

Anti-liberation forces must be resisted: Safiullah

By Chapal Bashar

Major General (ret'd) K M Safiullah, Bir Uttam has termed the activities of the anti-liberation forces 'alarming' and said, "We have to resist them — they should be eliminated politically."

In an interview with The Daily Star yesterday on the occasion of his joining the Awami League Safiullah, first army chief of independent Bangladesh, underscored the need for unity of the pro-liberation forces.

"Time has come again for the pro-liberation forces to unite to uphold and strengthen the spirit of the Liberation War", said the veteran freedom fighter who was commander of Sector 3 during the war.

Safiullah joined the Awami League Sunday. Narrating his reasons for joining active politics, the 59-year-old retired general said, "I fought against the enemies during the Liberation War — now I want to fight against the anti-liberation forces for which I need a political platform. I think the Awami League will be the best to serve my purpose." He maintained that the AL was the party that had led the liberation struggle and still remains the mainstream among the pro-liberation forces.

"I never aspired to join politics — but recent developments led me to take the deci-

sion", he said. Asked to clarify what he meant by 'recent developments', Safiullah said that the forces which opposed the Liberation War are now back in the field with the same motive to foil the country's independence.

"They are not only in the field — but also in a position to influence national policies. They should be eliminated politically."

Safiullah was in the army for 20 years until 1975 when



he was transferred to foreign service. During a diplomatic career spanning 18 years, he was High Commissioner to the UK, Canada and Malaysia and Ambassador to Sweden. He retired from government service

a year ago. "I have been closely observing the activities of the anti-liberation forces and the fundamentalists which have alarmed me. I thought that I should make some contribution to make the people aware of those forces", he said. "I want to expose their roles and activities during the Liberation War."

Paying tributes to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Gen Safiullah said, "We, the soldiers, took part in the Liberation War in spite of certain bondage and allegiance to the authorities. It was due to Bangabandhu that we felt inspired to revolt against the Pakistani rulers and that's why all the Bangalee soldiers in the country took up arms from their respective positions."

"It is unfortunate that the role of the great leader is not being evaluated properly."

Safiullah also recalled the contributions of late Jahanara Imam saying, "She inspired the pro-liberation forces to unite on one platform. There should be unity, at least on one point, which is, preservation of our hard-earned independence."

"But for the future, we have to strive hard so that persons belonging to anti-liberation camp cannot get elected to Parliament."

Poverty alleviation

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to poverty alleviation while stressing the need for supplementing government efforts by grass-root level NGOs and community organisations.

The meeting laid particular stress on the importance of decentralisation of power, participatory planning and ownership of development programmes by the poor. They agreed that steps should be taken to bring about a closer collaboration among government agencies, NGOs and community organisations engaged in poverty alleviation."

Reviewing the ongoing economic reform measures in the SAARC countries, he said the meeting observed that the reform process should be accelerated and a two-pronged poverty reduction programme should be initiated: a growth-oriented programme and a targeted poverty reduction programme to ensure that the reforms do not adversely affect the poor.

The meeting also agreed that we should reinforce our determination to place more emphasis on poverty reduction and we have also reiterated our commitment to alleviate poverty in our country through appropriate policies and programmes preferably by the year 2002," Rahman said.

Responding to a question,

the minister said that discussion was also held on ways to reduce military expenditure in the region. Noting that there is a different "security perception of the respective countries in relation to each other," he said, "if a congenial atmosphere evolves in the region, there won't be any need for such expenditures."

Asked if the issue of SAPTA came up for discussion at the meeting, he said that intra-SAARC trade expansion would help reduce the poverty level in the region and would also bring the member countries closer.

"The whole concept of SAARC will suffer from limitations unless economic cooperation is expanded," he added.

Responding to another question, the minister was optimistic that significant inroads on reducing the poverty level can be made within the target date of 2002. "All we want to see is that the human development indicators are improved upon and there is an improvement in the conditions of the people in the bottom half of the population."

It is not an ambitious target, he said. The economic reform and liberalisation process would bring about a resurgence of economic growth, creating a stage for a self-sustaining development process, he added.

'Hardliners may have killed Kim'

WASHINGTON, July 11:

Former CIA Director Robert Gates said today he would not rule out the possibility that North Korean President Kim Il-Sung was killed by hardliners wary of the tack he was taking with the United States and South Korea, reports Reuter.

"I think there is some small chance that he met is end other than with a heart attack," Gates, who headed the CIA from November 1991 to January 1993, said on NBC's "Today" television programme. Gates said such a plot was not the most likely explanation "but it can't be dismissed." If it did turn out the 82-year-old leader was killed, it could be bad news for future relations "and we may not know it for a long time," he said.

He said he believed Kim Jong-Il, the late leader's son and designated successor, was "something of a flake," based on the information he had when he headed the CIA.

IOJ MP Haq

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analists after the session was prorogued at ten last night.

Maulana Obaidul Haq, the lone MP of the IOJ who was elected from the Sylhet-5 constituency, has been boycotting the JS sessions along with the mainstream Opposition since February. The opposition parties had started boycotting the House following a 'derogatory comment' by the Information Minister which, allegedly, hurt the feelings of the Opposition MPs. But after the Magura-2 by-elections last March the parties continued boycotting the session demanding the next general elections under a caretaker government.

During the past several days, there was a strong rumour in the parliamentary circle that some smaller parties would rejoin the session before the prorogation of the House. Obaidul Haq and Shajahan Siraj and Shamsuddoha of the Gana Forum and Rashed Khan Menon of the Workers Party have been maintaining a noticeable distance with the mainstream opposition parties — the Awami League, the Jatiya Party and the Jamaat — which spearheaded the caretaker government issue.

Also, these three smaller parties had criticised both the Opposition and the ruling party, accusing them both for creating a stalemate in the House and called for a dialogue to settle the issue.

After joining the House, Maulana Haq told reporters that his first priority was to protest the anti-religious activities of Taslima Nasreen who 'advocated recasting the Holy Quran.'

"I submitted a notice for a general discussion on Taslima, so I joined," Haq added.

He said he would continue his struggle on the floor of the House to ensure free and fair elections.

He said the voters had elected him to protest the anti-people and anti-religious activities in the country.

"I performed part of my duty assigned by my constituents," Haq said.

In reply to a question whether he would join the next session, Haq said "Let the next session come."

He avoided another question if he had severed relations with the mainstream opposition parties.



A group of BSc students protesting the inclusion of Bengali literature in their syllabus in front of the National Press Club yesterday. — Star photo

JS session prorogued

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Opposition boycott of Parliament session, the Speaker said, "It would eventually benefit neither of the contending political camps."

He, however, hoped that the leaders of both the camps would be able to overcome the present political crisis soon.

Earlier, LGRD Minister and Secretary General of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), while giving the winding up speech, congratulated the lone IOJ legislator Maulana Obaidul Haq on his return to the House.

Salam Talukder called upon the Opposition to follow the 'footsteps' of the IOJ legislator and return to the House for the sake of democracy.

Earlier, Maulana Obaidul Haq of the IOJ, who entered the House during Talukder's speech, at 9:06 pm, spoke on his notice submitted earlier relating to alleged blasphemy by controversial writer Taslima Nasrin.

Referring to a number of statements and works of Taslima Nasrin, the Maulana told the House that she had clearly been making derogatory remarks against Islam.

"I have returned to the House only to discharge my responsibility of requesting Parliament to enact legislation against blasphemy."

Earlier, the Speaker declared the IOJ leader who had moved a notice seeking a 'short discussion' on Taslima issue, absent from the House. The Chair eventually entered

JS session prorogued

the notice, conditionally, at the request of Salam Talukder.

The Speaker told the Opposition member that a case against Taslima Nasrin was already pending before the court and, therefore, he cautioned that nothing could be stated which could influence the proceedings of the case.

Earlier, the House passed the State Acquisition and Tenancy (amendment) Bill, 1994 and the Speaker deferred, at the request of Law Minister Mirza Golam Hafiz, passage of the Representation of the People (amendment) Bill, 1994 to the next session.

LDF's convention against 'fatwabaz' July 27

By Staff Correspondent

The Left Democratic Front (LDF) will hold a "national convention on the spirit of the liberation war and against fundamentalism, communalism and fatwabaz" in the city on July 27.

This was announced at a press conference of the LDF held at the Workers Party office yesterday.

LDF Coordinator Manzurul Ahsan Khan urged the representatives of all pro-liberation political parties, professional groups, trade unions and student bodies to attend the convention and launch a united movement against the evil forces in the society.

progress to the common man," he underlined.

About the outcome of the just-concluded first SAARC finance and planning ministers' meeting, the Indian minister stated that the conference has been very useful in "sensitising the region's finance ministers towards the development process."

He said the conference and his visit has enabled him to gather new experience. "This experience on diverse areas of poverty would enlighten us to take more meaningful programmes in our respective countries."

Appreciating some of the programmes undertaken by national NGOs, Dr Singh was all praise for Dr Md Yunus of the Grameen Bank.

"Dr Yunus has set a splendid example. He has opened up a new perspective in disbursing and 'recovering credit to the poor'."

Dr Singh said Bangladesh has been able to send more girls into schools, which is something his country was still lagging behind. "This has opened my horizon."

The visiting finance minister said he was hopeful about more progress on poverty reduction in the region following the successful conclusion of the regional meeting.

"We can devise effective strategies to help the poor and undertake more effective pro-poor plans. For the first time, the finance ministers have touched the area which affects the majority of the population," he noted.

Speaking about the reforms programme that he had helped initiate in India, Dr Manmohan Singh said there has been significant progress in the reduction of taxes, tariff and restructuring of the public sector.

Stating that financial restructuring is not a means in itself, the Indian finance minister, who had earned a reputation for reforms, commented humbly, "We need to do lot

Population Day observed

The adverse effects of the present 2.03 per cent population growth was highlighted in seminars and symposia marking the World Population Day observed in different parts of the country yesterday, reports UNB.

Government leaders taking part in the discussions urged the people to adopt family planning methods to contain the rapid growth of population. They emphasised the responsibility of all couples to have small family for overcoming the problem of population boom.

This year's theme of the Day is: "Choices and Responsibilities."

Health and Family Welfare Minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf inaugurated the day's programme at the Osmani Memorial Hall at 10 am. Deputy Health Minister Serajul Haq and UNDP Representative Emi Watanabe also spoke at the inaugural session.

7 foreigners shot dead in Algeria

ALGIERS, July 11: Five Eastern European engineers working in Algeria were shot dead Monday, and two Yugoslavs later were killed along with two Algerians at a restaurant in an escalation of attacks on foreigners, reports AP.

The two attacks raised to 51 the number of foreigners killed in Algeria since September, when they became targets of Muslim extremist militants seeking to topple the army-backed government. Last week, assailants slit the throats of seven Italian sailors at the port of Djendjen.

Security officials said the victims of the first attack, in the Algiers suburb of Oued Ouchay, included a Russian, two Byelorussians, a Ukrainian and a Romanian.

Nepali Parliament dissolved, polls on Nov 13

KATHMANDU, July 11: Nepal's King Birendra has dissolved Parliament and announced elections for November 13, the official radio Nepal said tonight, reports Reuter.

The radio quoting a royal palace communique said the King had dissolved the 205-member House of Representatives and announced the election date.

The King earlier consulted constitutional experts as politicians pressed him to ignore outgoing Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala's demand for early elections, official said.

They said Birendra, a constitutional monarch since a 1990 pro-democracy campaign ushered in the first directly elected government in the Kingdom, was listening to both sides before giving his verdict. Koirala resigned on Sunday after his ruling party lost a crucial vote in Parliament.

The Midnight File

Jordan, Israel and US to hold talks July 20

JERUSALEM, July 11: In a sign negotiations between Israel and Jordan are moving into high gear, high-level officials from the two countries and the United States, will meet on July 20, the Foreign Ministry said Monday. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali of Jordan and Secretary of State Warren Christopher will meet in Jordan at a hotel on the edge of the Dead Sea, said ministry spokesman Gabi Baltiansky. The announcement came after Jordan's King Hussein said over the weekend he was willing to meet publicly with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, reports AP.

UN mission asked to leave Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, July 11: The military-dominated government Monday ordered all UN human rights observers and monitors from the Organization of American States to leave Haiti. UN spokesman Eric Falt said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave the observers 48 hours to leave the Caribbean country. The order was delivered to UN officials in Haiti at 9 am (1300 GMT), but it was not immediately clear when the clock begins, reports AP.

World Cup roundup

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Swedish coach Tommy Svensson said, "It's better than a lottery. In a penalty shootout it has to do with the players' skills."

On Wednesday, Bulgaria will play Italy at Giants Stadium and Brazil will face Sweden in the Rose Bowl at Pasadena, Calif. Sweden and Brazil drew 1-1 in the first round.

Italy and Brazil, both three-time champions, won their semifinal berths Saturday, although neither had an easy time of it. Italy downed Spain 2-1 and Brazil edged the Netherlands 3-2.

The other three-time champion in the field were Germany, and now the tournament moves on without its most dependable power. Germany had played in the last three World Cup title games.

"We, in Germany, have to start acknowledging the performances of other teams," German coach Berti Vogts said. "Other nations have caught up and we have to search for new ways."

The Germans were trying to become the first country since Brazil in 1958 and 1962 to win consecutive titles. But they were caught in the quarterfinals by a composed Bulgarian team that rallied from a 1-0 deficit in the second half.

"I think Germany were a little scared of us," Bulgarian midfielder Ivaylo Jordanov said. "I don't think there's any doubt we were the better team. We've played two world champions and now we are waiting for a third."

In the Bulgarian capital of Sofia, the streets became a sea of dancing, roaring celebrants. Even the country's president, Zhelev Zhelev, hailed the victory on national television.

Bulgaria are playing in their sixth World Cup, and until this tournament had never won a game. Now, after an opening loss to Nigeria, they have struggled together victories against Greece, Argentina, Mexico and Germany. There will no longer be sneers about Bulgarian soccer.

"I was not scared," Bulgaria coach Dimitar Penev said. "Nor were the Bulgarian players," referring to Lothar Mathaeus giving Germany the lead.

It would not be long before the Bulgarian locker room was re-taking calls from the country's president and prime minister, and Vogts was trying to explain a champion's fall.

"Football is cruel sometimes," said Germany's Andreas Moeller.

It would be hard to top the Bulgarians' theatrics, but the Swedes and Romanians sure tried.

Each team made four penalty kicks in the shootout, forcing sudden-death. After Henrik Larsson put Sweden up 5-4, Ravelli secured the win with a diving one-handed save on a hesitant shot by Miodrag Belodedici.

"I wasn't nervous," said Ravelli, the most experienced goalkeeper in the World Cup. "I had everything to win and nothing to lose."

The Sweden-Brazil semifinal will mark the first World Cup rematch within one tournament since 1982. Sweden's best finish in a World Cup was in 1958, when as host they were runner-up to Brazil.

JCD DU unit confce today

By DU Correspondent

The annual conference of the Dhaka University unit of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dai (JCD) will be held in front of the Arts Faculty building this (Tuesday) morning.

Barrister Abdus Salam Talukder, Secretary General of the BNP, will attend the meeting as the chief guest.

JP rally in city today

Jatiya Party will hold a rally today (Tuesday) at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram at 3:30 pm to press the demand for a caretaker government and immediate release of its president Hussain Muhammad Ershad, reports UNB.

Central party leaders, including its acting president Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury, Barrister Maudud Ahmed, Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Shah Moazzem Hossain, Anwar Hossain Manju and Barrister Abul Hasnat will address the rally.

Dollar falls

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for currencies other than dollar was very weak.

The dollar, lost ground as doubts grew about any major initiative to help the ailing greenback emerging from the weekend's Group of Seven (G-7) summit in Naples. Since the G-7 did not say anything specific about lifting the sagging dollar, the market expects a further tumbling dollar in the coming week. The G-7 mainly discussed the world economic growth and free market, rather than the level of dollar.

Even a hope of the Federal Reserve Bank's raising the interest rate on dollar did not come through keeping the greenback in the cold.

"The dollar is likely to remain under pressure and possibility of any federal rate hike in the present scenario is not likely to bring much cheer to the US unit," the Currency Newsletter of the Standard Chartered Bank, meanwhile, observed in Dhaka.

Meanwhile, the Bank of Japan last week continued its efforts to halt the dollar's slide through repeated interventions but not to much avail.

In Dhaka market, interbank call money rate remained steady over the last week and it ranged between 1.5 per cent and 2.5 per cent due to excess liquidity in the market.

DMC classes

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Sources said that the finished quarters of the 4th class employees will be removed near Bakshibazar soon to establish the new hospital which will be funded by the World Bank.

Besides, the meeting decided that the anti-social elements staying in these finished quarters for long, will be evicted within one week.

The students went on an indefinite strike demanding relocation of the staff quarters of class four employees from the hospital compound and punishment of those who attacked the students and damaged college property.

The students yesterday said they would continue their strike until the demands were accepted.

Leaders from the All Party Students Union (APSU) of the medical college reiterated the demands at a press conference on the college campus yesterday.

Mustafizul Azim Jami and Abdul Allim — VP and GS of the Dhaka Medical College Students Union (DHAMECSU) respectively — spoke at the press conference.

JEC meet

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The Government of Pakistan stopped the export of cotton to Bangladesh because of the decline in cotton production in that country a few years ago. Although the embargo was withdrawn, there are still some problems about cotton import from Pakistan, the official said and added a decision in this regard is likely to be taken at the meeting.

The fifth meeting of the JEC will begin at the State Guest House Meghna. The official level discussions will, however, be held at the ERD of the Ministry of Finance.

The Joint Economic Commission was formed in July 1979. The fourth meeting of the commission was held in Islamabad in November, 1991.

Cairo conference

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porting a health and family welfare system capable of attaining Health for All by the Year 2000 and a Natural Rate of Reproduction (NRR) of one by the year 2005.

Experts, however, feel that the government policy towards the population problem should give more emphasis on bringing about changes in the quality of life than purely on a demographic approach to curb population growth.

Family planning so far in Bangladesh has largely been a female responsibility, they say. The family planning measures should have a limited success unless the 'gender bias' was removed and socio-economic status of the women were improved, they noted.

US Vice President Al Gore, who will be leading the American delegation to Cairo, says that women's empowerment will be a key topic in the ICPD.

"Birth control alone cannot stabilise the world's growing population; it needs to be combined with the empowerment of women and improvement in child survival rates," Gore said while addressing a panel discussion of population experts hosted by the US National Academy of Sciences last month.

"Bangladesh in the global population theatre is represented by the demographers, in terms of its growing CPR," commented Farida Akhter of the UBINIG, an NGO working on women empowerment.

The discussions, debates and negotiations of the ICPD have been grounded mainly upon population and popula-

tion control," she said recently at a discussion on ICPD in Dhaka. The 'D' of the 'ICPD' has been dropped, with the development aspect marginalised," she said.

Nasrin Haq of the Naripakkha, a women's action group, however, said that there was still much scope to shift emphasis from demographic approach to sustainable development.

The Third Precom meeting on ICPD had achieved a kind of consensus among the policy planners and the NGOs about integrating population policies with the sustainable development and human rights issues, she pointed out.

Rachel Kyte, a consultant of the International Women's Health Coalition now working in Dhaka, commented there has been a new look into the ICPD bargains and population and development are being linked with common good as well as individual right.

New Govt ad section starts functioning from July 16

By Staff Correspondent

A new advertisement section of the Information Ministry will start functioning from July 16 for smooth and efficient allocation and distribution of government advertisements.

An official circular yesterday said all advertisements of the government, semi-government and autonomous bodies would be channelised to the Information Ministry's advertisement section through the Department of Films and Publications.

Editor: Mahfuz Anam