain Mansur Ali, A H M Qamruzzaman, Khandaker Mushtaque Ahmed and Colonel M A G Osmani, the Commander in Chief of the liberation forces.

A memorial has been erected at the site of the ceremony to mark the war-time capital.

Various organisations will observe the day in a befitting manner.

The Awami League will hoist the national and party flags at the Bangabandhu Bhawan in the city and party offices in the morning.

A discussion on the significance of the day will be held at the Awami League Central Office at Bangabandhu Avenue at 4 pm. It will be presided by AL chief and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina.

In a message yesterday, Sheikh Hasina recalled the contributions of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his other war-time cabinet leaders. She regretted that the dreams of Bangabandhu and the martyrs of the Liberation War were yet to be realised.

In observance of Mujibnagar Day, a discussion programme to be followed by a prize-giving ceremony and cultural programme will be held today at 4:30 pm at the ballroom of Sonargaon Hotel.

Prof A Q M Badruddoza Chowdhury, Deputy Leader of the House, will attend the programme as chief guest.

Forests and Environment Minister Lt Colonel (Retd) Akbar Hussain, Wing Commander (Retd) M Hamidullah Khan, MP and Major (Retd) Aktaruzzaman, MP will also be present as special invitees.

UNB adds: The Awami League has planned programmes in Meherpur tomorrow to observe the 24th Mujibnagar Day.

These include a rally at the Mujibnagar Memorial at 12 noon. Sheikh Hasina will attend the rally as chief guest.

It will be addressed by Syeda Zohra Tajuddin, Col (Retd) Abu Osman, Naima Chowdhury, Prof Abdul Mannan, MP and district AL president Hisabuddin.

A podium called the Sheikh Hasina Mancha has been constructed near the Mujibnagar Memorial on the occasion.

## The Midnight File

### Italian PM resigns

ROME, Apr 16: Prime Minister Carlo Azeglio Ciampi handed in his resignation to President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro today, the Premier's office announced. Ciampi, 73, said last week he was ready to resign after the March 27-28 general election but would do so only after the election of the Speakers of the upper and lower houses of Parliament. Politicians from the right-wing Freedom Alliance were voted into the posts earlier today, reports AFP.

### Burundi's President laid to rest

NAIROBI, Apr 16: Burundi President Cyprien Ntaryamira was buried Saturday, 10 days after he and Rwanda's leader died in a mysterious plane crash that set off ethnic slaughter in Rwanda. Thousands of people jammed the Regina Mundi cathedral in Bujumbura, the Burundian capital, for a requiem Mass. They followed Ntaryamira's casket on a 30-minute walk to the presidential palace compound where he was laid to rest, observers said by telephone, reports AP.

## UN orders air strike against Serb tanks

SARAJEVO, Apr 16: UN Commanders ordered air strikes today against Bosnian Serb tanks firing on Gorazde but poor weather prevented NATO jets from carrying out the bombing raids. UN military officials said, reports Reuter.

NATO jets swooped low over Serb tanks that had ignored repeated warnings to stop pounding the Muslim enclave but cloud cover hampered the allied pilots who had difficulty identifying targets. UN protection force (Unprofor) officials said.

NATO ground attack aircraft were called in as the weather was poor, a number of passes, were required to confirm and clearly identify the target. Unprofor said in a statement issued in Sarajevo.

During the delay caused by the weather, a British sea harrier involved in the raid was shot down by a surface-to-air missile, the UN statement said.

During this manoeuvre, a British sea harrier jet was shot by a surface-to-air missile, the statement said.

UN officials in Zagreb said

## ALCWC meet ends

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The leaders attending the meeting observed that the party should concentrate on making the April 20 gherao of the district-level administrations and the April 26 hartal successful.

AL chief and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina also asked all the working committee members to leave the capital for their respective constituencies by today to make the planned programmes successful.

On the question of attending the 14th session of Parliament, scheduled to begin on the 4th of next month, the ALCWC decided in favour of discussing the matter with other opposition parties in Parliament.

### Privatisation

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tory environment is strengthened to prevent private sector abuse of the programme," the report quoted.

The SOEs have posed another problem for the country's administration with much of the top SOE management being drawn from the administrative cadre, the report observed.

"The SOEs are also a drain on the scarce administrative talent in the country," it remarked.

"The utility SOEs' performance in terms of availability and quality of essential services falls well short of the international benchmark," the report commented, adding that this has caused upward shift in the production cost structure of Bangladesh.

The report felt that although disinvestment of smaller SOEs would be easier to accelerate, it would need foreign investment to sell off the larger ones.

The report also suggested opening up areas hitherto reserved for the public sector and attracting the private sector into joint ventures and BOO/BOT type arrangements.

Moreover, management contracts to allow the private sector to improve the quality of management and impart technical skills, even if ownership remains under public hands, is also seen a way of dealing with the loss-making SOEs.

### IRRI procurement

From Page 1 Col 7

ers and also to maintain a good stock, observers believe. Besides, a good IRRI-boro procurement drive is all the more essential now since this year's aman procurement drive fell far behind target, they pointed out.

Only a little over 8000 tonnes of aman rice — against a target of two lakh tonnes — have been procured during this year's drive which is now nearing its end. The government began its aman purchase on 15 November last year, offering Tk 210 for a maund of paddy and Tk 325 for rice.

Against a target of two lakh tonnes of paddy, 1.4 lakh tonnes were procured in the previous fiscal year.

### Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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