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CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS

In search of a way out



In today's instalment of The Daily Star series on current political deadlock, former Adviser of Foreign Affairs Fakhruddin Ahmed puts forward a new formula. He suggests a two-phase caretaker government which will not require any constitutional amendment.

Details on Page 5
 We request our readers to send in their own suggestions to solve the crisis.

Inside Today

- Article**
Labour Market Least Conducive for Growth
 Column: Crosscurrents by CAF Dowlah Page 4
- International**
Fall of Zepa imminent amid Serb fierce artillery attack
Rabin reveals details of draft autonomy accord for West Bank Page 8
- Business**
Country badly needs forward looking shrimp culture policy
World Bank commits \$22.5b to South in '95 Pages 6,7

STOCK MARKET

DSE price index	758.01 (+0.19%)
Market capital Tk	46.88 billion
Transactions in volume	98977
Transactions in value Tk	16.37 million

Metropolitan

Dhaka Day by Day

The Joy that Cards
 Bring Page 3

NEWS BRIEFS

- Ex-MP joins BNP**
 Mia Abbas Uddin, a former independent MP elected from Bagerhat-4 yesterday joined the BNP expressing his confidence in the ideals and principles of the party. Mia Abbas Uddin received the receipt of primary membership of the BNP from the party secretary general Barister Abdus Salam Talukder and joined the BNP at a simple ceremony held at the central office of the BNP in the city yesterday, reports BSS.
- Yeltsin feels better**
 MOSCOW, July 18: Russian President Boris Yeltsin said today he had a heart attack on July 10 but now felt better. "Something unpleasant happened to me on the 10th, in general a heart attack as a result of ischaemia," Yeltsin told Russia's channel one television in an interview obtained by Reuters.
- Transport strike**
 From Our Correspondent NARAYANGANJ. July 18: The road communication between Dhaka and Narayanganj was disrupted today as a section of transport workers enforced an indefinite strike.

Settlement of absentee MPs issue

Lawyers differ on authority of Speaker, Supreme Court

By Staff Correspondent

The Supreme Court was not competent to decide the matter relating to the absence of the Opposition MPs unless the normal parliamentary process had been exhausted, argued Barrister Syed Ishtiaq Ahmed at the Appellate Division hearing on the first-ever Presidential reference yesterday.

Justice T H Khan, President of the SC Bar Association and the other amici curiae who made his submission on the day, however, argued that the SC was the appropriate authority to provide an advisory opinion on the matter.

"Unless the (parliamentary) process is exhausted the Supreme Court is not competent to decide this matter which is the exclusive jurisdiction of the Speaker and the Parliament," said Barrister Ishtiaq Ahmed.

"By asking the court to answer this question, the court is required to encroach on the field of a coordinate organ that is Parliament, which has the primary exclusive jurisdiction" over the matter, Barrister Ishtiaq added.

Justice Khan, continuing his submission, which he had started Monday, noted that the framers of the Constitution never contemplated the en masse absence of MPs. "Since the framers of the Constitution could not dream of such a large scale abstention, it is tantamount to subversion of the Constitution,"

Referring to the "democratic process" mentioned in the Preamble of the Constitution and the "will of the people" noted in Article 7, he argued: "Bulk of the democratic process and the will of the people is realised through the proper functioning of the Parliament or the legislative part."

At this point, Justice Mostafa Kamal enquired if the Opposition tried to subvert the Constitution, was it

See page 12 Col 4

Standard of edn worries PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday lamented that quality of education remained a problem for the country and called for improving the standard of education for national development, reports UNB.

"The overall progress of a nation depends on its standard of education," she said at an international seminar on "Quality Assurance in Higher Education" at the International Conference Centre in Dhaka.

The three-day seminar, jointly organised by the University Grants Commission (UGC) and Canada-based Commonwealth of Learning (COL), is being participated by educationists from home and abroad. They include chairpersons of the UGCs of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka as well as experts from the COL.

Opening the conference, the prime minister said universal primary education and higher quality in education are among the many problems facing the country's education sector.

Referring to the highest allocation for the education sector and various educational programmes of her government, the prime minister said these have yielded positive results as literacy grew by 10 per cent in last four years and the rate now stood at 37 per cent.

Enrollment of boys and girls of 6-10 age-range have

See page 12 Col 1

50 injured as hill students clash with police

From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, July 18: At least 50 people including 17 police personnel were injured in pitched battles between police and activists of the Pahari Chhatra Parishad today at Khagrachhari town.

Official sources here claimed that one police inspector and a constable were in critical condition in hospital.

The trouble began at around 1 pm when police tried to remove road barricades put up by activists of the Pahari Chhatra Parishad at Khagrachhari town and at Guimara in the district. PCP activists enforced the 8-hour barricades from the morning to press for release of their leader Pradipon Kisa, vice

See page 12 Col 8



An inundated mosque in the city's Lalbagh area. — Star photo

Flood situation static in many districts

By Staff Correspondent

The overall flood situation in Dhaka, Narayanganj, Faridpur, Madaripur, Shariatpur, Kishoreganj, Narshingdi, Munshiganj and Chandpur districts remained almost unchanged for the second day yesterday.

The situation in Jamalpur, Mymensingh and in the northern districts further improved but water level of the Ganges continued to rise at upstream points, according to the flood information centre here.

Meanwhile the official death toll in flood-related incidents rose to 74 yesterday with three more deaths reported from Sherpur town.

Although the rivers Buriganga and Turag marked further fall yesterday, flood levels in the low-lying areas of the city remained almost unchanged.

The Buriganga fell further by 4 cm but was flowing 2 cm above the danger mark. The Turag marked fall by 4 cm at Mirpur and a slight fall at Tongi but was flowing 39 and 1 cm above danger levels at the two points.

The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) yesterday supplied water purifying tablets, oral saline and sanitary toilets in 35 flood shelters in the city's flood-hit areas where there is scarcity of safe drinking water. Twenty-three medical teams were active in these centres, the DCC said. Mayor Mohammad Hanif visited flood affected areas in Kadamtala, Basabo, Hirajhil and Rajarbagh and distributed relief materials.

The WASA in a statement yesterday urged the city dwellers to drink water after boiling as it feared some of its pump houses and water pipes might have gone under water causing pollution. Some of the pumps might be closed temporarily to avoid

See page 12 Col 7

'Govt has refused foreign aid for flood victims'

FENI, July 18: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today said her government regretted foreign assistance and is trying to tackle the flood and damages with domestic resources, reports UNB.

"Many foreign countries offered us assistance, but we have regretted... we want to prove that we are capable of managing calamities," she said.

The prime minister, who reached here in the evening, was reviewing the flood situation, rehabilitation and development activities of the district at local Circuit House.

"We don't like to be dependent on foreign aid for everything," said Begum Zia, who termed the flooding this time as more devastating in places than that of 1988 which is billed the biggest catastrophe in Bangladesh's recent history.

The Prime Minister said a

See page 12 Col 5

1000 gunmen attack police station in Karachi

KARACHI, July 18: UP to 1,000 gunmen opened fire on a police station in Pakistan's port city of Karachi overnight and fled after police fired back from the building's rooftop, police said today, reports Reuter.

The gunmen attacked the Mominabad police station firing hundreds of rounds, but there were no casualties, a police spokesman said.

"Some 800 to 1,000 people attacked and fired gunshots at the Mominabad police station at midnight," a police spokesman said. "The attacks fired at the police station for 20 minutes."

The gunmen retreated after police used light machine guns to repulse the attack, the spokesman said. The cause of the attack was not given and the gunmen were not identified.

Seven people, including two police officials, were killed in separate incidents in the violence-plagued city overnight, police said.

Unidentified gunmen kidnapped retired police official Raja Mohammad Isha from a bus and tortured him to death, they said. His body was found in a car in the volatile Gulbahar area.

Assistant sub-inspector Abdul Razzak, 45, was shot dead in Gulbahar. He was kidnapped, blindfolded and his hands and feet were tied before he was shot, a police official said. His body was wrapped in a sack and dumped.

"Anyone who confronts us will meet the same fate," said an unidentified hand-written note found in the sack.

The latest killings raised the death toll to 175 this month and more than 1,100 this year, compared to some 800 in 1994.

As violence continued in the port city of 12 million people, the government and the opposition Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM) planned to continue peace talks in Islamabad on Thursday.

In a joint statement issued after Monday's talks in Karachi, both sides condemned terrorism and pledged to cooperate in a bid for peace.

The government has issued 21 conditions in reply to 18 presented by the opposition MQM.

The MQM has threatened to demand a separate province for Karachi if the talks fail. It wants greater rights for the Urdu-speaking Mohajirs, who migrated from India at partition in 1947.

The government says the MQM must renounce violence before its complaints about discrimination against Mohajirs in politics, jobs and education can be tackled.

AP adds: Despite efforts to negotiate an end to ethnically motivated attacks in Pakistan's largest city, six people died Tuesday, including three family members apparently targeted by rival ethnic militants.

Hasina off to US

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League president Sheikh Hasina left Dhaka for the United States last night.

She had cancelled her July 14 flight to visit the flood-affected areas.

During her stay Hasina will attend some programmes of the AL branches there. She will also meet her son and daughter.

Party leaders Abdul Mannan, Zillur Rahman, Amir Hossain Amu, Abdur Razzak, Tojael Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Abdul Jalil, Matia Choudhury, city mayor Mohammad Hanif and leaders of the party's front organisations saw Hasina off at the airport. She is likely to return in the first week of August.

During the period senior presidium member of the party, Syeda Zohra Tajuddin will be the acting chief.

Earlier yesterday, Hasina visited the flood-hit Kamrangirchar of Labagh thana and distributed relief among the affected people.

Addressing several gatherings

See page 12 Col 7

City garbage a huge source of biogas

Some 75 thousand cubic metres biogas and 700 tons of organic fertilizer will be obtained if about 1,000 tons of garbage, being disposed of by the Dhaka City Corporation everyday, is processed through biogas plants, reports UNB.

This was stated by State Minister for Science and Technology Prof M A Mannan yesterday while opening a three-day SAARC seminar on "Waste Recycling Based on Biogas Technology."

Prof Mannan said biogas equivalent to 1.5 million tons of oil will be generated annually if 80 per cent dung of the country's 22 million cattle-head is processed through biogas plants.

"Fertiliser, which would be produced through biogas plants, is expected to increase production of food-grains by over 4 million tons annually," he added.

A biogas plant must be set up with any dairy or poultry farm established with loans from the nationalised commercial banks, he said. Bangladesh Bank and Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) have signed an agreement this year to this effect.

Prof Mannan said 115 crore maunds of fuel like straw and dung are used annually for cooking purpose causing depletion of forest resources. "We have only 9 per cent forest against minimum requirement of 25 per cent to maintain ecological balanced."

Biogas will help in relieving energy crisis, meeting the demand of organic fertiliser and controlling environmental pollution, he said.

The state minister said development of science and technology is now synonymous with economic development of a country and upliftment of science and appropriate technology is now the only way to encounter the challenge of the 21st century.

Referring to the government's priority of science

See page 12 Col 8

BNP MP Mirza Murad dead

Mirza Muraduzzaman, a ruling party MP from Sirajganj, died of cancer at Sir Salimullah Medical College Hospital here yesterday morning. He was 57, reports UNB.

He left behind his wife, two sons, two daughters and a host of relatives and friends.

Mirza Murad started his political career from student life and actively participated in the historic language and anti-Ayub movements. He joined the BNP in 1978.

The namaj-e-Janaza for Mirza Muraduzzaman was held at the south plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali, Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Panni and some MPs including cabinet members, attended the Janaza held at 11:40 am.

Earlier, wreaths were placed on the coffin of Muraduzzaman on behalf of President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas expressed his deep shock and sorrow at the demise of Mirza Muraduzzaman.

See page 12 Col 7

Brawl in Taiwan's parliament

TAIPEI, July 18: Legislators in Taiwan's Parliament jumped on to the Speaker's desk and punched and shoved each other in a brawl over a law to pave the way for the island's first presidential elections, a spokesman said today, reports Reuter.

Opposition New Party legislator Ju Gau-Jeng, known as "Taiwan's Rambo" for his fights in Parliament, rushed to the Speaker's podium leaped on top of the Speaker's desk and then dived from the desk on to a crowd of ruling Nationalist Party legislators.

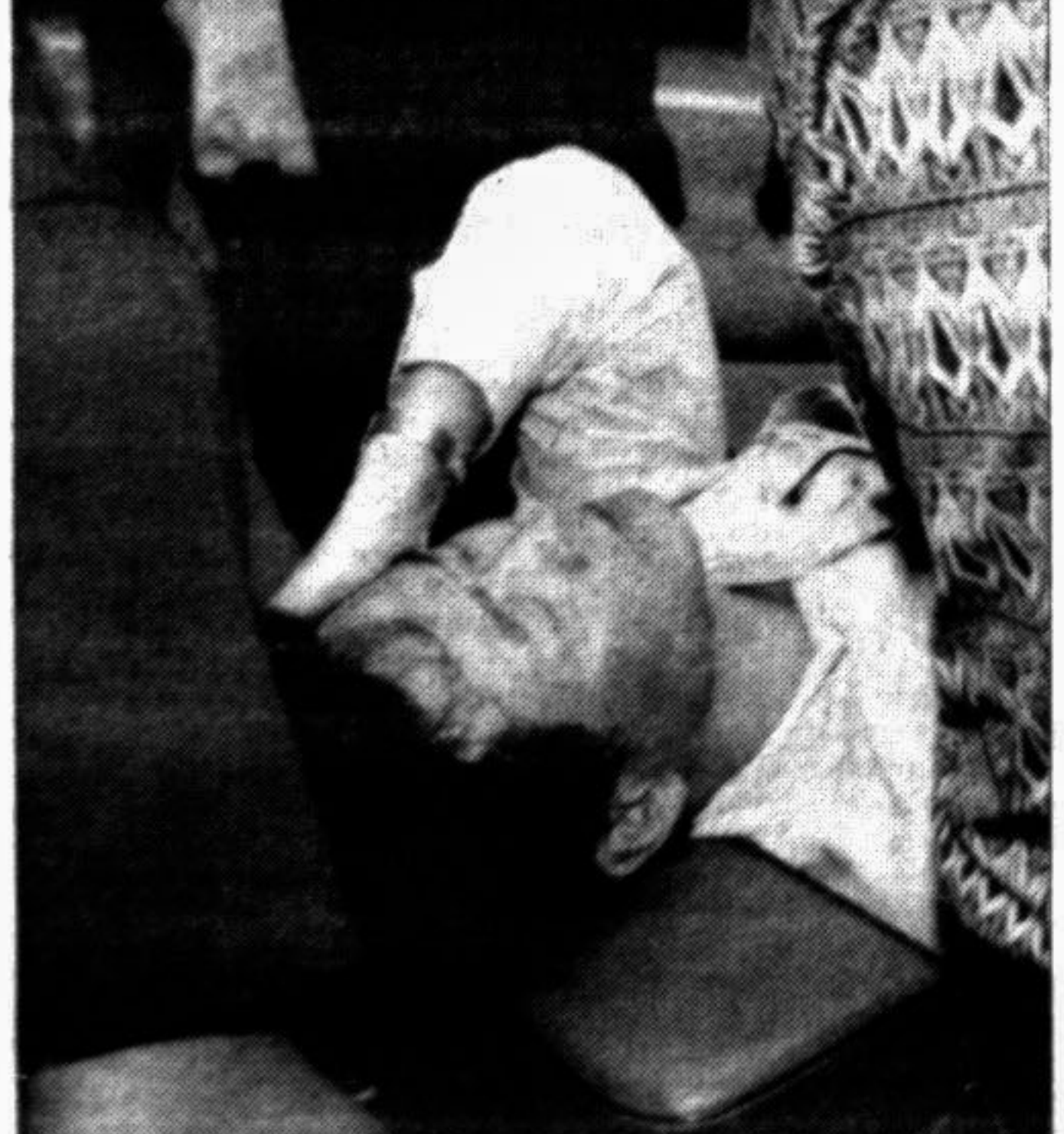
State television showed several Nationalist legislators landing punches on Ju's face, knocking his spectacles off and sending him reeling backwards in the brawl late on Monday night, other lawmakers also pushed and shoved each other.

Four New Party legislators are injured, New Party Whip Lee Ching Hwa told Reuters by telephone.

We will fight this until the end, he added.

Legislators objected to Article 23 of what is to be Taiwan's first bill on presidential election.

See page 12 Col 8



Taiwan opposition Democratic Progressive Party MP Huang Chao-Hui is being carried to hospital after he was seriously hit on the head by his ruling Kuomintang colleague during an argument in parliament yesterday in Taiwan. — AFP photo

FM leaves for UK tonight to attend confce on Bosnia

Foreign Minister ASM Mostafizur Rahman leaves Dhaka for London tonight to attend a special conference on the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, reports UNB.

Britain will host the conference in London on Friday.

Mostafiz will be accompanied by Chief of Army Staff Abu Saleh Muhammad Nasim and Director General (UN) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Alimul Haque.

British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind has invited the Foreign Ministers and chiefs of Army Staff of troops contributing nations, contact groups' countries and permanent member countries of the Security Council to the emergency session.

The conference, considered as very vital in the backdrop of the present volatile situation in the Balkan, is expected to work out a strategy to deter the continuous Serb aggression to protect territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina and save innocent human lives there.

A conference of the OIC

See page 12 Col 8

Court told during hearing of writ EC prevented 1.5 crore from being registered

The Election Commission (EC), in collusion with the government, deprived some one-and-a-half crore eligible citizens of their right to register themselves as voters, a lawyer yesterday told a High Court Division bench, reports UNB.

Advocate ABM Nurul Islam making his submission on a writ petition challenging certain provisions of the voters' registration form, stated that the EC had intentionally and willfully prevented those eligible voters from being registered.

The writ petition was filed by Md Aminul Gani Tito on May 28.

He further submitted to the bench, comprising Justice Habibur Rahman Khan and Justice MM Ruhul Amin, that five years ago the number of registered voters in the country was 6.20 crore and in 1995 the EC declared that voters number was 5.58 crore.

Referring to press reports that the EC on the plea of shortage of time was not going to issue voters' identity cards, Islam said, this is being done to facilitate casting of false votes which will hamper free and fair election.

But under Section 11 of the Electoral Roll (Amendment) Ordinance, the EC was bound to issue identity cards to each and every voter, he submitted.

During the argument an Affidavit-in-Opposition was submitted in the court on behalf of the EC by an Assistant Attorney General where it said that under Section 10 and 11 of the Electoral Roll (Amendment) Ordinance there was a scope of correction and revision of voters' list.

Advocate Islam promptly drew the attention of Section 7.20 and Form-4 and 7 and submitted that aforesaid sections applied only to those persons who were aged 18 years between January 1, 1995 and May 25, 1995, when the process of registra-

See page 12 Col 4

Garments worth Tk 1 cr seized at Ctg

From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, July 18: Customs officials today seized a consignment of garments worth about Taka one crore at the port jetty on charge of false declaration.

Official sources said a Dhaka-based enterprise, PS Apparels Private Ltd, allegedly sold out 40,000 yards of garments cloth imported under back-to-back L/C in the local market and attempted to evade actual exports by making a false declaration.

The enterprise gave a declaration of export of 46,000 pieces of ready-made shirts in three containers, but when the customs intelligence officials challenged and checked the consignment, they found shortage of 16,000 pieces.

The Customs alleged that 40,000 yards of cloth out of which 16,000 pieces of shirts could be made were sold in the local market.