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80 days to the 3rd Millennium

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Will they continue as ministers?

By Nazmul Ashraf

Losing their Jatiya Sangsad seats, Dr. Mohammad Alauddin and Hasibur Rahman Swapan now plan to join the ruling Awami League and contest by-polls to return to the parliament.

For the last 20 months, the two have been in the Cabinet as minister of state and deputy minister respectively while still being MPs officially belonging to the opposition BNP.

Whether the two will retain their seats on the Council of Ministers was still not clear after the EC verdict stripping their parliamentary seats.

By definition, they became "technocrat" ministers. But the composition of the Cabinet raised questions about their future.

The law permits one tenth of the present 38-strong Council of Ministers to be from among non-MPs. With the addition of the two, the number of technocrat ministers is now four. Finance Minister SAMS Kibria and State Minister for Planning M K Alamgir were the only non-MP members of the Cabinet.

"I've accepted the Election Commission's verdict and have no plan to challenge it in the Supreme Court," Swapan said in his reaction to the EC judgement. Dr Alauddin could not be reached for his reaction.

Senior Awami League leader - See Page 11 Col 7

EC verdict on floor-crossing JS seats of Swapan, Alauddin vacant

By Staff Correspondent

The Election Commission yesterday declared the Jatiya Sangsad seats of BNP lawmakers Dr. Md Alauddin and Hasibur Rahman Swapan vacant with immediate effect.

The two MPs joined the government of Sheikh Hasina against their party decision in February last year.

The seats of Mr. Hasibur Rahman Swapan MP, elected from Sirajganj-7 constituency



Swapan



Alauddin

and Dr. Md. Alauddin MP, elected from Rajshahi-5 constituency, stand vacated with immediate effect. Chief Election Commissioner Mohammad Abu Hena said in the verdict in the much talked about floor-crossing case.

The three-member Election Commission headed by Abu Hena heard the case.

Flanked by Commissioners Mstaque Ahmed Chowdhury

and Abidur Rahman, the CEC also read out a portion of judgement at the EC office yesterday morning. It said: "Considering the facts and circumstances of the case and the law involved, we are of the opinion that the opposite parties (Swapan and Alauddin), by their conduct, have resigned from BNP, the party which nominated them in the general election held in June, 1996."

The Commission said the seats of the MPs stand vacated under Article 70 (1) of Bangladesh Constitution.

The Article says: "A person elected as a member of Parliament in an election in which he was nominated as a candidate by a political party shall vacate his seat if he resigns from that party or votes in Parliament against that party."

The Commission sent a copy of the judgement to the Speaker yesterday afternoon, a top EC official told The Daily Star.

As per law, the Speaker is to make a gazette notification on vacation of the two JS seats.

The EC has to hold by-election to the seats in 90 days from

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Cabinet okays proposal for reserved women seats for another 10 years

By Staff Correspondent

The Cabinet yesterday approved, in principle, a draft bill providing for a 10-year extension of the constitutional provision for 30 reserved seats for women in Jatiya Sangsad.

The decision was taken at the weekly meeting of Cabinet yesterday morning with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

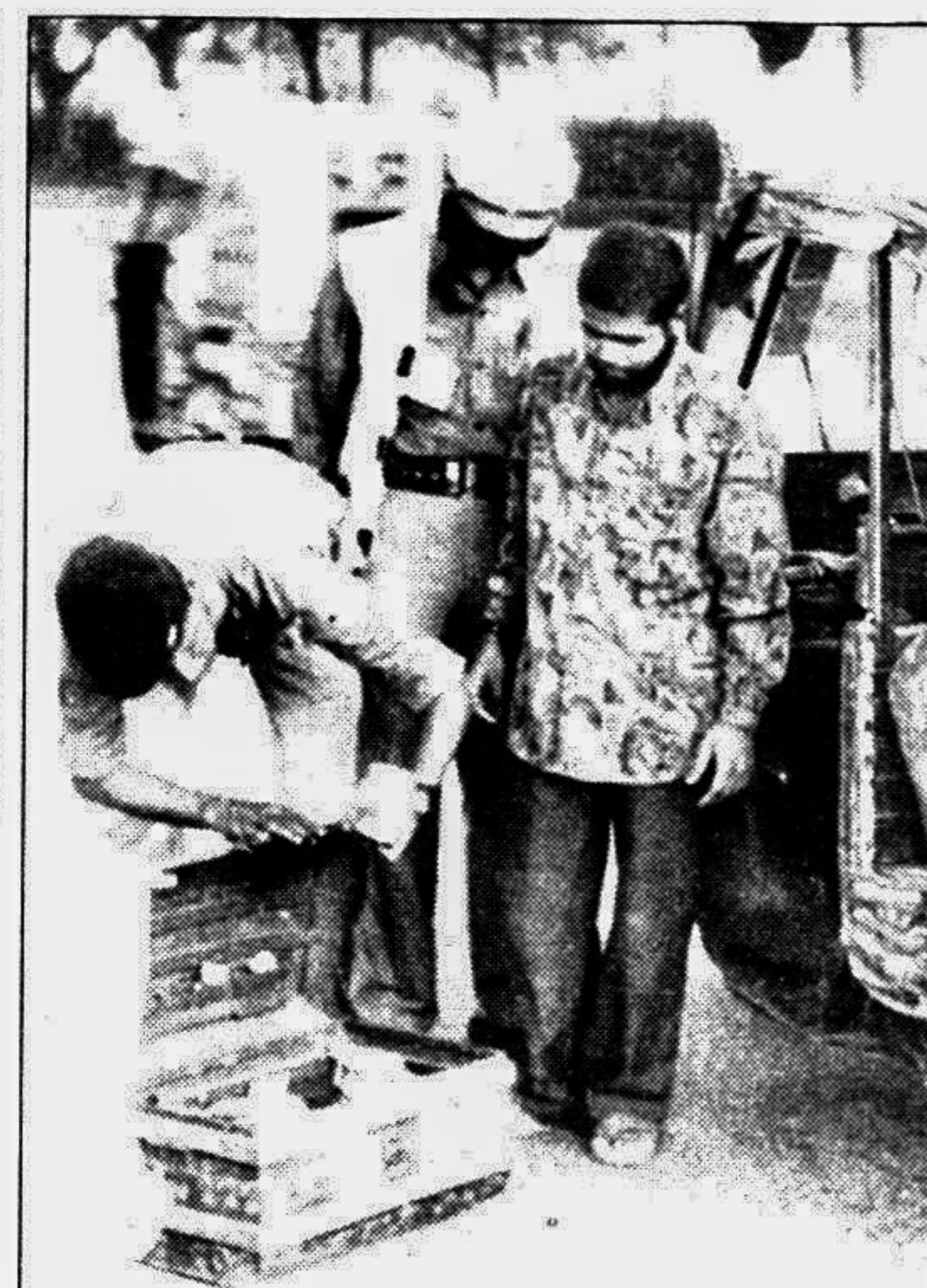
The present provision for electing 30 women MPs by 300 directly elected members of the House will expire on April 4, 2000.

"But the tenure of the present parliament will end on July 17, 2001 - necessitating a constitutional amendment for a renewal of the provision," said a Cabinet member last evening.

The Cabinet also decided to open dialogue with the opposition parties concerned on the issue, as the implementation of the decision would require a constitutional amendment to be supported by two-thirds of the present 330 member Jatiya Sangsad, a minister attending the meeting said.

The PM also asked her Cabinet colleagues concerned to discuss with political parties the proposition of direct election to the reserved seats for women in parliament.

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Police checking a box carried in an autorickshaw in front of the Sangsad Bhavan yesterday as part of vigilance after recovery of bombs from three places in the city recently.

—Star photo

Suspect in bomb planting cases held

Star Report

One person was arrested yesterday in connection with the recent planting of explosives in two mosques and the daily Janakantha office in the city.

The arrested person, Afsar Ali, is a BNP activist, police said. He was arrested from his Badda residence in the city under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrP).

Ali is suspected of being linked with planting the explosives in those places, police said in the FIR.

The accused is involved in blasting bombs at mosques and public rallies, police said in a forwarding letter while praying for 10 days' remand before the CMM court. The court granted two days' remand.

When contacted last night, DMP Commissioner AKM Shamsuddin said one person was arrested for "interrogation" in connection with the incidents.

The arrested person is a notorious criminal of the locality, the Commissioner said without mentioning any specific evidence.

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Shoaib Chy remanded

By Court Correspondent

The CMM's Court yesterday placed Salahuddin Shoaib Chowdhury, managing director of now defunct ATV, on eight days' remand in two cases.

Shoaib was arrested by Special Branch of police from his Uttara residence on Sunday night as an accused in a case filed with Mohtijheel thana for his alleged involvement in a conspiracy to kill the prime minister and her close relatives.

He was also shown arrested in another case filed with the same thana alleging his involvement in "passing state secrets."

Shoaib was produced before the CMM's Court at about 6:30 pm yesterday. Police prayed for 12 days' remand in the cases.

Metropolitan Magistrate Shamsur Rahman granted a three-day remand in the first case and a five-day remand in the second case.

Six more HC judges may be appointed

By Staff Correspondent

Six more judges are likely to be appointed for the High Court Division of the Supreme Court, according to official sources.

Oath taking ceremony of the new judges may be held on October 18, the day Supreme Court opens after one and a half months of summer vacation, the sources said.

A law ministry proposal in this regard is now awaiting approval of the Prime Minister and the President.

Of the six likely to be made HC judges, three are from the judicial officers and three from the lawyers.

The officials recommended for appointment include Arasuddin and Abdus Salam, both joint secretaries in the law ministry, and Marjuiul Haq, Registrar of the Supreme Court. From the lawyers' quota, 10 names have been proposed and three would be finally selected by the highest authorities, the sources said.

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Prayer Timings

October 12		
Fajr	Azhan	Jamaat
4:30	5:00	
12:45	1:20	
4:15	4:30	
5:45	5:55	
7:45	8:15	

Source: Islamic Foundation

Hartal called on Oct 21

Bomb planting a govt blueprint: Khaleda

By Staff Correspondent

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia has called a countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal on October 21 to protest Indian "aggression" and press the demand for resignation of the Awami League government.

The call was made from a public meeting at Paltan Maidan yesterday, organised as part of "Anti-aggression Day" programme of the BNP-led four party opposition alliance.

The other alliance components - Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote - also simultaneously called the hartal from separate rallies in the city.

"We have observed hartal and will do so to topple this subservient government. We will call hartal till ouster of this government," she said.

"I do not want to go for non-stop hartal, but will be compelled to do this if the incompetent, unsuccessful and subservient government does not step down immediately and hand over power to a caretaker administration."

Referring to the government's call to businessmen to keep their establishments open during hartal, Khaleda asked how could police protect those while they failed to protect a judge from attackers in court, prevent occupation of bank by hoodlums, extortion by terrorists and attempt to break jail gate to take away criminals?

The motive behind the government call is to allow AL activists loot business establishments and later shift the blame on the hartal callers, she said.

Businessmen should be alert

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Border incidents BDR, BSF to hold meeting from Oct 24

By Staff Correspondent

The Directors General of Bangladesh Rifles and Border Security Forces of India will begin a four-day meeting here from October 24, home ministry officials said yesterday.

They are likely to discuss recent border clashes between BDR and BSF, killing of Bangladeshis by BSF and push

in of Indian citizens into Bangladesh by the Indian border guards which created tension in certain border areas of the country, the officials said.

This will be part of regular meetings between top officials of BDR and BSF, held twice a year. The last meeting was held in March in New Delhi.

Twenty-six Bangladeshis were killed in BSF firing in the last ten months up to October 4, according to a home ministry report.

Border clashes, killing and

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Nobel Medicine Prize goes to Guenter Blobel

STOCKHOLM, Oct 11: Dr Guenter Blobel of The Rockefeller University in New York won the Nobel Prize for medicine today for protein research that shed new light on diseases including cystic fibrosis and early development of kidney stones, reports AP.

Blobel, 63, a native of Waltersdorf, Germany, was cited for discovering that proteins carry signals that act as postal codes, helping them find their correct locations within the cell.

Some hereditary diseases are caused by errors in these signals, and by associated transport mechanisms, the Nobel Assembly said in announcing the prize. The work has helped scientists use cells in laboratories to churn out drugs, and has had an "immense impact" on studies of the cell, the assembly said.

Blobel was not immediately available for comment.

The prize announcement said. Blobel's work explained the molecular roots of several genetic diseases. They include primary hyperoxaluria, which causes kidney stones at an early age, as well as some forms of inherited high cholesterol and illnesses like cystic fibrosis that occur when proteins fail to reach their proper positions within a cell.

Blobel, a cellular and molecular biologist, discovered in the early 1970s that newly made proteins carry the signals. During the next 20 years, he illuminated the details of how the

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Hurriedly-called meeting with diplomats Govt vows to stay till 14 July, 2001

The government yesterday told foreign diplomats that it was not willing to discuss the opposition's one-point demand and vowed to stay on till the end of its tenure, reports UNB.

The government briefed donors and foreign mission chiefs in Dhaka on the country's current political developments in the wake of opposition agitation as well as economic and investment scenario.

Industries and Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed, at the hurriedly-called briefing at State Guesthouse Padma last night, apprised them of the government position on opposition's various demands and answered to queries from Ambassadors, officials said.

The ruling party stalwart said there was no need for dialogue with the opposition on the means of changing government

since the modalities are incorporated in the Constitution.

In an oblique reference to the opposition plea, he told the diplomats that the present government got electoral mandate to rule the country for five years.

"And accordingly," the minister said, "the government will remain in power till July 14, 2001 as per constitutional provision and hand over power to a neutral caretaker government which will complete elections within three months and transfer power to a new government."

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Abu Hasan Chowdhury also spoke at the meeting. Foreign Secretary C M Shafi Sami, Additional Foreign Secretary Mohiuddin Ahmed and senior officers of the Foreign Ministry were present.

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