

Indian parliament adjourned again over Gujarat riots

AFP, New Delhi

Both houses of the Indian parliament were adjourned in uproar for the third consecutive day yesterday, with opposition MPs continuing to demand the removal of the chief minister of Gujarat state, where sectarian riots have claimed more than 850 lives.

The lower house was adjourned within minutes of assembling as slogan-shouting MPs made normal business impossible.

Business was suspended in the upper house for the same reason by speaker and India's vice president Krishan Kant after a brief ceremony to swear in newly elected members.

Parliament has been paralysed by the dispute since it returned from a three-week recess on Monday to

debate and pass the national budget.

Opposition parties, as well as some members of the governing coalition, have been demanding the government sack Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi for failing to curb communal violence that erupted in late February.

The ruling Hindu nationalist BJP party, which dominates the coalition, has refused to dismiss Modi and instead directed him to seek a fresh mandate by calling snap elections in the state.

Following the adjournment of parliament, leaders of the BJP-led coalition met and later reiterated their rejection of opposition demands for a special debate on the Gujarat crisis.

"Why should Gujarat be an issue

of debate in the first place?" said defence minister and coalition convenor George Fernandes. "Tomorrow we can also say we want to discuss what is happening in West Bengal."

Fernandes insisted that Gujarat was a state issue that did not require emergency deliberations by the federal government.

"What is happening in the states, the states will decide," he said.

Meanwhile, the Gujarat state cabinet deferred any immediate decision on dissolving the local legislature and calling a snap election.

"The first priority of the government is to concentrate on relief and rehabilitation," said a source within the cabinet.

Road accidents kill 8 in Comilla, Sherpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least eight people were killed and 15 others injured in separate road accidents in Comilla and Sherpur yesterday.

Of them, five people were killed in Comilla and the rest two in Sherpur.

In Comilla, five people, including a woman, were killed and 15 injured as a bus hit a taxicab on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway yesterday afternoon, according to UNB.

Police and witnesses said a Dhaka-bound bus of "Meghna Paribahan" rammed a taxicab at about 2 pm at Kutumbopur in Chandina upazila, leaving five people, including the taxi driver dead.

One of the victims was identified as Rabiul Haque, hailed from Charigram of Fulgazi upazila in

Feni.

Five of the injured were admitted to Chandina Upazila Health Complex "in critical condition."

Later police seized both the vehicles. A case was filed.

In Sherpur, three pedestrians were crushed under the wheels of a Dhaka-bound bus from Sherpur at Arakandi Bazar at 5:30 pm yesterday.

The dead were identified as Niyat Ali, 13, Bajit, 50, and Miraj, 50. They died on way to hospital.

Local people said the driver lost control over the steering while giving side to another vehicle coming from the opposite and hit the pedestrians.

Police held the killer bus of Dreamland Service. Mob caught the driver but he somehow managed to escape with the help of transport workers, witnesses said.

Moudud

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Moudud lauded the role of the local media in condemning the recent cover story of the Hong Kong-based Far Eastern Economic Review that portrayed Bangladesh as a breeding ground of fundamentalists. He said the local media played their due role in unison to "foil evil attempts by vested quarters to put national security at stake through some absurd propositions".

Chaired by BISS Chairman Mufleh R Osmany, the opening session was also addressed by Jangtor Editor Golam Sarwar, The Independent's Acting Editor Zakaria Siraj, News Director of Channel-i Shykh Siraj and BISS Director General Major General SM Shahabuddin Ahmed.

Journalist Ataus Samad and Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam of Dhaka University presented the keynote papers at two working sessions.

Ataus Samad said the best service the media could provide at the hour of crisis was to disseminate accurate information about happenings and their analyses.

Surgery machine

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checked the machine for defects, a laser tube worth Tk 5.71 lakh and another spare part (Argon Wag 2) worth Tk 5.12 lakh went out of order.

Meantime, the supplier of the machine, Universal Traders, offered to replace the machine with a latest version that would cost around Tk 19 lakh while the repair of the argon laser would cost around Tk 12 lakh.

"We prefer to use the newer version as it is almost hassle-free," said Professor M A Hadi, director of NIO.

The newer version of the laser machine—VISULAS 532—is much better and easier to use compared to the older version of the machine.

"The manufacturer no longer produces spares for the older version and so, it is advisable to buy the latest technology," said one of the doctors of NIO.

The laser is used to treat ocular diseases like retinopathy and hypertensive retinopathy. Its unique characteristic is that the laser rays can be focused to burn out development of any diseased area no matter how small it may look on the retina.

Argon laser machine is mainly used to treat blocked blood vessels in the retina of the eye, remove oedema or formation of water in the retina that often intercepts with eyesight and, burn out ischaemic area on the retina. The machine is very useful for use on diabetic patients.

The development of the argon laser is the key element that has made laser eye surgery in retina possible. The machine uses argon gas when lased, produces light in the ultraviolet range. The rays or the beams produced are used to burn out the areas on the retina that are affecting eyesight.

Detention

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Khan Saifur Rahman, who moved the petition on behalf of the four, meanwhile, pleaded that bail should be granted to his clients since the settlement of the case by a full bench would require more time.

The judges upheld his plea and granted bail to the four detainees.

On Tuesday, another division bench of the High Court gave a verdict that upon expiry of a detention period of a person, a fresh detention order would be considered valid. In this case, the government does not need to show any new grounds for fresh detention.

In other words, this verdict allows multiple detentions instead of extended detention.

As per Clause 3 (2) of the SPA, a district magistrate or an additional district magistrate can order a 30-day detention. However, it is required that the magistrate or the additional magistrate must explain in 15 days as to why he has issued the detention order.

Clause 3 (3) of the act says if the government approves the detention order, it may be extended without further explanation.

Otherwise, the detainee must be released after the 30-day detention period is over.

Besides, Clause 3 (1) of the act provides for fresh detention upon completion of the initial 30-day period.

In recent times, the government is not only approving detention under Clause 3 (2) but also extending detention period applying Clause 3 (1).

The act, meanwhile, also requires that the government must explain within 120 days of detention to the advisory council as to why it has detained a person.

In case of a fresh detention, the question arises as to when the 120-day period should be counted from the first day of initial detention or that of the fresh detention.

Note of protest

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Aricha route from the first week of May. These ferries have been procured from Chinese loan at a cost of Tk 17 crore.

"The deal for procuring the Chinese ferries was sealed during the tenure of the previous government. I think we will not face any problem in ferry service," Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain told The Daily Star.

Hague ministerial meeting

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the benefits of globalisation, to create job opportunity for all, including the most vulnerable members of society, so they can earn a decent income and have access to better education and healthcare."

Kok said the dramatic events of 11 September last year "taught us the urgency of redoubling our efforts to eradicate poverty. We made meaningful progress on the trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights, which will ensure affordability of medicines and vaccines for the poor, and will help significantly in the fight against HIV/AIDS".

The two-day ministerial segment of the convention, he said, "is an important step towards achieving the millennium development goals and towards bringing the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) to a successful conclusion".

He called upon the participating ministers to formulate decisions geared towards action and to affirm its strong commitment to immediate implementation.

"Let's return home with the knowledge that we have made progress towards access to, and benefit-sharing of, genetic resources, with guidelines on invasive alien species, and with a working programme on forest biological diversity," he said.

President of the COP-6 and State Minister for Environment of the Netherlands Ms. Geke Faber chaired the inaugural function.

While speaking at the inaugural session, Siraj said the geographical situation and socio-economic development scenario of low-lying countries and island nations should be kept in mind while preparing global strategies, programmes and action plans.

He apprised the ministerial meeting of various programmes related to environment in Bangladesh and said, "We are committed to meet the challenges of the millennium."

In order to make plans for and attain sustainable development goals, he said, conservation of biological diversity, regeneration of extinct and lost species together with effective as well as adequate management of various other natural resources is a must.

"The new millennium has thrown out numerous challenges and solutions of those challenges are not easy and thus we have to make determined, decisive sincere efforts to face the difficult challenges. Let's work together to reach our common goals of sustainability of the biological diversity around the world."

Other members of the Bangladesh delegation are Bangladesh Ambassador to the

Netherlands FM Shamim Ahmed, joint secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forest Syed M Lutfulah, deputy secretaries Dr Mahfuzul Haq and ATM Zulfiquer Haider.

Main themes of the ministerial segment are foreseen for strengthening of involvement of women in conservation and wise sustainable use of biodiversity as well as access to genetic resources and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources.

Representatives of parties, intergovernmental organisations, NGOs, indigenous organisations, private sector and civil society will participate in the multi-stakeholder meetings of the ministers scheduled for today.

Over 120 environment ministers from around 160 participating countries including UK, Norway, Belgium, the Philippines, Jordan, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Italy, Greece, The Maldives, Germany, Japan, Romania, Russian Federation, Finland, Switzerland, Ukraine, Vietnam, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Uganda, El Salvador, Denmark, Bhutan, Bolivia, Austria, Argentina, Cambodia, Canada, China, Cuba, Sweden, New Zealand, Sudan and host Netherlands are participating in the two-day segment.

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Shihab murder

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The two disclosed the names of Faisal Sharif Razu, Mahbulul Haq Rubel, Imran Hossain Sabuj and Nasim Sheikh as their associates in the crime.

Earlier, the police arrested six persons — Liton, Syed, Rashedul Islam Rashed, Julekha Akhter, her husband Fazlul Haq and daughter Konkon Akhter Kanok — for interrogation.

Charges have been dropped against Rashedul Islam Rashed, Julekha Akhter, Fazlul Haq and Konkon Akhter Kanok.

Shihab, 13, a student of class seven of Motihel Model High School, was abducted in front of his school on February 7. He was later killed as he recognised one of the abductors.

The incident came to the light on March 31 when Liton and Syed were caught red-handed by the detectives when they came to take the ransom money from a relative of Shihab at a sweetmeat at Shipaibagh in Khilgaon.

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Saifur tells IMF

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some issues they advised Bangladesh to follow up.

The issues include reducing budget deficit, further relaxation of foreign exchange regulations and progress with regard to interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

"They were quite impressed with the improvement," he told UNB following the meeting, as the delegation expressed their satisfaction over performance in increasing revenue earnings and remittances, reducing expenditure and other steps taken by the government so far.

He said it would be possible to take steps otherwise to generate employment and thus alleviate poverty, a major goal of a fiscal policy, if the budget deficit can be contained. He, however, said the deficit is not always bad if it is utilised for employment generation and poverty alleviation.

Saifur said they (IMF) found "amazing" the progress in remittance inflow that registered over 33 per cent growth in the first three quarters of the current fiscal year compared to the same period of last fiscal.

Expatriate Bangladeshis remitted an additional US\$450 million during the period to help push the foreign exchange reserve to US\$1.41 billion, as of yesterday, from a vulnerable position. The reserve was about to plunge below the billion-dollar mark in January.

The minister said the delegation did not come out with specific suggestion for cutbacks on the Annual Development Programme (ADP), but said the development budget should not be so heavy as can prove a burden for financing.

He apprised the delegation of further examining the issue of introducing flexible exchange rate in the country and said a substantial monetary support would be a pre-requisite for it.

The minister said the IMF team would visit Bangladesh again in July to review the interim PRSP. "They would provide substantial funding if they feel that Bangladesh could achieve the set targets."

The finance minister said the delegation apprised him of their report to the IMF board under Article IV consultation that concluded in February. In the report they praised Bangladesh for its robust economic progress in the early 1990s.

But, the fiscal policy began to be expansionary and reform agenda

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stopped after mid-90s to drive down foreign exchange reserve, he said quoting the IMF report. "The economy became progressively fragile after mid-90s."

The donor agency report noted that demand for public borrowing from the banking system increased to put pressure on the macroeconomic situation.

It said in the last three years of Awami League government, the amount of publicly guaranteed credits rose to US\$16.5 billion (36 per cent of GDP). "Most of the amounts were against supplier's credits," Saifur said citing the IMF appraisal report.

The delegation leader, Valdivieso, said they were here just to clarify few points related to policies, especially on fiscal deficit and enhancing central bank's monitoring.

BIWTC to launch 2 ferries at Aricha next month

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) will commission two recently procured ferries at Aricha ferry-ghat in the first week of next month.

This was decided at a high-level meeting held yesterday at the Shipping Ministry with Shipping Minister Lt Col (Retd) Akbar Hossain, Bir Pratik, in the chair.

BIWTC officials told the meeting that present condition of the existing ferries would not create any trouble in ferry services in next five years.

They suggested that smooth ferry services could be ensured in next 10 years by overhauling the old ferries.

The meeting decided to overhaul four ferries — Hazrat Shahjalal, Amanat Shah, Shah Mokhdum and Shah Ali — one by one in next two years with the fund reserved for BIWTC.

The officials concerned were instructed to select shipyard for the early renovation of the ferries.

It was also decided in the meeting to conduct a survey on how many ferries would be required in next 10 years after constructing bridges on the big rivers of the country.

Secretary of Shipping Ministry Golam Rahman and BIWTC Chairman Abdul Matin were present.

CRP Bill to be placed in next JS session

BSS, Dhaka

The government will take steps to table Consumer Rights Protection (CRP) Bill in the next session of the Jatiya Sangsad.

Food Minister Abdullah-al-Noman disclosed this at a national workshop on 'Food Security and Safe Food' at a city hotel yesterday.

Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB) and Consumers International jointly organised the two-day seminar, chaired by CAB President Dr Jafarullah Chowdhury.

The workshop was addressed among others by Executive Director of the Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD) Debapriya Bhattacharya, advisor of the Consumer Voice of India Dr Bijon Misra, Programme Officer of Consumer International Dr Alice Escalante de Cruze, Executive Editor of the Daily Janakantha Borhan Ahmed and Secretary General of CAB Qazi Faruk.

Cancer hospital

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urgently needed by the hospital area - Cisplatin, 5 Fluoracil, Cyclophosphamide, Carmustin, Doxorubicin, Dacarbazine, Docetaxel, Taxotere, Epirubicin, Idarubicin, Erythropoietin, Lenogastim and Mitoxantron.

Most of the anticancer drugs are used to destroy or interfere with the growth of malignant cells in the lungs, breast, ovary, head and neck, oral cavity, kidneys, colon, brain, blood and cervix.

The correspondent went to the office of Director of the CMSD Brigadier General Abul Kalam Azad twice for comments. But he refused the correspondent appointment. Later, the director was e-mailed. Yet, he did not reply.

Simi suicide case

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interrogate the mother and brother of the victim in connection with the case, he said into the matter to leak out the more important information about the suicide of the victim, the petition added.

After scrutinising the case diary (CD) and statements of the 44 prosecution witnesses, the court gave the order.

Simi, 21, a final year student of Narayanganj Institute of Fine Arts, committed suicide on December 23 last year after being harassed by local hoodlums.

She left a note holding five youths — Knulli, Doel, Ripon, Mofazzal, Enayet and the son of police — responsible for her death.

Later, police arrested SI Abul Basher on December 29 last year.

He was arrested on charge of negligence of his duties that led to the suicide of Simi in Khilgaon area of the city on December 23 last year.

Meanwhile, the five absconding accused are now threatening the victim's family to withdraw the case or to face 'dire consequences,' victim's family sources said.

Powell's peace mission

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whether your sights can be set squarely on peace through negotiations," he said.

Powell noted that both he and US President George W Bush had expressed disappointment in the Palestinian leader's performance in combating such attacks.

Turning to Israel, Powell said incursions into Palestinian territory had to end and that there needed to be a resumption of security talks with the Palestinians if a ceasefire is to be achieved.

Powell said Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon had assured him he was winding down his West Bank operations, launched on March 29.

"He has provided me with a timeline through this weekend and as you all know, (army) reservists are now returning home. I stressed to the prime minister the urgency of completing the withdrawal and have been assured of real results in the next few days."

Powell said that until that happened,