

State Dept on one-party polls

The United States wants a fully contested elections in Bangladesh as a spokesman says one-party election does not usually provide for fully participatory democracy, reports UNB.

"One-party elections don't in the abstract, obviously, provide for fully participatory democracy... That's correct," acting spokesman for the State Department Glyn Davies said.

His observation came during a briefing on Tuesday in Washington in response to a question whether one-party elections are non-democratic.

Commenting on February 15 general election, being boycotted by major opposition parties, the American spokesman said the US called on both the Opposition and the government of Bangladesh to end violence and intimidation over the poll issue.

"Our interest in that country... is in seeing the democratic process proceed and we would like very much of course to see fully participatory elections occur," he said. Asked whether the US recognises the February 15 one-party election, Davies said: "We'll wait until February 15, if there are to be elections, and see what happens... But I can't speculate about whether we recognise or don't recognise."

Poetry festival begins today

The two-day Jatya Kabita Utshab '96 (national poetry festival), organised by the Jatya Kabita Parishad begins today in the city on the theme: "Manobikotar Protyaya Kabita (poetry for humanity)".

The festival, now in its tenth year, will be inaugurated today at 2:30 pm by Begum Sufia Kamal at the Kabita Chhatra, a make-shift stage in front of the TSC on the Dhaka University campus.

Poets Syed Shamsul Haq, Mohan Raihan, Mazharul Islam, Rafiqul Azad, Muhammad Samad and Rabul Hussain will also attend the opening ceremony.

The Parishad will place wreaths at the Central Shahid Minar and the grave of Kazi Nazrul Islam at 2 pm, before the inaugural ceremony. Presentation of self-composed poems and a recitation session, are scheduled for today at 4 pm and 8 pm respectively.

JS polls candidate beaten up in Bogra

From Our Correspondent RAJSHAHIL, Jan 31: Mirja Salim Reza, a candidate of the Gono Adhikar Front in the coming parliamentary elections from Bogra-6 constituency, was beaten up last afternoon.

He was admitted into the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital in critical condition. Mirja Reza was attacked by a group of people when he was going to address a press conference in Bogra Press Club.

Police recovered him in unconscious state and sent to Mohammad Ali Hospital. He was later shifted to the Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

Show cause

From Page 1 not only violative of equal opportunity of the petitioners in the service of Bangladesh but this also tends to undermine the concept of Bangladesh and the Laws Continuance Enforcement Order.

"Persons who after the Proclamation of Independence, ignoring the clarion call of the Mujib Nagar Government during the Liberation War joined the Pakistan government, cannot be treated as being in the service of Bangladesh since 26th March, 1971," submitted Barrister Islam.

He also submitted that the order passed soon after the Liberation War was consistent to the concept of Bangladesh and its sovereignty and in line with proclamation of Independence. But the order was undone by the two SROs, he added.

Barrister Islam further submitted that those who could not be absorbed in the Bangladesh Civil Service under the law with the change of government managed to rehabilitate themselves in 1977 under a new regime.

"Since the rehabilitation they cautioned by using the lobby of a rested quarter and manipulated these SROs to be issued under which they now claim to enjoy seniority since 1971," he submitted.

Barrister Amirul Islam was assisted by Advocate Shirin Sharmin Chowdhury and Idrisur Rahman.

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Police picking up a student during their raid in the Jagannath Hall of the Dhaka University yesterday. — Star photo



Police beat up students inside their rooms at the Jagannath Hall of the Dhaka University yesterday. — Star photo

Hasina tells newsmen One-party polls to create illegal JS

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina yesterday said "a one-party farcical election" would only create an illegal parliament and a government without credibility both at home and abroad, reports UNB.

"That illegal government will not have any right to pass any law in that illegal parliament," she said while exchanging views with journalists from national dailies and news agencies at her party's central office before the 11th.

Hasina, who is leading the 22-month-old agitation for elections under a non-party neutral government, said the ruling BNP just wanted to pass the electoral race by holding a farce in the name of elections.

"The government and its subservient Election Commission must stop the elections... This will not be an election at all, where about 90 per cent voters, I think, will not turn up at the polling centres," the Awami League President said.

Hasina believed, there was still a scope for a solution of the crisis if "this farcical election" is postponed, the Prime Minister resigns and an election is arranged under a neutral non-party caretaker government allowing all opposition parties and voters to join it.

"The BNP government has no right to snatch the voting rights of the people on the plea of the Constitution," she said, adding that the government was talking about Constitution — but violating it time and again for its own interest. "The Constitution is for the people."

"None will be allowed to play with the basic rights of the people," Hasina said. "The government is going to stage a farce with the killers of 1975."

Referring to the killing of a Juba League worker in Jhalakathi during the combined arms recovery drive, the Awami League chief demanded return of the army to the barracks.

Asked whether western diplomats had put any pressure on the government,

5 bodies seek EC's permission to monitor polls

Five organisations have so far sought Election Commission's permission to work as observers in the coming parliamentary polls scheduled for February 15. Election Commission sources said, reports BSS.

The organisations include the Fair Election Monitoring Alliance (FEMA), Coordinating Council for Human Rights in Bangladesh (CCHRB), Fair Observation Forum (FOF), Bangladesh Ain Adhikar Trust and the Human Rights and Legal Aid Association. Of the five, the Human Rights and Legal Aid Association is located in Sylhet.

Indian intruders chop Bangladeshi with machete

MEHERPUR, Jan 31: Several Indian nationals, backed by BSF, this morning intruded into Bangladesh territory at Rudrapur, 15 kilometers from here, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the intruders chopped one Omar Ali with machete at village Fathpur and took away his belongings. Ali was rushed to Kushtia hospital in a critical condition.

On Monday, some 200 Indian nationals from village Vatpara of Nadiya district illegally walked into the same village and tried to take away shallow tubewells from the fields.

Villagers blamed the local BDR personnel for not preventing the Indian nationals from trespassing on the Bangladesh territory.

Raid on halls

From Page 1 Campus sources said, many rooms at the Jagannath and SM hall were ransacked during the hour-long police raid, apparently in a cleansing bid before today's opening ceremony of the Ekushey Book Fair.

Police said they arrested 95 students from the halls and the Dhaka University areas. Bangladesh Chhatra League, which had earlier vowed to resist the PM's arrival in the DU area, brought out a procession on the campus and later held a rally in front of the Bangla Academy.

The BCL activists then tried to hoist a black flag at the entry of the Bangla Academy, police chased them. Following a pitched battle between the activists and police there, scores of plainclothesmen wearing bullet-proof vests were seen disembarking from a white Palero Jeep and opening fire from rifles, shotguns and different small handguns.

The two sides traded some 200 rounds of shot as police proceeded towards the East Bhaban and October Smriti Bhaban of the Jagannath Hall at around 2:55 pm, witnesses said.

They said the police first broke the main gates of hall and opened fire to make their way into the rooms to pick up the resident students.

Students alleged police ransacked their rooms and rounded up over 100 students after beating them severely. There were numerous reports of physical assault on students. Police allegedly used blankets to wrap up and beat some students, also kicking them indiscriminately.

Blood marks were seen on the beds, floors and stairs. Canteens of the halls were also searched. Firing rubber bullets, police entered those ransacking everything on their way, campus sources said.

Those rounded up after the raids were seen lying flat on the floors, most of them injured, they added.

The DUTA claimed that at least 42 rooms in the Jagannath and SM halls were ransacked by police, who picked up innocent students.

Hartal

From Page 1 Prior to the liaison committee meeting a front ranking opposition leader told The Daily Star that a "tough" agitation programme including a 96-hour hartal from February 13 be announced to unseat the BNP government and to resist the one-party election.

"This time the hartal, which will coincide with the polling date, will be rigorously enforced and people will be called to remain indoors and not to go out for casting votes," the leader said who returned to the capital after a mass contact in the countryside.

"We are now ready to launch a tougher agitation programme," he said.

The opposition's current phase of 10-day programme which included rallies, demonstrations, mass contact and exchange of views with professional groups ended yesterday.

Directive to BNP leaders, workers

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) yesterday directed leaders, workers and supporters of the party and its front organisations to take necessary organisational programmes in a peaceful manner for creating public opinion against the anti-democratic activities of a section of opposition political parties, reports BSS.

A press release signed by the BNP Office Secretary, Nazrul Islam Khan said: "Attention has been drawn that leaders, workers and supporters of a few political parties in the name of imposing their democratic rights have engaged in terrorist and non-political activities, creating obstruction to the democratic functions of other political parties."

PM distributes certificates to DSCSC graduates

Prime Minister Begum Khaleida Zia yesterday said Bangladesh is a small state in terms of the size of its territory but it is discharging a very important responsibility on global plane, reports UNB.

"We became able to establish ourselves as a self-respecting and hard-working nation in the world through ceaseless efforts," she said. "We have to continue to work together for maintaining and further boosting the honour and prestige which we have achieved," she said.

Begum Zia was addressing the graduation ceremony of the 20th Army Staff Course, 14th Naval Staff Course and 16th Air Staff Course of the Defence Services Command and Staff College (DSCSC) at Mirpur in the city in the morning.

A total of 109 student-officers, including 23 foreign students from China, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Zambia, graduated in the aforesaid courses.

The Prime Minister distributed certificates among the graduating student-officers at the function.

Begum Zia said the independent and sovereign Bangladesh was established through a blood-lit armed struggle and paid rich tributes to the memories of those who had embraced martyrdom in the War of Liberation.

Focusing on Bangladesh's foreign policy, which attaches great importance to the SAARC, she said: "Friendship with all — is our policy."

"We believe in peaceful solution of all disputes. We are firmly committed to upholding the ideals of the SAARC," she said and expressed her optimism that a new horizon of knowledge and development can be opened through the SAARC.

The Prime Minister told the graduates that they completed the most prestigious and important course of the armed forces through tireless labour.

Begum Zia said there are three branches here for imparting training through exchange of thoughts, ideas and merit of the officers of the three services.

"The DSCSC thus provides a unique opportunity to our three services to work on a single platform," Begum Zia said and hoped that the process of this coordination would be maintained at all stages of their professional activities.

Commandant of the DSCSC, Major General Hasan Mashud Chowdhury, also addressed the function, attended by ministers, diplomats, chiefs of three services, high civil and military officials and dignitaries.

Sonargaon Hotel incident: 28 held

From Staff Correspondent Twenty-eight employees of the Sonargaon Hotel were arrested yesterday following a case filed by the General Manager (GM) of the hotel regarding Tuesday's incident in which 15 officials of the hotel were reportedly beaten up.

The arrested persons include President of the employees union, Dewan Nasimur Rahman, vice-presidents Alibuddin Gazi and Abdul Gani, joint secretary Delwar Hossain, sports secretary Ahsan Habib Khawaja and treasurer Mirza Akbar Ali, police said. The arrested include six outside the list given by the General Manager.

Police are looking for the remaining of the 45 who have been implicated in the incident by the GM of the hotel. In his First Information Report (FIR) filed with the Tejgaon thana, said between 25 and 30 outsiders entered the hotel lobby Tuesday with pistols, daggers, and other weapons and immediately some office bearers of the union and employees entered his office and started abusing him.

"I tried to pacify them. As a result they became furious and in presence of those outsiders the above union bearers started hitting me. Some of them started breaking the furniture of my office including the big glass panel. I had to run off through the broken window in order to save my life," he said in the FIR.

"At the same time a group of militant employees headed by Motahar Ali, organising secretary of the Union, and some of the union executives entered the room of Assistant General Manager Shahid Hamid and they started to beat him," mentioned Hamano.

"As a result he was severely injured and he had to seek medical help," he said.

The Midnight File

Greece, Turkey back off from military showdown

ATHENS, Jan 31: Greece and Turkey began withdrawing warships from the eastern Aegean sea following a US-mediated agreement, Greek Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos said today, reports Reuter.

Nicaraguan hostage drama over: 107 held

MANAGUA, Jan 31: Police arrested 107 students today and confiscated 520 home-made bombs after ending a 12-hour hostage drama at the foreign ministry, authorities said. National police chief Fernando Caldera said 100 anti-riot police stormed the building and made the arrests from among some 30 students who had occupied the ministry Tuesday afternoon demanding an increase in public university budgets, reports AFP.

JP urges govt employees to go on leave from Feb 14-16

By Staff Correspondent Jatya Party has reiterated its plan to resist the electioneering in connection with general elections scheduled to be held on February 15.

The ruling party will have to bear all the responsibilities for the destruction of lives and property of the commonman, said acting Chairman of JP Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury at a rally at the South Gate of Baitul Mukarram yesterday.

He urged the people to resist the elections and appealed to government servants at all levels to go on leave from February 14 to 16.

Presided over by JP city unit chief Col (ret'd) A Malek, the rally was also addressed by, among others, party central leaders Begum Raushan Ershad, Moudud Ahmed, Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Shah Moazzem Hossain and secretary general Anwar Hossain Manju.

BSS adds: Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury urged the foreign diplomats based in Dhaka to play a neutral role in the present political crisis centering on the coming general election.

He said the partisan role of the Western diplomats would be regarded as nothing but an 'unfortunate act' on other part.

Referring to the recent statement of the US State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns, the Jatya Party leader said if possible, the foreign diplomats based in Dhaka should impress upon the government to resign, but they should not show their partisan attitude.

EC office set on fire

COMILLA, Jan 31: Burchinghana Election Office of the district was set on fire by some unidentified men today, reports UNB.

Officials said that the miscreants stormed the EC office at about 12:45 pm and set ablaze some furniture and valuable documents of the office.

A case was filed with Burchinghana. Pending disposal of the rule, the court directed the respondents to allow the petitioner to release the said imported goods, imported on November 25, 1995 by payment of duties and taxes the basis of CRF certificate pursuant to SRO No. 316.

Hartal observed in Jhalakathi

From Staff Correspondent BARISAL, Jan 31: A dawn-to-dusk hartal was observed at Jhalakathi town today at the call of the three major opposition parties there to protest the death of an Opposition worker after his arrest, Tuesday.

Ashraf Ali Howladar, 30, a Juba League worker was picked up from his Baraikaran village home and taken to the Nalchiti camp of the security forces under the arms recovery drive. Ashraf was later taken to the Nalchiti thana health complex when doctors declared him dead.

Local units of the Awami League, Jatya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami has also called a dawn-to-dusk hartal at Nalchiti tomorrow to protest the death.

UNB adds: Postmortem of Ashraf was conducted at Jhalakathi health complex morgue. After the post-mortem the elder brother of Ashraf appealed the authorities to hand over the body, but the plea went unheeded. A scheduled namaj-e-zanaja arranged by the opposition parties also could not be held.

The opposition activists brought out another procession in the afternoon as the authorities did not hand over the dead body to the family members of Ashraf.

PM: Book fair

From Page 1 to the Dhaka University was closed and traffic was diverted towards other directions.

Bangla Academy and the Bangladesh Book Sellers and Publishers' Association have jointly organised the fair in which 474 stalls have been set up.

The Academy authorities have allowed sales of books only in the authorised stalls while erection of unauthorised stalls, playing of cassette recorders and sale of obscene pictures have been prohibited.

The fair will remain open to members of the public from 10 am until 5 pm everyday.

11 get life-term for killing one

KISHOREGANJ, Jan 31: Eleven people were sentenced today to life-term in jail for killing one person in Nikli thana in 1990, reports UNB.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Mohammad Shahidullah delivered the judgement convicting the accused of murdering Mohammad Nurul Huq of village Dawlatpur.

The court also instructed the higher authorities to take departmental action against the investigation Officer of the case, Fayezuddin Ahmed, for his nepotism and corruption during the inquiry.

Among the convicts, Mohammad Nurul Islam, Hafizuddin, Abdul Hamid, Shukur Mahmood, Fazlu, Abdul Ali and Anar are in custody. Shahabuddin, Nuru, Taheruddin and Giasuddin were tried in absentia.

After examining 15 witnesses and records, the judge pronounced the verdict, also fining the convicts Tk 5,000 each.

However, the court made the sentences concurrent.

PSI facility

From Page 1 and Justice K M Hasan. The Division Bench issued rule nisi on the government to show cause as to why the SRO No: 215 refusing to accept Clean Report of Findings (CRF) certificate in order to assess Customs duty on the imported consignments of the petitioner, should not be declared illegal and as to why the respondents should not be directed to levy and collect Customs duty, VAT and other taxes in respect of the said imported consignment on the basis of CRF certificate as per Section 25A of Customs Act, 1969 and the SRO No 316.

Pending disposal of the rule, the court directed the respondents to allow the petitioner to release the said imported goods, imported on November 25, 1995 by payment of duties and taxes the basis of CRF certificate pursuant to SRO No. 316.

Barrister Amir-Ul-Islam, appearing on behalf of the petitioner, submitted that the notification is inconsistent to Section 25A of the Customs Act and purports to change or reverse the thrust and the policy of the Finance Act 1995.

VC says

From Page 1 day. "Neither a bullet was fired nor anybody died on the campus," Dr Anwar quoted the VC as telling him.

Dr Anwar further said that the VC informed him that police said there was none named Foton Chandra Sutradhar in their custody.

Witnesses, however, claimed to have seen Foton Chandra a third year student of physics in DU, being carried in a police van with severe injuries and both his hands tied.

EC decision

From Page 1 peared for the petitioner while the defendant himself pleaded his case.

Justice Khan emphasised that as per Article 13 (A) of the election related laws, signing of such a declaration was mandatory.

The CEC, however, pointed out from another Article that it was not justifiable to cancel a nomination paper on such a minor ground.

It was learnt from a top official of the EC that 'most' of the candidates in this election did not submit such declarations.

Misbahur said that after he had won the appeal, he requested the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Maulvibazar to hand him over the election symbol, which the DC refused to do.

The DC, waiting in the next room, was immediately summoned before the EC. Election Commissioner Justice M A Jalil read to a letter written by the DC to the EC following the order from the CEC to restore Misbahur as a candidate.

The CEC then told the DC that he had no right to question the decision of the Commission. Instead of carrying out the order, you started to dwell on the law point of our verdict, he said adding, Your business is to look at the order of the Commission.

The DC however defended himself saying that he had written the letter to check whether the taxed directive was issued from the EC or not.