

Quorum crisis

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ings has been happening in the very first session of the new legislature.

Yesterday was only the ninth working day of the ongoing session yet members of the new parliament seem less interested in attending the House business. Excepting for the first couple of days, the current session of the parliament has so far failed to start business on schedule. Delayed start apart, the attendance in House is also getting thinner day by day.

Front-ranking leaders including the ministers in the treasury bench are not regular in attending the proceedings, let alone being punctual. No surprise that other treasury benches, who include many new faces, are following suit.

Deferring listed items on the agenda has become a common practice on the part of the Chair thanks to the absence of the ministers concerned. Similar is the case with many general members who had either questions to raise or motions to move in the House. The speaker is often found inviting the fellow ministers or MPs to give proxy for the absentees.

Leader of the House and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia herself seldom attends the session. The front row of the treasury bench these days is dotted by a few ministers who are late and leave soon after their business with the House is over. There are ministers who attend the House only when they have scheduled business.

With the main opposition Awami League still staying off the parliament proceedings and a section of the opposition legislators following the examples set by the BNP-led

alliance in the treasury bench in terms of attending the proceedings, the House continues to be lifeless.

However, situation often gets worse when protests against poor performance of the parliament come from within the treasury bench.

"Things should not go on like this. I had to stay awake last night and line up in the queue to submit my amendment motion but none of the two ministers concerned is present today," ruling BNP lawmaker Shahidul Islam said yesterday.

Angered by the common practice by the ministers, Islam told the barren parliament that he did not go to his constituency on the weekend only to see to it that the minister addressed the issue he had raised in the House yesterday.

Nevertheless, Speaker Sircar appeared unconcerned about the crucial issue of the treasury bench member had raised. "You are wasting your time. Please talk about your motion," the speaker advised.

As regards the lingering crisis of quorum, the speaker is often heard seeking cooperation of the lawmakers. Forced to start the day's sitting 47 minutes behind the schedule due to lack of quorum, the speaker sought cooperation of all so that the House resumed its proceedings on Sunday on time.

In all, there were only 52 lawmakers including two ministers sitting on the front row when the speaker adjourned the House at 3.12pm yesterday. And, the House ran short of quorum 12 minutes before the day's sitting was over.



Local BNP accorded a reception to Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan at Laldighi Maidan in Chittagong yesterday.

Police camp tragedy

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Complex and Chondraghona Christian Mission Hospital one by one. However, as the on-duty doctors at these local hospitals refused to admit them, it took another two hours to shift the policemen to Chittagong. When they were finally taken to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) and the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Chittagong, they were barely alive.

Doctors at the hospitals said the casualties could have been low had the ailing policemen been shifted to the CMCH or CMH earlier by helicopter.

"Only a few years ago, the policeman stationed at those mountainous places would usually be sent for treatment to the CMH (in Chittagong) by helicopter. But the service has remained suspended for unknown reasons," a member of the Armed Police Battalion (APBN) said.

The commander of the Paglipara Police Camp, Subedar Altaf Hossain, demanded resumption of the helicopter services in case of emergency. During a visit to the camp yesterday morning, this correspondent found that fresh consignment of rice, pulse, soybean oil, fish and pumpkin in the kitchen.

No reforms, no aid

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the finance minister that they wanted to see notable improvement in law and order, wastage in the public sector and overall governance before the scheduled meeting of the Aid Club in Paris in April next year.

The WB official reiterated donors' conditionalities to stop funding loss-making state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and privatise those, increase the administered price of fertiliser, power, gas and petroleum before considering Bangladesh's request for increased financial assistance.

Talking to newsmen later, Saifur Rahman admitted the donors' conditionalities. "Without reforms, specially if we don't dispose of loss-incurring SOEs to the private sector, the donors won't consider our request for significant assistance. But we are hopeful of fulfilling their

conditions and get significant assistance in the future," he said.

The WB vice president suggested the government to overhaul the financial management for efficient revenue collection and to control 'wasteful' public expenditure.

Nishimizu also mentioned corruption and mismanagement in health and education sectors and suggested taking corrective measures for development. Pointing out lack of good governance, she said the government has been deprived of huge amount of money every year due to a nexus between dishonest officials of utility services and customers.

During her five-day visit, Nishimizu held meetings with the government leaders, business people and NGO activists.

Left-leaning parties

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allegedly perpetrated by the ruling alliance. CPB leaders said at the meeting that left parties would soon organise a convention against communalism.

CPB leaders present at the meeting later told The Daily Star that AL did not raise the question of jointly organising the convention, planned by AL.

"We will fix the date for a convention at our meeting day after tomorrow. As we understood, they (AL) are planning for another after the Ramadan. We can join each other's convention upon invitation. The question of jointly organising the programme was not raised," said a CPB leader.

AL sources said such meetings will continue to seek support from other parties to organise the all-party national convention, sometime in January next year.

Other important national and international issues also came up for discussion at yesterday's meeting, the sources said.

CPB leaders told AL leaders that though there were lots of ideological differences between the two parties, CPB always likes political dialogues among parties.

"Such dialogue should be held between AL and BNP also," one CPB leader said.

CPB leaders also explained to AL that left democratic parties were

Gunfight at DU

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Provost of Jagannath Hall Dr. Min Chandra Bhoumik, house tutors Dr. Ajay Kumar Das of Jagannath Hall and Dr. Abul Bashar and Nizamul Haq Bhuiyan of Zahurul Haq Hall.

When contacted yesterday, Proctor Prof. Nazrul Islam said the report is now at the final stage.

"We appealed to persons concerned to testify before the probe body, but none came to us," he said.

He said though the probe body was formed on November 14 it began working after two days due to some administrative difficulties.

Bill

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it on the ground that the whip's function in the House is irrelevant to the number of administrative divisions in the country. However, the House later accepted the bill by voice vote.

Earlier, with Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar in the chair, the House resumed sitting more than 40 minutes behind schedule, as most lawmakers came in late. In yesterday's sitting, the second private members' day of the current session, three private members' resolution were dealt with. Two other such motions were suspended one was due to a minister's absence and the other, for absence of the lawmaker concerned.

The speaker called upon the lawmakers to attend parliament sittings on time as he announced its adjournment for two days. The House will sit again at 12 noon Sunday (November 25).

3 killed

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mishuk from behind. Three passengers of the mishuk were killed on the spot. Two other passengers sustained severe injuries and were rushed to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH). They were identified as Mortazul, 30, and Tariqul Islam, 26.

A case was filed with Nachol thana in this connection. Police seized the mishuk but the driver of the bus managed to escape with his vehicle.

Disciplinary actions range from verbal warning to expulsion.

On October 23, AL formed a committee headed by Zillur to report within 15 days about the party men who acted against its interests in the elections.

Zillur said the report was yet to be finalised and it would take a few more days.

An AL presidium member, seeking anonymity, said that as the overwhelming majority in the party demanded a change in leadership at all levels, the party thought it would be wise to remove the malcontents first. This would help the party men choose their new leaders through special councils, he explained.

The AL central council would be organised once the councils at grassroots level are completed by

rebels who had contested against the party-nominated candidates in different constituencies in the recent polls.

Those expelled include AL presidium member Dr Mohammad Selim, who was in the polls race against his younger brother and former home minister Mohammad Nasim in Sirajganj, Hemaetullah Awranga and Delwar Hossain who were elected lawmakers.

Witnesses and police said the clash ensued when local BNP leader Ramzan Ali along with his supporters harvested paddy from the field of Awami League leader Tajal Ali Wednesday morning. The houses of Tajal and his brother were also damaged and plundered.

Both sides used firearms and lethal weapons during the clash. Jamat Ali died in action and 15 injured on both sides. Of them, Tajal, Salek, Nazir, Abul, Sattar and Rajjal were admitted to Kushtia general hospital.

Villagers said Awami League and BNP had been warning up for the last few days to establish supremacy in the union.

Local MP Ataur Rahman Khan Angur said villagers held the policemen as the dacoity was committed in connivance with the police. "The sad incident was a result of failure of the police," said the ruling party lawmaker.

He demanded punishment and withdrawal of all the policemen from Araihazar thana.

Deputy Commissioner Iqbal Uddin Ahmed said that a probe body was formed to inquire into the incident.

"Suspension and legal actions against the four accused policemen have already been ordered," he said.

The sources said the association leaders tried to meet Post and Telecommunication Minister Barister Aminul Haque yesterday, but failed.

They will hold a meeting with leaders of Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FCCI) to discuss how to reduce miseries of Internet users, the sources said.

"The office of Mullah Omar strongly denied that, and the Taliban army chief Akhdar Othmani said the information was totally false," correspondent Mohammad al-Shuli reported from the southeastern city of Spin Boldak.

UN, US and British officials said they could play no role in Kunduz, but the international community urged the Northern Alliance to avoid using the capture of the city for a bloody settling of scores.

"The best way to save lives in Kunduz is for the Taliban to surrender. There can be an instant end to any bloodshed if the Taliban lay down their arms," said Kanton Keith, the Islamabad-based spokesman for the US-led coalition against terrorism.

While the standoff in Kunduz seemed to be reaching a climax, fighting broke out between Taliban and Northern Alliance forces near the capital Kabul, an AFP correspondent at the scene reported.

Eleven Northern Alliance tanks, backed by artillery and rocket fire, spearheaded an assault on Taliban hill positions about 20 kilometres (12 miles) southwest of Kabul.

Commanders with the alliance, which now controls Kabul, said the attack against an estimated 600 Taliban troops lasted some five hours before the alliance forces retreated in the face of a flanking counter attack.

In the south, local Pashtun tribal elder Hamid Karzai said he was still hopeful the Taliban would agree to a bloodless handover of power in Kandahar province, the home of Mullah Omar.

Karzai, an ally of former king Mohammed Zahir Shah who recently returned from exile with US backing to stir up a popular revolt in the south, said he was in contact with the Taliban in Kandahar by telephone.

"They are sending messages. They want negotiations to work out a solution. I am indeed hopeful a solution will be found," he said.

But a spokesman for Omar in Kandahar has said there is no question of a Taliban surrender and no talks are underway.

"At present, our forces in Kandahar and surrounding provinces, they are enough to defend our present controlled areas," said Tayyab Agha said Wednesday, adding that the militia had also lost all touch with bin Laden.

Meanwhile, the Taliban's international isolation was completed yesterday after neighbouring Pakistan, once the militia's strongest ally, closed the Taliban embassy in Islamabad.



Prime Minister Khaleda Zia offering munajat at an Iftar Party hosted for journalists at Prodan Mantri Bhaban in the city yesterday.

AL likely to expel

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against the renegades.

AL central leadership has asked party leaders at grassroots level to send names of party men who either acted against its interest and supported rebel candidates or remained inactive during the polls.

"We will serve show cause notice on them. If their replies are not satisfactory, disciplinary actions will follow," AL General Secretary Zillur Rahman who heads a party committee on this issue told this correspondent.

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