

Financial help sought for garments units

President of the Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) Redwan Ahmed yesterday said that the 21-month long political impasse had nearly destroyed the export oriented readymade garments industries of Bangladesh, reports BSS.

As of today, he said, about 1000 factories are closed and almost 500 thousand workers have lost their means to survive while the existence of several hundred entrepreneurs has been threatened. In a statement, Redwan said that the factories had lost 170 production days due to frequent harts and non-cooperation movement while this production loss culminated in total liabilities of Tk 42.5 lakhs for an average size factory.

The port closure had initiated further doom adding fuel to the flame, as a result to which 90 per cent of the existing factories faced full or partial closure during the last one month.

He said adding it is found from a preliminary survey done by the BGMEA that almost every alternative factory had suffered cancellation of orders or faced air shipment at their own cost. The factory overheads (salary, rent, gas, electricity and telephone/fax bills) are unpaid for two months in most of the factories.

Due to cancellation of orders and for the delay in receiving the raw materials in

transit, about 60 per cent of the factories will remain without any production for at least two months even after the normalcy, he added.

In view of the financial problems, he sought financial supports to put the garments factories on their wheels and urged to provide four months working capital to each individual factory at lowest possible simple interest rate repayable within 3 years and said the amount of working capital for an average size factory should be Tk 10 lakhs per month.

In case of demand/forced loan due to cancellation of orders, the demand loan sum, should be converted into capital loan in the name of the factory with a repayment period of 5 years at simple rate of interest, he suggested.

In case of air shipment, the concerned bank should pay the air freight to the carrier/agent by creating short term loan in the name of the factory at simple rate of interest. Payments of royalty to Biman and landing charges to civil aviation should be exempted for the time being, the BGMEA president demanded.

He urged for the rescheduling of the outstanding project loan with immediate effect as may be requested by individual factory.

Interest on overdue import liabilities occasioned by the closure of the port should be exempted, he suggested.



Awami League president Sheikh Hasina addressing party leaders of Dhaka and its adjoining districts at the party's Dhanmondi office yesterday. — Star photo

LDF, BJD, BML meet Chief Adviser

The leaders of the Left Democratic Front (LDF), Bangladesh Janata Dal (BJD) and Bangladesh Muslim League (BML) held separate meetings with Chief Adviser Muhammad Habibur Rahman at his office last night, reports BSS.

During the meeting the leaders of the political parties exchanged views with the Chief Adviser on the holding of a free and fair election and made certain suggestions for achieving the objective.

The LDF delegation led by Rashed Khan Menon expressed the hope that the present drive for recovering illegal arms would continue. They called for eliminating the influence of black money and debarring the bank loan defaulters from contesting the election.

The 12-member LDF delegation included, among others, Haider Akbar Khan Rano, A F M Mahbubul Haq, Moinuddin Khan Badal, Kazi Aref Ahmed and, Hasanul Haq Inu.

Bangladesh Janata Dal (BJD) president K M Obaidur Rahman demanded registration of all eligible voters who had been left out of the voters list. He said a consensus among the politicians would help restore peace in the country and emphasised the need for early recovery of illegal arms.

The seven-member delegation included, among others, Begum Shahida Khan, Rajib-Uddowla and Khandkar Abdul Awai.

The BML leaders led by party secretary general Alhaj Mohammad Zamir Ali welcomed the on-going drive for recovering illegal arms and demanded reconstitution of the Election Commission.

They called for news coverage of all political parties in radio and TV.

The six-member BML delegation included, among others, Prof. Delwar Hossain Nannu and Advocate Khandkar A Quyum.

Aid Club
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ment was alright, but after that it did not pick up as work on the aided projects were hampered, said an official of the Finance Ministry.

But the aid commitment level till February this year was higher than the same period of last year.

Till February this year, the commitment was 886 million US dollars against 617 million dollars during same period of last year.

Keeping with the low aid disbursement level, the project aid disbursement target has been reduced to 1101 million dollars against the original size of 1250 million dollars.

Meanwhile, since an interim budget is likely to be needed before a political government takes over, ERD has notified the Finance Ministry of a possible 1270 million dollars aid disbursement to be included in the ADP for fiscal 1996-97, official sources said.



Ghulam Rasool Kar (R), state chief of the ruling Indian Congress Party, files his nomination paper for the forthcoming parliamentary elections at the District Magistrate Office in northern Kashmir where Muslim rebels have threatened to thwart the elections at all cost. — AFP/UNB photo

'Mad cow' fever infects cosmetic industry

PARIS, Apr 3: Fear of 'mad cow' disease has spread to the unlikely sector of cosmetics, reports AFP.

Bovine extracts are used by almost all cosmetic manufacturers, except those who specify that their ingredients come solely from plant or marine life.

Bovine tissue has numerous uses. Collagen (used in cosmetic surgery implants), elastin (hydrating creams), keratin (shampoos) and bovine grease (soaps and lipsticks) are only one of its uses in the cosmetic industry.

Even though the French cosmetic industry introduced a ban in 1990 on bovine derivatives from countries that pose a health risk such as Britain the European cosmetic industry took a further step on Saturday by asking its members not to use certain bovine extracts regardless of their geographical origin.

These extracts include tissues taken from the eyes, marrow and brain, which all carry a high risk of infection. Although few cosmetic products are currently made using these particular extracts, the European cosmetic industry has asked its members to withdraw these types of products from shops.

The only new measure taken by authorities in this sector has been the ban on a

specific type of injectable collagen used in cosmetic surgery, according to health experts, the origin of this derivative is not guaranteed.

In France, the cosmetic industry only use products with a known source with certificate stating the origin. If a certificate is not provided, the extracts are treated to kill any possible germs.

At the beginning of last week, when 'mad cow disease' hysteria exploded, the French fraud squad launched an enquiry into whether the existing regulations are respected by laboratories.

Toiletries, beauty and hair products represent more than half the French cosmetic and perfume industry turnover six billion dollars of a total of 56.1 billion.

France is a market leader in the cosmetic industry with three large brand names, L'oreal (including Lancome and Vichy), Sanofi (including Yves Saint-Laurent and Yves Rocher) and Lvmh (including Christian Dior and Givenchy).

The European Commission last week imposed a ban on beef products from Britain because of fears that 'mad cow disease', or bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), can be transmitted to humans as Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease, a fatal brain disorder.

Opinion poll shows

Cong to get 191 of 545 Lok Sabha seats

NEW DELHI, Apr 3: India will end up with a hung parliament on staggered general elections beginning this month, according to a poll published today, reports AFP.

The Congress (I) Party of Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao will win only 191 seats and will not get a majority in the 545-member Lok Sabha, the lowest house of parliament, the survey of voters by Outlook Magazine found.

The main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) will improve its previous performance and finish with 170 seats, according to the poll last month of 15,450 voters in 15 of India's 25 states.

But the BJP would fall short of its aim of sweeping 250 seats.

A centrist-leftist coalition which is presenting itself as the 'third force' will bag 139 seats while the remainder would go to smaller parties.

The 'opinion poll suggests strongly that the fears of a hung (parliament) and stability of the next government are not entirely unfounded,' Outlook said.

An estimated 600 million voters are eligible to vote in the April-May ballot.

Twenty-nine per cent of those polls said Rao, the

Congress president, was the best bet for the prime ministerial post, followed closely by BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee.

The magazine's findings mirrored the predictions of most pundits who have warned that the world's largest democracy was heading for a fractured house for the third time in succession since 1989.

The Executive Committee of Bangladesh District Election Officers' Association which held its meeting at the conference room of the Election Commission yesterday demanded immediate removal of the Additional Secretary (Election), reports UNB.

It also noted with concern that the Additional Secretary (Election) is carrying out undesirable activities because he has remained posted in the Election Commission, for the past two decades.

It also called for making all posts of the Election Commission Secretariat transferrable.

Sect employees concerned at 'threats'

By Staff Correspondent
Bangladesh Secretariat Officials-Employees Liaison Committee, in a statement yesterday expressed concern at the 'threats' by a certain political quarter not to be involved in 'illegal activities'.

The Committee observed that if activities like giving threats over telephone and bomb hurling at officials residences continued it might create new crisis.

"We are delighted that important role played by the officers and employees at a very crucial juncture of national life helped overcome the political crisis", it said.

The Committee requested the government officers and employees throughout the country to work extra hours and even on holidays if necessary in the interest of the people.

Ctg port : Army, navy withdrawn

From Staff Correspondent
CHITTAGONG, Apr 3: The army and navy contingents deployed at the Chittagong port for maintenance of security and law and order during the non-cooperation movement were withdrawn today, port sources said.

Congestion at the port continued to ease following intensified round-the-clock operation. The port will be free from congestion in a week, acting chairman of the Chittagong Port Authority Capt Zahir Uddin Mahmud told The Daily Star today. "We have taken all out measures to ensure faster service to the cargo ships." Operation at the port began on March 27.

Some of the ships stranded during the non-cooperation have already sailed out after delivery of cargo, he added.

Now, only five container ships are waiting at the outer anchorage while 15 container vessels stayed there during the recent stalemate, he added.

A total of 21 vessels including five container ships are being handled at the port jetties now while 17 others arrived at the outer anchorage in the last few days, port sources said.

Delivery of cargo to and from the port is also going on in full-swing, the sources said.

JP only tested nationalist force: Mizan

Jatiya Party acting Chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury yesterday said that his party was the only tested 'nationalist force' and urged the people to rally round it to consolidate democracy and independence, reports UNB.

Addressing a rally of Jatiya Tarun Party, he said BNP has ruined the national unity for its narrow political outlook and caprice for last five years. As a result BNP was rejected by the people and turned into an 'evil' political force.

Chowdhury said forthcoming election would not be fair without the release of JP Chairman and former president Ershad. He urged the caretaker government to take necessary steps for his release.

Presided over by Iqbal Hossain Raju, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Col (Retd) A Malek, Syed Tarek, Shaikhul Islam Babul, Abul Khasem, Zahurul Islam Zahir and Arif Khan.

Arms recovered, 7 held in city

By Staff Correspondent
Police arrested seven persons and recovered arms and ammunition in an eight-hour raid at Kalyanpur and Paikpara in the city early yesterday.

Mirpur police began the special arms recovery drive at around 2 am and found a sawed-off rifle, a revolver and 64 rounds different types of bullets, police said.

The arrested were identified as Prakash Kumar Biswas, 28, Mirza Mahmud Hasan alias Litan, 28, Al Noor Alias Prince, 24, Fazul Karim, 26, Mokarrom Hossain, 22, Ramesh Kumar Biswas, 28 and Shiba, 26. The arrested persons, some of whom are wanted in connection with murder cases, were possessing the illegal arms for a long time.

Three separate cases have been filed with Mirpur thana.

Zaker Party calls for restraint

By Staff Correspondent
The Zaker Party has welcomed the formation of the caretaker government, says a press release.

At a meeting of the party's standing committee yesterday to evaluate the country's current political situation, the members expressed the opinion that the nation has been saved from inevitable danger through handing over power to the caretaker government lawfully.

The meeting called upon the political parties to exercise restraint for peace and economic development. With party chairman Mostafa Ameer Faisal in the chair, the meeting was attended by members of the standing committee including its chief policy planner Mahfuzul Haq Mujaddidi.

The Midnight File

Schoolbus crashes into train in India: 10 killed

NEW DELHI, Apr 3: At least 10 students were killed today when their schoolbus crashed into a speeding train in the northern state of Punjab, the Press Trust of India said, reports AFP.

Three killed in city incidents

By Staff Correspondent
One person was murdered while two others were killed in an accident in the city yesterday.

Ruhul Alam, 43, an employee of Balaka cinema hall was found dead at Shajahan Road in Mohammadpur early yesterday.

Alam went out of his house at North Dhanmondi Tuesday afternoon but not returned, according to family members.

The family members went to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) at around 2:00 am yesterday after getting information that Alam was admitted there in a critical condition, hospital sources said.

An unidentified person took Alam to an unconscious state to the hospital where doctors declared him dead.

There were marks of injuries in Alam's head and thighs, hospital sources added.

Meanwhile, two persons identified as Abul Jabbar

Ten advisers

From Page 1
The prime task of the caretaker government will be to extend all possible aid and assistance to the Election Commission for holding the general elections peacefully, fairly and impartially.

During its tenure the caretaker government shall not take any policy decision.

The Chief Adviser shall have the status, and shall be entitled to the remuneration and privileges, of a prime minister, and an adviser shall have the status, and shall be entitled to the remuneration and privileges, of a minister, the Constitution said.

The non-party caretaker government will be dissolved on the date on which the prime minister enters upon his office after the formation of the new parliament, according to the Constitution.

Another dacoity

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occupants of their belongings. The dacoits fired at a jeep killing a passenger, Nazimuddin, aged 40, and critically wounding another.

They then fled with the valuables and Tk 3 lakh.

The injured, Kamal, has been admitted to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital and a case has been filed with the Cox's Bazar police.

In a similar incident on the highway at Kamatia Darga early yesterday morning, at least 12 persons were injured and valuables worth Tk 5 lakh looted from the passengers of passing vehicles by a gang of 20 masked and armed robbers.

CEC ready

From Page 1
office. During the meeting which lasted for a brief period, the CEC was reported to have briefed the Chief Adviser on the current position of the Election Commission in view of the coming polls.

About his resignation, the CEC had earlier said that the President of the Chief Adviser of the caretaker government would have to tell him formally so that he could decide.

Meanwhile, activities at the Election Commission has come to a near, standstill amid confusion among the officials. It is not clear to many EC officials whether the CEC would relinquish his office or continue, sources in the EC secretariat said.

Many officials also fear that the possible restructuring of the EC would cost them their posts. Some police parties including the AL and the JP have also demanded restructuring of the EC.

"We know some major changes are going to take place but time is running out fast. We cannot do anything until something is decided," a high official said.

BNP drive

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strengthen the party units across the country and get well-prepared for the coming polls. The party chief was giving them directives for sinking differences among themselves and gearing up political programmes and mass contact.

Meanwhile, the central office of the BNP is crowded with party leaders and workers and those of different social forces supporting the party every day, especially in the evening, when Begum Zia attends the office.

BNP is also preparing to organise public meetings in the capital and other cities soon.

Yunus invited to symposium in Cairo

By Staff Correspondent

Dr Mohammad Yunus, chief of the Grameen Bank and newly appointed adviser of the caretaker government, has been invited by Prince Talal Bin Abdul Aziz, President of the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organisations to attend a symposium in Cairo to highlight the activities of the Grameen Bank, according to a message from the Bangladesh embassy in Saudi Arabia.

The symposium, likely to take place sometime this month, is expected to be participated by intellectuals, bank managers and businessmen from Arab countries. The symposium will study the possibility of creating a bank similar to the Grameen Bank in the Arab region.

Dr Yunus when contacted yesterday said that he will inform the organisers that the proposed time for the symposium may not be convenient for him because of his current assignment as an adviser of the caretaker government. He said he will request for a change in the timing. He said the Grameen Bank idea has already been replicated in Egypt and Lebanon.

Asked about his reaction on being an adviser, Dr Yunus said, that it is a daunting task where the primary responsibility would be to restore law and order and get the wheels of the economy moving.

Portfolios

From Page 1

aster management and relief fund.

Maj Gen (Retd) Abdur Rahman Khan, adviser: Ministries of health and family welfare and religious affairs.

Dr Wahiduddin Mahmud, adviser: Ministries of finance and planning.

Syed Manzoor Elahi, adviser: Ministries of communication, shipping, civil aviation and tourism, post and telecommunications and housing and public works.

Dr Nazma Chowdhury, adviser: Ministries of labour and manpower, social welfare and women and children affairs.

Dr Jamilur Reja Chowdhury, adviser: Ministries of power, energy and mineral resources and water resources.

BNP: Corruptions

From Page 1
Islamic trial of former BNP ministers for their alleged corrupt practices.

"It's not right to speak of anything about the (former BNP) ministers without substantiating it by proper documents," he said.

Commenting on the newly-appointed advisers of the caretaker government, the BNP Secretary General said: "We hope the advisers would perform their duties with total neutrality."

Reacting to the charges brought against the BNP by its political opponents that the party was conspiring to foil elections under the non-party caretaker government, Salam Talukdar said: "We held the February 15 polls and passed the caretaker bill in the sixth Parliament despite the Opposition's threat on our lives. Later, the new law regarding the caretaker government was accepted by all political parties and others concerned. Have we done all these things to foil the polls under a caretaker government? Rather, we made constitutional provision for a free and fair elections under a caretaker government."

Asked on his party's ultimatum which expired Tuesday, seeking action against some government secretaries, whom the BNP accused of siding with a particular political party, the BNP secretary general said: "You understand that it was a mere political statement. In this context, he quoted

India conveys best wishes to caretaker govt

NEW DELHI, Apr 3: The government of India today conveyed its best wishes to the caretaker government in Bangladesh with retired Chief Justice Habibur Rahman as the Chief Adviser to the President, reports BSS.

In a statement issued here by the External Publicity Division of the Ministry of External Affairs, the government expressed the hope that the formation of the non-party caretaker government will lead to restoration of normalcy in the country and enable the democratic process of elections to go forward."

The statement further said, "India's policy towards Bangladesh is motivated by friendship and a desire to develop cooperative ties between the two countries. It will be our endeavour to further the dialogue between our two countries to work for giving impetus to Indo-Bangladesh relations."

The seven-member delegation included, among others, Begum Shahida Khan, Rajib-Uddowla and Khandkar Abdul Awai.

The BML leaders led by party secretary general Alhaj Mohammad Zamir Ali welcomed the on-going drive for recovering illegal arms and demanded reconstitution of the Election Commission.

They called for news coverage of all political parties in radio and TV.

The six-member BML delegation included, among others, Prof. Delwar Hossain Nannu and Advocate Khandkar A Quyum.

The meeting was held at the party office with its president, Dr Kamal Hossain in the chair. Earlier, the team leaders congratulated Chief Adviser Muhammad Habibur Rahman and members of his advisory council.

In a resolution, the Gono Forum proposed for a consensus of all political parties on a single 'code of conduct' in the greater interest of holding a free and fair election free from the influence of black money and illegal arms.

The meeting also proposed to make a provision in the code of conduct for banning the propagation of communalism in the country.

On BNP's preparation to contest the coming elections, Salam Talukdar told the reporters: "It will begin after the schedule for the polls is announced. Now we're taking organisational preparations. We've meantime requested the Chief Adviser to maintain law and order so that we can smoothly go ahead with our political programmes."

Replying to another question on reconstitution of the Election Commission, the BNP leader said, "It is the prerogative of the President and the Chief Adviser."

BSS adds: The BNP Secretary General yesterday congratulated the President, the Chief Adviser and the advisers on completion of the formation of the 11-member caretaker government for holding free and fair elections.

The BNP Secretary General, in a statement, extended the whole-hearted support and co-operation of BNP to the non-party caretaker government in the accomplishment of his mandated task.

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