

Holding fire

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Servant (Special Provisions) Ordinance, 1979 would not be declared beyond constitutional jurisdiction and as such void.

The petitioner termed the ordinance a black law, for it does have room for appeal against any disciplinary actions.

The court also asked the government to explain why the actions taken against the official, AKM Shamim Chowdhury of Film Archives Directorate, under the 1979 ordinance would not be declared void.

Besides, the departmental actions against these 185 officials have stirred up chaos in the administration as many of the officials openly challenged their department heads.

All these factors may have prompted the government to put on hold the move to sack officials alleged to have had links to the so-called Janata Mancha.

Accordingly, the officials have been informed that the hearing would not take place as per schedule due to "unavoidable circumstances." They were earlier given

hearing dates after they were served with show-cause notices. The officials were further told that fresh hearing dates would be conveyed to them later on.

It is not clear if the government would resume soon the move to punish the officials.

Sources said the government had planned to fire as many as 300 officials as per a decision based on the reports prepared by an intelligence agency, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and BNP's 'unofficial headquarters' Hawa Bhaban.

However, many aggrieved officials pointed out that list was full of flaws, as the reports were based on old newspaper reports and videotapes.

When the show-cause notices were served, the officials under fire brushed aside the charges against them saying those were generalised and unsubstantiated.

They also questioned the legal and moral rights of some of the secretaries to serve the show-cause notices. The officials said these secretaries themselves had expressed solidarity with the 'Janata Mancha'.

AL: Sudha Sadan

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when they came out of Sudha Sadan after exchanging Eid greetings with their leader.

The student leaders were detained without any specific charge against them, AL leaders alleged.

Saber Hossain Chowdhury told The Daily Star yesterday that during his telephonic conversation with the home minister, he expressed concern at 'extraordinary security surveillance' that at times reached the level of 'intimidation'.

"Besides, we are not always sure about the identity of plainclothes policemen. This situation holds potential threats for the opposition leader as anyone can use it as a cover."

As the road adjacent to Sudha Sadan leads to a public thoroughfare, indiscriminate checks caused disturbance to the public, AL leaders complained.

A visit by this correspondent yesterday afternoon to Dhamondi road No. 5 where Sudha Sadan is located revealed that the presence of AL leaders and workers was thin. The surveillance also resulted in a significant drop in the number of visitors.

Although the daytime surveil-

lance remained by and large normal, the overnight surveillance by plainclothes policemen culminated in intimidation, AL leaders alleged.

Despite repeated attempts, the home minister could not be reached by phone yesterday for his comments.

Meanwhile, addressing an impromptu briefing at the party's central office in the city yesterday, AL Organising Secretary Mohammad Nasrin said Sheikh Hasina had been kept under strict surveillance, thus jeopardising her personal safety.

The BCL leaders who were kept at the Detective Branch Office were physically tortured, he alleged.

AL leaders Matia Chowdhury, Obaidul Qader and Advocate Abdul Mannan Khan were also present at the briefing.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Hasina issued a statement yesterday, condemning the arrest of ten BCL leaders and workers and demanding their immediate release.

The BCL held a rally at Bangabandhu Avenue last night in demonstration against the arrest of BCL leaders.

Although the daytime surveil-

Will culprits be punished ?

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get the culprits arrested and punished", he said talking to this correspondent on Monday.

"We do not do politics. We are not permanent supporters of any political party and it is not a political incident".

Mahima ended her life after the miscreants threatened her father to circulate her nude photos among locals. Her father had gone to local Jamaat-e-Islami leader Jahangir Hossain, maternal uncle of Selim, president of JCD unit at Lashkarpur Degree College, to hand over the nude photos. But he declined.

Police recovered at least seven photos and a negative of the rape scene from Jahangir's house.

"There are now two stories among local people regarding the motive behind the incident, and we have proof supporting both the stories", said a senior police official in Rajshahi while talking to The Daily Star.

The miscreants might have taken political revenge by raping the girl because Mahima's father and her brother are active supporters of Awami League, he said.

The other story is that Selim had

proposed love to her several times earlier but was refused. He took the revenge, the official said.

Those who visited Mahima's family since February 24 are Awami League's Presidium member Abdul Jalil MP, district unit general secretary Tajul Islam, Mohammad Farooque, former state minister Jinnatunnesa Talukder, city unit general secretary Khairuzzaman Liton, central organising secretary of BNP and Mayor of Rajshahi City Corporation Mijanur Rahman Minu MP, Nadim Mostafa MP, convenor of the National Convention on Crime Against Humanity Justice KM Sobhan, its joint convenor Barrister Amirul Islam, TV artiste Asaduzzaman Noor MP, Group Theatre leaders Ali Jaker and Sarah Jaker, women's leader Ayesha Khanam, Prof Haroon ur Rashid, former vice-chancellors of Rajshahi University Prof Abdul Khaleque, Prof Sayeedur Rahman Khan and DIG and DC of Rajshahi. Many NGO leaders also went there to console her family.

Local MP Nadim Mostafa said the culprits must be punished. He urged all not to use the incident for political purposes.

The other story is that Selim had

authorities also decided to take measures to ensure security of general and resident students on the campus, drive out illegal resident students and take lawful actions against the persons responsible for the attack on November 3 and other incidents of violence on the campus according to the probe reports.

Vice-chancellor of the university Prof. AZM Nuruddin Chowdhury, pro-V.C. Prof. Mohammad Shamsuddin, ex-pro-VCs Prof. Abu Yousuf and Prof. Anwarul Azim Arif, Proctor Prof. Abdul Hakim, Acting President of the CUTA (teachers' association) Benu Kumar Dey, and the president and the general secretary of the BCL were, among others, present at the meeting.

At the seven-hour meeting held at the vice-chancellor's (VC) office, the authorities also decided to tighten security on the campus. The proctorial body is going to sit with the police officials concerned today to discuss the security measures.

Vice-chancellor of the university Prof. AZM Nuruddin Chowdhury talking to The Daily Star yesterday sought cooperation of all concerned to put an end to the present dead-lock.

"The university is like a family. If the teachers, students, officials and employees do their duty, it will create a congenial academic atmosphere on the campus," said the VC.

Proctor Prof. Abdul Hakim said to The Daily Star yesterday, "We now have only 150 policemen on the campus to maintain law and order but we need more of them."

"We told the SP (police superintendent) to deploy 100 more policemen to avoid any untoward incidents on the campus," he added.

At the meeting, the university

Hasina to visit 6 northern dists March 2-5

UNB, Dhaka

Leader of the Opposition and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina will visit six northern districts on an organisational tour from March 2 to 5.

During the four-day visit, she will meet the family members of rape victim Mohima in Kathalbaria village under Puthia upazila in Rajshahi.

Mohima, a schoolgirl, committed suicide last week after being raped allegedly by three activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, the student wing of the ruling BNP.

On the first day (Saturday) of her tour, Hasina will address a public meeting at Sherpur in Bogra, visit Puthia and stay the night at Rajshahi Circuit House.

The Awami League chief will attend a meeting of party activities of Rajshahi district and city, and address a public meeting at Tanore upazila on Sunday.

On Monday, she will attend the party workers' meeting of Naogaon district and address two public meetings at Gobindaganj in Gaibandha and Pirganj in Rangpur district.

On Tuesday, she will attend the party workers' meeting of Rangpur district and attend a mild mahfil at Nimgachi in Raiganj upazila of Sirajganj district in the afternoon.

She is scheduled to return to the capital on March 5.

Emergency meeting of ALCWC today

UNB, Dhaka

An emergency meeting of the Central Working Committee of Bangladesh Awami League will be held today.

AL president and leader of the opposition Sheikh Hasina will chair the meeting to be held at 3 pm at party central office at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city.

Nurul Islam Murder: Another held in Laxmipur

BSS, Laxmipur

Laxmipur police yesterday arrested Anwar Hossain Mahbub, 28, an accused in the killing of BNP leader Advocate Nurul Islam.

A team of Laxmipur Sadar police led by Officer-in-Charge Kamrul Hassan arrested Mahbub, a nephew of district Awami League from in front of Pinky plaza.

Meanwhile, the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) brought out a procession in the town demanding capital punishment to the killers of advocate Nurul Islam.

Police so far have arrested ten persons including Awami League leader Abu Taher for their alleged involvement in the killing.

Natore clash

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AL offices at Lalpur bazar, leaving the upazila AL organising secretary Aftab Uddin Jhulfi and Juba League leader Rana injured.

They ransacked the offices and damaged the portraits of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. In Bagatipara, three persons, including a woman, were injured when the cadres of the ruling BNP attacked houses of four AL leaders at Kolabaria on Monday.

They ransacked and looted valuables from the houses of Korban Ali Khondokar, Sher Ali Khondokar, Alal Ali Khondokar and Dulal Ali Khondokar.

Police were deployed at Borobaria and Kolabaria villages to avoid further clash.

A case was registered with Lalpur thana in this regard.

Arrest culprits

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Convenor of the committee Justice KM Sobhan said the committee members visited Mohima's family and talked to their neighbors. Their investigating revealed that the rapists had a political motive behind the brutalities, Sobhan said.

I found seven reasons behind the incident. These are:

In August last year, local BNP office had sent a letter to Mahima's brother Jahangir, secretary of local Bangabandhu Club, threatening that the club would be demolished. After the October 1 general election, the club was raged to the ground.

Abdul Hannan and his family members were threatened with death after the election.

The gang-rape was done by Chhatra Dal activist Ujjal and his accomplices.

Hannan and his other family members are being threatened now to deny links with Awami League.

Many of our activists are scheduled to write their tests on March 1, 2 and 3," Shikdar said and added that this 'unfair' move will inconvenience their activists.

The Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), student wing of the ruling BNP, however welcomed the decisions and said it will help the authorities to restore the image of the university.



Afghanistan's interim leader Hamid Karzai (R) shakes hands with Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee prior to a meeting at Hydrabad House in New Delhi yesterday.

Afghans need more int'l forces, says Karzai

AP, New Delhi

safety, he said, but the troops are wanted as a guarantee "of the international commitment ... to Afghanistan until it is able to take care of itself."

Vajpayee said that if Indian troops are needed to help secure Afghanistan, "we will consider it favourably."

Karzai said he had no problem with Indian troops coming, but explained that it is the United Nations, not his administration, that decide which country contributes to the security force.

The country is beginning to establish its own army and police, he said.

As soon as Afghanistan is stable, and firm on our own feet, and the fight against terrorism is finished, we will ask the international security forces to leave," Karzai said.

He confirmed that Afghanistan's 87-year-old exiled king, Zahir Shah, who now lives outside Rome, would be arriving March 21 to celebrate the Afghan new year. He is coming "as an Afghan citizen, an elderly statesman," Karzai said.

Business tycoon Abdul Awal Mintoo, who joined the BNP before the last general election, is also aspiring to get the ruling party ticket

Meantime, the BNP aspirants for the mayoral posts in the three cities have become active and are lobbying for the party's backing. Fisheries and Livestock Minister Sadek Hossain Khoka, who heads the BNP's Dhaka city unit, has already launched his election campaign.

Khoka, whose candidature was announced by the BNP chief about two years ago, has already printed colourful posters and drawn graffiti on walls seeking votes.

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