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EC's deferral of by-elections

Opposition will stage demonstrations today

By Staff Correspondent

The major Opposition political parties will observe a country-wide 'demonstration day' today to protest the Election Commission's announcement deferring the by-elections to 144 parliamentary seats on grounds of floods.

A joint meeting of the Awami League (AL), the Jatiya Party (JP) and the Jamaat-e-Islami on Wednesday took up the programme.

This is the first identical programme of the Opposition parties since the seats of 142 Opposition MPs were declared vacant due to their absence from Parliament for 90 consecutive sitting days without leave of the House.

Two more seats fell vacant due to the death of two ruling party MPs.

The 90-day limit for holding by-elections to the vacant seats was to expire on September 17. The Election Commission, however, on Wednesday deferred the by-polls by another 90 days because of 'natural calamity caused by recent floods' in different parts of the country.

The EC's announcement came under fire from the major Opposition political parties which termed the deferral of by-elections another act of violation of the Constitution by the government.

They said the government had influenced the EC to defer the by-polls only to prolong its stay in power ignoring the popular demand for dissolving the "ineffective and illegal" Parliament to pave the way for fresh general elections under a non-party caretaker government.

As part of today's programme, the AL will hold a rally in front of the party's Bangabandhu Avenue office in the city at 4 pm. The rally will be followed by a procession.

The JP will hold a rally at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram mosque at 3 pm, while the Jamaat rally will be held at 5 pm at the north gate of the mosque.

Editorial on page 4

Saddam's 2 daughters defect to Jordan

WASHINGTON, Aug 11: The Pentagon said Thursday it had evidence that Iraqi troops were preparing to move artillery and tanks out of their bases following the defection to Jordan of two daughters of President Saddam Hussein, reports AFP.

Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon said the United States saw three possible theories for such troop activities — a response to problems in the north with the Kurds, preparations to maintain stability within Iraq and a possible move toward neighboring Jordan.

Lieutenant-General Hussein Kamel Hassan, who ran Iraq's military industries, and his brother Lieutenant-Colonel Saddam Kamel (See Page 12 Col 8)



File picture showing Iraqi President Saddam Hussein surrounded by his first wife Dajiba (bottom L), his eldest son Uday and daughters Rana (top L) and Raghad (top C) dated November 20, 1988. — AFP/UNB photo

Miladunnabi celebrated

Eid-e-Miladunnabi, marking the anniversary of birth and departure of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM), was celebrated all over the country on Thursday with due solemnity and religious fervour, reports UNB.

Processions, rallies, discussions, seminars and milad mahfil were arranged by different political, socio-cultural and religious organisations to mark the day.

Special prayers were offered in all mosques seeking divine blessings for peace, progress and prosperity of the nation as well as strong fraternity and unity of the Muslim Ummah.

The day was a public holiday.

National flag was hoisted atop all public and private buildings. Streets of the capital were decorated with national flags and flags inscribed with *Kalema Tayyaba*.

A milad mahfil was held at Bangabhaban. President Biswas, ministers, judges, (See Page 12 Col 6)

News Analysis

EC makes it easy for the ruling party

By Farid Hossain

Few political speculations proved right, especially since the opposition parties launched their neutral-caretaking-government campaign in March last year.

No more does that record hold. Speculations that parliamentary by-polls to fill the seats vacated by Opposition MPs will be deferred citing Act of God — meaning floods this time — have not gone futile. Newspapers are already vying for credit for writing about the possibilities of postponing the by-elections that, according to Constitutional provision, should have been held within September. Now forget the balloting until at least December.

The Election Commission's decision must have cheered the government. Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, desperately trying to avoid the huge by-elections, has got what she wanted. Good or bad, Begum Zia is scoring one point after another over her arch rival Sheikh Hasina of the Awami League.

When Hasina led the Opposition MPs in a mass resignation from the House in December, Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali simply ignored their act. The seats did not automatically fall vacant. Then came the question of the absence from the House for 90 consecutive sitting days. A decision from the Speaker? Not yet. Begum Zia advised the President to send the issue — whether the mass boycott of the Opposition MPs should be taken as absence — to the Supreme Court. The President did refer the matter to the court, which reverted it to the Speaker. Some vital time was thus bought. Without wasting time the Speaker declared the seats belonging to 142 Opposition MPs vacant giving backdated effect from June 20.

At this point Begum Zia had to make a choice: by-elections or dissolution of Parliament. Her task was made easy by the Election Commission. She has now all the time to wait until December to make her next move. By that time she will (See Page 12 Col 7)

'Materialise Bangabandhu's dreams'

From Our Correspondent

TUNGIPARA, Aug 11: Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina today said the nation would take revenge for the killing of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by materialising his dream for a 'Sonar Bangla'.

"Economic freedom cannot be achieved without completing the unfinished task of Bangabandhu," Hasina told a gathering at his 'mazar' premises.

The AL president said the Bangabandhu had dedicated his life for the emancipation of the masses. She deplored that the dream of the great leader could not be fulfilled as he was assassinated on the fateful night of August 15 in 1975.

The AL leaders led by Sheikh Hasina came to Tungipara in connection with the observance of 'August 15'.

Hasina called upon the people to intensify the present movement for ensuring people's right to food and vote.

AL presidium member Abdus Samad Azad said that the killers of Bangabandhu later turned into the rulers of the country and did little for the good of the people.

The meeting was also addressed by (See Page 12 Col 1)

Tk 1.75cr Sultan museum at Narail planned

NARAIL, Aug 11: The government has decided to establish 'S M Sultan Memorial Museum' at a cost of about Tk 1.75 crore at the late artist's birth place on the bank of the river Chitra here, reports BBS.

Minister for Post and Telecommunications Tariqul Islam announced the decision of the government at two separate discussions held at late S M Sultan's residence in the city and the local thana parishad auditorium yesterday.

The discussions were held marking the 71st birth anniversary of the world famous Bangalee artist. Deputy Commissioner of Narail Taj Mohammad was in the chair while artist Abu Taher, Director of Shilpakala Academy Subir Choudhury and Principal of Khulna Art (See Page 12 Col 3)

Clinton vetoes Cong Bill on Bosnia

WASHINGTON, Aug 11: President Bill Clinton today vetoed a Bill passed by Congress to unilaterally lift the arms embargo against Bosnia-Herzegovina, reports AFP.

"I know that members of Congress share my goals of reducing the violence in Bosnia and working to end the war," Clinton said in a statement.

"But their vote to unilaterally lift the arms embargo is the wrong step at the wrong time," he said.

The President sent the veto message to Congress today just as lawmakers adjourned for the August recess.

The timing was aimed at preventing lawmakers from beginning the expected process of collecting votes for a veto override until they return in September, according to McCurry, who noted that Congress would not likely want to prolong the session into next week.

The President leaves for his own two-week vacation Tuesday and the White House is hoping to use the intervening time to win support for its opposition to lifting the ban.

Meanwhile, Reuter adds: Russia and the United States, increasingly at odds over former Yugoslavia, have agreed to meet to try to coordinate peace efforts, the Russian foreign ministry said today.

In Sarajevo, the International Committee of the Red Cross said it believed some 6,000 people were missing in eastern Bosnia but said it could not confirm a US assertion that thousands of Muslims were executed and buried in mass graves.

The US ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright gave (See Page 12 Col 1)

Opposition out to create chaos: PM

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia yesterday made a blistering attack on the opposition parties, saying they are trying to push the country backward by creating indiscipline in national life, reports UNB.

"They do not want development, they want to exploit the people keeping them weak and uneducated... They only think of capturing power," she said.

The Prime Minister was addressing a gathering of newcomers to BNP from Mathbaria thana of Pirojpur district at her 30, Hare Road office last night.

Party sources said several hundred leaders and workers of the Jatiya Party and its front organisations, led by former MP and Pirojpur District Council Chairman Abdul Jabbar Engineer, joined the ruling party at the function.

The Prime Minister said her government is relentlessly trying to free the people from exploitation by empowering them. "If people are not weak and uneducated, they can't be exploited. That is why we have launched a massive education programme to ensure education for all," she said.

Begum Zia said the Food (See Page 12 Col 3)



Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina along with party leaders placing wreaths at the mazar of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in Tungipara yesterday. — AL photo

Tamil Tigers reject peace package

COLOMBO, Aug 11: Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger guerrillas have rejected a peace plan aimed at ending a separatist war as the government set a two-month deadline to defeat them, Tamil sources said Thursday, reports AFP.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) urged civilians in areas under their control not to support Colombo's political package unveiled by President Chandrika Kumaratunga last week, the sources said.

"Area leaders of the LTTE have begun telling people that this plan will not bring peace. They say Tamils who support it are traitors," a Tamil source here said quoting travellers from LTTE-held areas.

The LTTE which is fighting for an independent homeland in the island's northeast has rejected all previous attempts to politically resolve the conflict which has claimed over 50,000 lives since 1972.

There has been no direct statement from the LTTE leadership to the peace plan but travellers said Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran had been meeting with his field commanders and academics to discuss the issue.

The rebel rejection came as power and Energy Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte told Parliament Wednesday that he needed another two months to complete an offensive against the LTTE.

Meanwhile, the Lankan navy has destroyed four Tamil rebel boats today.

13 members of a family gunned down in Sindh

KARACHI, Aug 11: A gang of bandits, commonly known as dacoits, gunned down 13 family members today in a village some 25 kilometers (15 miles) west of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's hometown Larkana, police and local administration officials said, reports AFP.

The officials said a gang of around 30 bandits took the whole family hostage in Mamrani village along the bank of river Indus.

The area is believed to be a safe haven for such gangs. They gunned down the 13 family members, injuring two others.

Officials said the reason for the killing was not known adding the bandits might have suspected the family of passing information to the police.

Dr Kamal blames CEC for misuse of power

Gano Forum president Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday blamed the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) for misusing his power by extending the time-limit for by-elections 'without valid reason', reports UNB.

"This has created doubt in people's mind about the neutrality of the Election Commission," he said at a meeting of the party's central committee in the city.

Dr Kamal said election under a neutral caretaker government is acceptable to all democratic forces and this is the only way to resolve the staggering political crisis.

But, he regretted that both the government and the Opposition had taken a negative stand on the proposed election of neutral persons (See Page 12 Col 3)

25 injured as workers clash in AJM area

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Aug 11: At least 25 persons were injured in clashes between two rival groups of workers over the quota of alternate workers in Adamjee Jute Mills area last night.

The clashes broke out at about 11 pm between pro-Awami League Jatiya Samik League and Jatiya Party-backed Jatiya Samik Party at No 1 mill gate, sources said.

Over 100 cocktails were exploded and 25 shots were fired during the clashes which spread to Dhaka Baju and Shapla Chattar areas and continued till the early morning.

The injured were admitted to different private clinics to avoid police action, sources said.

No case was filed in this connection.

MCCI suggests flexible labour market

A leading chamber has suggested reformation of the labour market by making it flexible for the workers to enjoy the benefits of market-driven growth, reports UNB.

"Implementation of the Report of the National Labour Law Commission, 1992 can be a major step in introducing the requisite flexibility in the labour market," said the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) in its latest publication.

The chamber called the report a 'unique achievement' in the sense that representatives of government, employers and workers unanimously adopted it and committed to its implementation.

However, its implementation is yet to take place although various chambers and employers' organisations have been demanding that the report be allowed to get off the ground.

"Its implementation will remove distortions which have characterised the country's labour market since its inception," the MCCI said.

The chamber viewed that labour is Bangladesh's most abundant resource which provides it comparative advantage. "For full utilisation of this comparative advantage, a flexible labour market is essential," it said.

Referring to the World Development Report 1995, the chamber said the report provides important lessons and guidelines for countries like Bangladesh where labour reforms are overdue.

The labour market in (See Page 12 Col 7)

65 killed in Guatemalan plane crash

SANAN VICENTE, El Salvador, Aug 11: A Guatemalan airliner crashed into the side of a Salvadoran volcano in a heavy rainstorm killing all 65 people aboard — the majority foreigners, officials said Thursday, reports AFP.

The Aviateca Boeing 737 jet made a fiery crash into the side of the San Vicente volcano late Wednesday, 60 kilometers (40 miles) east of San Salvador.

Officials reported locating the torn bodies of two children and 28 adults by late Thursday.

Among the crash victims were the Brazilian and Danish ambassadors to Nicaragua, officials said Thursday.

Salvadoran President Armando Calderon issued a statement expressing his sadness at the news of "such a lamentable air disaster without precedent in El Salvador."

Fresh violence claims 25 lives in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, Aug 11: Kashmiri Muslim leaders today vowed to fight together for independence from India, as 25 people were killed in a fresh wave of violence in the troubled state, officials said, reports AFP.

Both guerrilla and religious leaders told a gathering of about 100,000 Muslims at the Hazratbal Shrine here that they had overcome their differences and would take the separatist struggle "to its logical end."

"We shall fight on," thundered Yasin Malik, President of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), adding that his group had decided to join the freedom conference, an umbrella grouping of nearly 30 separatist groups.

All the differences with the freedom conference have been resolved," he said in a brief speech to frenzied slogan-shouting by the thousands who raised clenched fists in solidarity.

"This is a great step towards unity," added influential Muslim leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who also pledged with other speakers to intensify the drive to secede Kashmir, India's only Muslim majority state.

Malik's announcement followed the death of a JKLF district commander in a suspected fratricidal clash at the Hazratbal Mosque late Thursday. But the JKLF chief blamed "Indian agents" for the shooting.

The JKLF is the oldest of dozens of Muslim rebel groups fighting to end Indian rule over Kashmir.

14 fishermen rescued

From Staff Correspondent

BARISAL, Aug 11: Fourteen fishermen were rescued 16 hours after their fishing trawler sank in sea. The trawler sank in the Bay of Bengal 40 kilometres off Kalapara of Patuakhali district Wednesday evening due to bad weather. They were rescued by another trawler.

Ferry service suspended

PIROJPUR, Aug 11: Ferry service between Pirojpur and Barisal has been suspended due to some mechanical disturbance in the ferries at Togra Ferry Ghat in Sadar thana since last Tuesday. According to the officials of Roads and Highways, Togra Ferry service has only two ferries which are not in a position to operate. Of the two ferries, one has become inoperative for the last two days and another was stuck at a charland in Sadar on Wednesday, reports UNB.

3 more beheaded in S Arabia

DUBAI, Aug 11: Three men — two Turks and a Saudi Arabian — were beheaded in Saudi Arabia today for smuggling drugs, taking the number of beheadings in the Kingdom this year to 133, reports Reuter.

An interior ministry statement, carried by the official Saudi press agency, said the three men were found guilty of smuggling drugs and were beheaded in northern Saudi Arabia.