

Constitutional changes: 4-party to consult opposition

UNB, Dhaka

The BNP-led four-party coalition will not use its absolute majority to make any constitutional amendment without consulting the opposition in parliament, unless needed in the greater benefit of the people, said the Law Minister.

Things like dismantling the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman or cancelling the allotment of Ganobhaban for former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina are not the priority issues of the government either, Barrister Moudud Ahmed further said.

In an exclusive interview with UNB yesterday Barrister Moudud Ahmed categorically said the government has also no intention whatsoever to interfere in the Bangabandhu murder case now lying with the Supreme Court.

"Although we have two-thirds majority in parliament, we have to keep in mind we can amend the Constitution if it is absolutely necessary for the benefit of the people. Despite this fact, we would not like to act alone on any issue of national importance, said the Law, Justice and Parliament Affairs Minister of the new government of Khaleda Zia.

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Moyeen calls for neutrality in state-run electronic media

BSS, Dhaka

Information Minister Dr Moyeen Khan yesterday asked the BTV to reflect objectivity and neutrality and the Bangladesh Betar to ensure acceptability of the state-run electronic media in line with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's speech.

Speaking at the premier show of a tele-film at the BTV here, he said in the past 10 days the activities of BTV and radio marked signs of advancement in terms of objectivity towards regaining people's confidence on the state-run media.

"You have to work hard with more dedication to earn people's trust," he said.

The minister enjoyed the "Rupali Nadir Dhew," a joint production of BTV and Commonwealth Broadcasting Association, and asked the BTV authorities to screen it for the television audience.

Dr Khan praised the film saying it had amazingly reflected Bangladesh life and culture and hoped this would properly reflect Bangladesh to the foreigners.

The film made with a story by GD Jailami, which was translated in Bangla by Dr Syed Manjurul Islam and televised by K M Harun. The film has been sent to Manchester Film Festival 2002.

Acknowledging BTV constraints, he said the dedication and good wishes can overcome the limitations.

World Congress of APFEJ in Manila Oct 22-26

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 13th World Congress of the Asia Pacific Forum of Environmental Journalists (APFEJ) will be held in Manila, the Philippines October 22-26.

The theme of this year's conference is the role of media in the road to Rio+10 and beyond.

Over 100 national environmental journalists' organisations, representatives from nearly 50 countries, media, NGO activists, educators, scientists, government and UN officials from around the world will participate in the Congress, said a press release.

A team of the Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB) led by its chairman Quamrul Islam Chowdhury left for Manila yesterday to attend the Congress.

The Manila congress will focus on: The need for reliable, accurate and independent information and data on issues relating to water and sustainable development in different countries of the world for achieving a water secure future, mobilising political will and bringing behavioural change. Water in the 21 century -- the looming crisis.

The need for international coverage to be supplemented by added

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Separate body needed to protect trees and forest resources

The Daily Star-BUET-Bangladesh Scouts workshop told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a workshop yesterday suggested that a separate body be formed to protect trees, forests and forest resources of the country, and a long-term plan be taken up for tree plantation and nursing of the plants.

The workshop on "Osmany Udyan: An Ode to Nature" was jointly organised by the BUET, The Daily Star and the Bangladesh Scouts at the BUET Civil Building in the city. The lack of maintenance has diminished the attraction of the park, the participants of the workshop observed. Inertia of the author-

ities and constant attempts to encroach on the parkland have made things worse.

Moderated by Dr Nizamuddin Ahmed, the workshop was attended by, among others, WASA Board Chairman Prof. Nazrul Islam, Habibul Alam, Bir Pratik of the Bangladesh Scouts, Head of the Department of Architecture, BUET, Dr M Sahidul Ameen, Editor of The Daily Star Mahfuz Anam, former vice-chancellor of Khulna University Dr Golam Rahman and Chief Engineer of Dhaka WASA Kazi Mohammad Seesh.

Some students of the

Department of Architecture, BUET, presented their projects on the Osmany Udyan at the workshop. The main objective of the projects was to protect the felling of more than 100 trees on the eastern side of the park on July 16, by hired hoodlums of the so-called owner of the land.

The small number of parks, lakes and green spaces now existing in the city should be preserved, the participants suggested.

The BUET students in their projects identified ever-dwindling trees, and absence of plantation and of arrangement for amusement

of children as the main reason for diminishing beauty of the park. Added to these are inadequate gateways and seating arrangement, pollution of water of the pond inside the park due to dumping of wastes and sewage, antisocial activities and poor lighting system.

Dr. M Sahidul Ameen suspects that a vested group is patronising the planned drug peddling in the park area. It has led the people to lose interest in the park, thereby converting the parkland into an urban settlement, he pointed out.

Referring to a survey of Japanese International Cooperation Agency conducted in 1997, the head of the BUET architecture department disclosed that parks, greenery or tree-covered spaces constitute only 14 per cent of the city landscape.

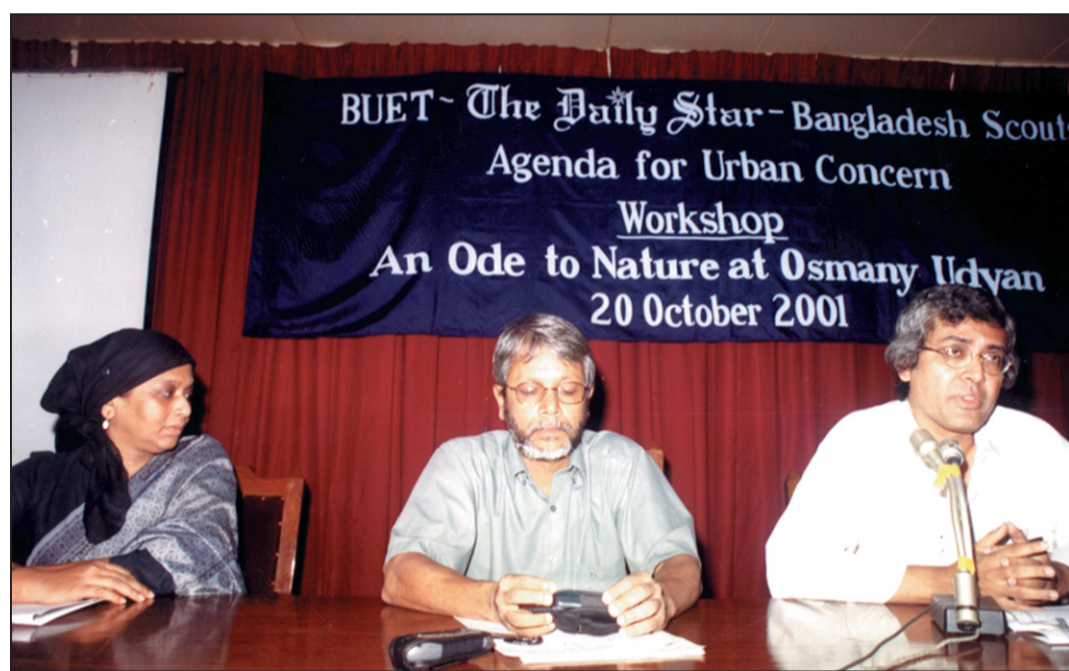
Prof. Nazrul Islam pointed to some insidious attempts out in force since 1972 to construct buildings on the parkland of Osmany Udyan.

Mahafuz Anam has said the newspaper always keeps the environmental issues in sharp focus. He urged teachers and students of the BUET and different professional groups to move and work for environmental issues.

Kazi Mohammad Seesh expressed his deep concern over the felling of trees in different parts of the country, including Rajshahi, Tangail and Rangpur as well as in the hill tracts. The forest cover in Bangladesh is 1.1 million hectares, according to the statistics of the Department of Forest, of which 9 lakh acres have already been encroached upon across the country.

Dr Jebunnasreen Ahmed, teacher of the Department of Architecture, BUET, has said that at

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Professor Shahidul Ameen of the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) addresses yesterday's Agenda for Urban Concern workshop titled An Ode to Nature at Osmany Udyan, organised jointly by The Daily Star, the BUET and the Bangladesh Scouts.

JCD has no control over 'outsiders' at DU halls

ABUL KALAM AZAD

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), Sstudent front of the ruling BNP, is now facing a leadership crisis as it has no control over 'outsiders and hoodlums' belonging to its various factions now dominant in residential halls of Dhaka University, JCD insiders said.

There is no chain-of-command in JCD since hundreds of such elements rushed to various halls of the university in the early hours of October 2 when the BNP-led four-party alliance's landslide victory in the national election became clear.

Genuine leaders and activists of JCD who returned to their respective halls after a long stay outside the campus feel 'insulted' that 'outsiders and criminals' are dominating them, a number of JCD

activists said. These elements are doing whatever they like at the halls, keeping aside the JCD leadership and are thereby tarnishing the image of the student organisation, activists said.

They are creating a state of insecurity for the resident students - beating them, taking away their belongings and forcing many of them out of the halls.

Meanwhile, tension was mounting in most of the halls where these outsiders and terrorists -- many of them armed -- are engaged in bitter feuds for domination over each other.

JCD leadership failed to go for any action against the troublemakers, fearing backlash, sources said. "We have already informed the

BNP high-ups about the problem and they have taken it up seriously," said a top JCD leader.

Another leader said, "BNP leadership told us that steps would be taken shortly to oust the troublemakers from the halls."

Following press reports on domination of outsiders and criminals at the halls, JCD President Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu on Wednesday went to Ziaur Rahman Hall where tension was created due to rivalry between two factions of the student body. He ousted the 'outsiders' from the hall.

He also asked two leaders of the rival factions -- Zakir Hossain Siddique and Asaduzzaman Asad -- to stay outside the hall for some days.

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Claiming himself son of ruling party MP...

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A young man claiming himself to be son of a ruling party lawmaker tried to take away the luggage of an engineer of the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) at the Zia International Airport (ZIA) yesterday morning.

Two assistant engineers of the CAAB were returning home from London on an Emirates flight (EK-612). The young man, Mizanur Rahman Tutul, also reached the airport from Dubai.

Assistant Engineer Latiful Kabir saw his luggage being carried along by the conveyor belt. Minutes later, the engineer discovered to his surprise that a young man was taking away his luggage, witnesses said.

The engineer told Tutul, who was standing near the scanner, that he might have mistaken the luggage for his. At this, Tutul got angry with the engineer and reminded him that he was talking to the "son of the MP from Dhaka-4".

National Security Intelligence (NSI), and customs and other law-enforcement officials at the airport arbitrated in the dispute that followed, and the luggage was handed over to the engineer after identification.

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Former AL MP Mustafizur Rahman dead

BSS, Dhaka

Mustafizur Rahman, a former MP and the chief editor of Dainik Rupali died yesterday at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore, family sources said. He was 59.

Rahman was suffering from diabetes and kidney disease.

He left behind his wife, three sons, one daughter and a host of relatives, friends and admirers to mourn his death.

Rahman was twice elected MP on Awami League ticket from Swandip constituency in 1991 and 1996. He was also an Awami League candidate for the 8th parliamentary election from the same constituency.

Body of Rahman is expected to arrive in Dhaka tonight.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has expressed deep shock at the death of Mustafizur Rahman.

In a condolence message, she



Awami League President Sheikh Hasina listens to the newly appointed Russian envoy to Bangladesh during a meeting at her Dhanmondi residence yesterday.

Israeli troops raid 2 more towns, kill 5 Palestinians

AP, Jerusalem

Israeli troops entered two more West Bank towns yesterday in what is shaping up as the broadest Israeli military operation in more than a year of fighting. Five Palestinians were killed, including a woman whose home was hit by a tank shell.

The incursions -- six in three days -- were triggered by the assassination of an Israeli Cabinet minister by Palestinian militants earlier this week. With the military action, Israel is trying to pressure the Palestinian Authority to arrest and hand over the assassins, and crack down on Palestinian militant groups.

The US State Department said Friday that the Israeli incursions "complicate the situation and should be halted."

The escalation threatens Washington's efforts to retain Arab and Muslim support for military action against Islamic militants suspected of having masterminded the Sept 11 terror attacks on New York and Washington. The United States is courting moderate Arab states and fears Israel-Palestinian violence could interfere.

At about 3 am local time yesterday, Israeli tanks entered the towns of Qalqilya and Tulkerem in the northern West Bank, and set up positions on the rooftops of several homes.

Troops were met by Palestinian fire, and four Palestinians were killed in the fighting, doctors said. In the town of Beit Jalla, where troops set up positions on Friday, a 23-year-old Palestinian woman was Saturday killed when an Israeli

tank shell hit her home, doctors said.

In Qalqilya, Israeli soldiers took over the two-story police headquarters, which Palestinian officers had left before the incursion, Palestinian security officials said.

Israeli soldiers arrested five activists Hamas activists, including four brothers of a man who had carried out a suicide bombing in Israel in 1994, Palestinian officials said. Two members of Force 17, a Palestinian security service, were also detained.

An Israeli government spokesman, Arnon Perlman, said troops sealed Tulkerem and Qalqilya because of warnings that militants from the two towns were preparing to launch suicide attacks in Israel.

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President of the Women for Women Salma Khan (R) makes a point at the open dialogue on "Repression on Women and Dowry", jointly organised by the Prothom Alo and the British Council, at a hotel in Sylhet yesterday. (From L to R) Prothom Alo Editor Matiur Rahman, Vice-chancellor of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology Professor Salahuddin Ahmed and Assistant Director of the British Council Farah Kabir look on.

Delhi may ask US, EU to allow duty-free access of RMG

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

The European Union decision to allow duty-free access of Pakistan garment and proposal for a similar move by the United States is likely to prompt India to seek similar facilities to stop possible diversion of export order worth millions of dollars.

The EU last week announced duty-free access of Pakistani textile and clothing as well as increased quotas by 15 per cent to help boost the country's exports by 40,000 tonnes next year, in return for Islamabad's cooperation in the fight against Afghanistan. The US is also considering a similar response.

The issue would be taken up with the EU and the US first at the official levels and, if necessary, at the highest level when Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee visits US next month, according to official sources in New Delhi.

The prime minister has convened a meeting with textile, commerce and finance ministries to discuss the steps to be taken to arrest the decline in textile exports which dipped by over 17 per cent during April-July this year.

An estimate made by the Indian textile industry suggests that the concessions, given by the US and the EU to Pakistan, would result in

diversion of exports worth ten thousand crore rupees per year. The EU and the US are the two major markets for Indian garments that account for 27 per cent of the country's annual merchandise exports of 44 billion US dollars.

The EU measure is expected to make Pakistani garments more competitive from the point of view of price compared to the Indian products in European markets.

This will add to the pressure Indian garments already face from recent devaluation of currencies of competing countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Turkey.

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15 injured as AL, BNP clash in Sirajganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

At least 15 people were injured, three of them by acid attack, during a clash between the supporters of BNP and Awami League at Chand Matunai village under Belkuchi thana yesterday.

Of them, Mohir Uddin Fakir, 65, Abu Hossain Fakir, 55, and Ainal, 14, were admitted to Belkuchi thana health complex with acid burn injuries.

The clash ensued following altercations between the supporters of two groups.

Police, however, said the clash was a sequel to previous enmity over the land.

They arrested eight people from the spot.

Two cases were filed with Belkuchi police station in this regard.



Milon with his wife and their daughter at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

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