

2 Brig Generals likely to be promoted

DEFENCE CORRESPONDENT

Two Brigadier Generals are likely to be promoted to the rank of Major General soon. They are Brigadier General Tarik Ahmed Siddiqui and Brigadier General Abu Ishaq Ibrahim, sources said.

Both have been given important positions which are normally chaired by officers of the rank of Major General.

Tariq Siddiqui, Deputy Director General of Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), has been appointed as the officiating Adjutant General (AG) of the Bangladesh Army while Brigadier General Ishaq Ibrahim has been made the area commander of Bogra. Ishaq, before his new appointment, was the Director of Military Operations (DMO) at the Army Headquarters.

It may be mentioned that the 11 Division headquarters at Bogra was previously under the command of

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Dawn-to-dusk hartal today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP-led opposition alliance has called a countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal today demanding release of alliance leaders and judicial inquiry into Saturday's killing of a police constable.

The opposition has demanded immediate release of IOJ Chairman Azizul Haq, secretary general Fazlul Haq Amin, joint secretary general ARM Abdul Matin and others. The IOJ is a component of the alliance.

The opposition brought out processions in the city and at district and thana headquarters across the country yesterday in support of today's hartal.

The liaison committee of the alliance has condemned the killing of five Islamic activists during hartal hours in Brahmanbaria yesterday.

The committee at a meeting last night also urged the countrymen to make today's countrywide hartal a success

Islamic scholars call countrywide hartal tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

Islamic Law Implementation Committee has called a countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal tomorrow (Thursday) protesting the killing of its five activists during hartal hours in Brahmanbaria yesterday.

The 4-party opposition alliance has called a countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal today demanding release of the leaders and activists of IOJ, a component of the alliance. Ulama-Mashaikh Islamic scholars and thinkers in a joint statement yesterday called upon the countrymen to make tomorrow's hartal a success.

They alleged that police and BDR fired indiscriminately on the religious minded people during the

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	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Feb 7		5.49 pm
Feb 8	6-37 am	

Prayer Timings		
February 7		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fazr	5-30	6-10
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-20	4-35
Maghrib	5-54	6-00
Esha	7-25	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Armed battles at B'baria leave 6 killed, 100 hurt

IOJ men clash with Police-BDR for 5 hours during hartal



Police intercepting a procession brought out by Islamic activists in Brahmanbaria town during hartal hours yesterday (top) and BDR personnel chasing the hartal activists.

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Brahmanbaria

At least six people were shot dead and over 100 injured, many of them bullet-hit, as armed activists of Islamic Oikyo Jote (IOJ) fought battles with police-BDR and attacked a police station in the town during a day-long hartal in Brahmanbaria yesterday.

Twenty-two people with bullet injury were admitted to the Sadar Hospital. Scores were treated there and at private clinics.

A number of critically injured persons were sent to Dhaka in two microbuses for treatment, Rana Nurus Samad, Resident Medical Officer of Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital said.

The dead were identified as Tajul Islam, 18, Osman Mia, 25, Alauddin, 28, Musherraf, 18, Billal, 22 and Kabir, 22.

IOJ activists claimed that two more were shot dead but the security forces took away the bodies.

Police however confirmed three deaths.

The activists also injured a number of journalists and photo journalists of leading national dailies. The injured also includes police Havildar Shamsu Mia.

A tense situation is prevailing in the town with streets wearing a deserted look.

Violence erupted when IOJ activists from a procession started throwing bricks on police and BDR in front of the Jamia Yunusia Madrasa at around 8 am. Pitched battles continued till about 1 pm. Teachers and students of the Madrasah and their supporters brought out a big procession on the main road of the district town in the morning.

At around 8 am, a contingent of riot police and BDR personnel came near the Madrasah and started proceeding towards it. Seeing them, the madrasah students started

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Families of launch victims to get at best Tk 492 each!

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Families of the 204 people who drowned in a launch capsized in the Meghna near Chandpur on December 29 last year would get at best Tk 491.96 each as compensation, according to sources concerned.

Quoting relevant laws, the lone magistrate in the Marine Court Abdul Mannan Elias told this correspondent that the offender in such a disaster involving loss of lives could be fined up to Tk 100,000.

The amount of fine would depend on whether the accident occurred due to negligence or other reasons.

The accident in the Meghna took place on the night before the Eid-ul-Azha as an over loaded passenger launch -- Rajhangshi -- was hit by another launch -- Jalkapot --I. Rajhangshi sank instantly while the other launch fled.

An inquiry report submitted to the Shipping

Department a few days ago by Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), said 204 people on board Rajhangshi died as it capsized.

"The launch, according to our investigation, was actually carrying about 350 people. But the survey report mentioned that it had a capacity to carry 87 people," said Nazrul Islam, Special Officer on Marine Safety and also a Magistrate.

"The master of Jalkapot - II may also be sentenced to a maximum of eight years' imprisonment if found guilty."

Some officials concerned pointed out that the relevant laws seem to be 'lenient' to offenders and that launch owners do not have to pay heavy compensation.

"We have recommended amendment to the laws. Enacted more than 100 years ago, these are not suitable now," one official said.

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HC declares Ershad's Jatiya Sangsad seat vacant

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday declared the parliament seat of jailed Jatiya Party (JP) chief and former president HM Ershad vacant on grounds of moral turpitude because of his conviction in the Janata Tower Case.

A Division Bench of the HC comprising Justice JR Mudassar and Justice

Arayesuddin gave the verdict yesterday on a writ petition filed by two persons.

The two are Mohammad Zahidul Islam Khokon, a voter in Ershad's constituency Rangpur 3 and Sadeq Siddiky, a leader of Jatiya Party (MM), a rival faction of JP.

The HC Bench said Ershad had lost the right to represent his constituency as he was jailed for more than three and a half years on corruption charges in the Janata Tower Case. This had disqualified him as a public representative as per the Constitution.

The Bench observed that since Ershad's conviction was upheld by the Supreme Court, there is no scope for another decision on the issue.

It also rejected a prayer by Ershad's counsel for a certificate for appeal against its judgement.

The petitioners were represented by Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud. Barrister Rafiqul Huq represented the former president.

Rokonuddin Mahmud argued that Ershad had lost his right to remain a Member of Parliament because of moral turpitude and his jail term of more than three and a half years bars him from holding public office.

Barrister Rafiqul Huq maintained that the conviction of Ershad did not fall in the category of conviction for moral turpitude.

Ershad is likely to appeal to the Supreme Court against the HC judgement, sources said.

This is the first time a person of Ershad's status is stripped of his membership of parliament for moral turpitude. He will not be eligible to run for any public office for a period of five years from the date of his release from prison.

Ershad has already served a five-year jail term is now in jail for another six months for his failure to pay a fine of Tk 5.5 crore.

Ambassadors of Muslim countries apprised of political situation

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad yesterday briefed ambassadors of Muslim countries on violent incidents staged currently by fundamentalist forces to achieve their evil political designs.

Ambassadors of 13 Muslim countries Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Indonesia, Malaysia, Qatar, Turkey, Afghanistan, Libya, Morocco, Nigeria and PLO attended the hurriedly called briefing at the Foreign Ministry.

Talking to newsmen, the Foreign Minister said he briefed the envoys on the present situation and the government's resolve to maintain law and order.

"Each envoy spoke at the briefing, deplored the violent activities and called the government's action justified," Azad said.

In his opening remarks, the Foreign Minister narrated the incidents starting from unearthing of a huge bomb at Kotlalpara that was

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Bangabandhu Murder Case Third judge rejects plea for fresh hearing

UNB, Dhaka

The third judge dealing with the split judgement in the Bangabandhu death-reference case yesterday rejected defence plea for a fresh hearing of the entire case.

Turning down applications for hearing of the matters of all the 15 condemned accused, Justice Mohammad Fazlul Karim passed an order that the court would confine the hearing only to six disputed ones.

Court's orders came after hearing daylong submission by the counsel for Lt Col (ret'd) Syed Farooq Rahman, Maj (ret'd) Bazlul Huda and Lt Col (ret'd) Sultan Shariar Rashid Khan and by Special prosecutor Adv Serajul Huq and Attorney General Mahamudul Islam.

The court also rejected another prayer for the certificate for leave to appeal, moved by Adv Khan Saifur Rahman, counsel for Lt Col Farooq and Lt Col Mohiuddin Ahmed (Artillery).

Adv Khan Saifur Rahman, counsel for Lt Col Farooq, Adv Abdus Sobhan, counsel for Maj Bazlul Huda, and Adv Abdur Razzak Khan counsel for Lt Col Shariar, said in their submissions that the judgement passed by the High Court Division bench was split, so the third judge should hear the entire case.

Points of disagreement between the two judges needed to be found out by the third judge and this court is here to give final judgement and not necessarily agree with one of the two judges," said Khan Saifur. Another defence lawyer, Adv

Rezzak Khan, submitted that this court should be restricted to the split portion of the judgement, but should look into the whole case, which he said is the demand of the law.

Contradicting, Special Public Prosecutor Serajul Huq said where there are differences, there comes a third bench. Only the portion of different is laid before this court and not the whole one, he argued.

He said the third judge in one way is three judges and since the judgement passed by the two-judge bench is not a complete one, so the matter in the third judge bench is the continuation of the judgement, to complete the judgement.

"Since the judgement of the previous bench is not final, your

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Election Commission reiterates proposals Change electoral laws ahead of next election

NAZRUL ISLAM

The Election Commission has once again reminded the government about its proposals for changes in electoral laws and rules ahead of the next general election.

Pending with the law ministry for more than two years, the four-point proposal provides for registration of political parties with the Election Commission, increasing the limit of expenditure of a candidate in parliamentary polls to five lakh taka from the existing three lakh, strengthening election tribunals and restricting a candidate from contesting for more than two seats, official sources said.

The proposals were aimed at holding elections in a "realistic and peaceful" manner, the EC had said.

In a recent letter to the ministry, the Commission asked the authorities concerned to implement the proposals immediately so that the benefits can be derived in the next election.

Earlier in 1999, the EC submitted the proposal to the Law Reforms Commission (LRC) through the law ministry.

Waiting for about two years, the Commission recently reminded the ministry about its proposals,

bringing about some changes in those, sources at the EC Secretariat said.

Due to lack of law for registration of political parties, the Commission had to face many complexities including rise in expenditure during the last election, a top election official said.

If the proposal for registration of political parties is approved by the LRC, the EC plans to hold dialogue with political parties to set the criteria for a party to get registration, the official said.

"It would help ensure transparency and accountability of political parties. After being registered, a party will have to be transparent in its budget, source of income and the heads of expenditure in a systematic and democratic manner," he added.

As the practice goes now, an aggrieved person in an election has to wait for years to have his/her petition with the election tribunal settled. In some cases, settlement of an election dispute lingers up to or more than the tenure of a parliament, delaying justice to the victim.

Considering the lingering process, the Commission had proposed that judges of the tribunals be empowered to pass verdict in a maximum period of one year.

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Pak people realising atrocities by their military in '71

HR activist Asma Jahangir says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

A leading Pakistani human rights activist has said the people of her country are increasingly recognising the scars left behind through atrocities committed by their 'military' in Bangladesh in 1971.

"It is the military that is primarily responsible for the atrocities. The civilians have not been allowed to take major decisions. There is now a great change in the thinking of the people of Pakistan because of the freedom of information and following release of the Hamudoor Rahman Commission Report," Asma Jahangir said at a citizens' rally in Dhaka yesterday afternoon.

Asma Jahangir, an internationally acclaimed human rights activist who is a former chairman of Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and special coordinator of United Nations for Genocide, was vocal against the genocide in Bangladesh by the Pakistan occupation forces. A strong exponent of human and

women's rights, Asma spoke at length on issues concerning apology, trial of war criminals and the need for people-to-people cooperation to strengthen democratic governments and enhance regional cooperation for survival in a fast globalising economy.

The rally held on the premises of Muktijuddha Jadughar was attended by a cross section of people including leading members of the civil society, NGO representatives, academics and members of cultural, human and women's rights organizations.

The programme was organised by Prof Rehman Sobhan, Dr Anisuzzaman, Salma Khan, Hamida Hossain and Mahfuz Anam. Editor of the Prothom Alo Matur Rahman conducted it. Many from among the audience took the opportunity to ask questions to the visiting human rights champion.

Responding to several questions relating to apology and genocide, Asma said the military was respon-

sible for the genocide in 1971. She called for collective efforts of the civil society to create a climate of change for cooperation, not looking back to the past.

"There is a growing recognition of the scars. But let us stress more on people-to-people rather than government-to-government. People of Bangladesh and Pakistan have the same aspirations, bonds and hopes," she said. "I am not saying forget it. I am saying forgive it in a collective way."

Pressed further on Pakistan's posture on the atrocities committed, she said, "I am not an apologist for my country. It is indeed that Pakistan has not grown. Look at the number of people who have suffered at the hands of the military."

Replying to a question about local efforts to form a Truth Commission, she observed, "I think

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Leading Pakistani human rights activist Asma Jahangir addressing a citizens' rally at Muktijuddha Jadughar (Liberation War Museum) in the city yesterday.

400 IOJ activists sued under PSA at Hathazari

UNB, Ctg

A case was filed against 400 IOJ activists, including its north district secretary M Solaiman, under the Public Safety Act (PSA) in connection with Monday's violence at Hathazari.

Some 100 people were injured when madrasah students and IOJ activists went on the rampage at azpila headquarters protesting arrest of Mufti Fazlul Haq Amin and Shaikhul Hadith Maulana Azizul Haq.

They also put up barricades on roads and damaged vehicles. SI of Hathazari thana Shahadat Hossain, who received injuries during the trouble, filed the case against the IOJ activists for hurling bombs at police, damaging vehicles and putting up barricades on roads.

The superintendent of Hathazari madrasah also issued showcause notices on its 14 students for their involvement in the violence.

Meanwhile, the city unit leaders of the four-party alliance at a meeting on Monday night strongly condemned the arrest of IOJ leaders.

Chaired by BNP city president Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin, the meeting decided to hold an Ulama-Mashaikh conference here on February 13 to protest repression on Islamic scholars and thinkers.