

Dulu: Minor offence?

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yesterday. Dulu was an worker of AL unit in Ward 26 in the city, he said.

Tushar was among many who were present at the meeting, arranged on the premises of Namo Bhadra Government Primari School in the city.

Among others, newly elected woman (reserved) commissioner from wards 25, 26 and 27 Nazma Begum; newly elected commissioner Anwarul Amin Ajab in ward 27; defeated commissioner candidates in ward 26 Mokhlesur Rahman Khalil of AL and Zakirul Islam of BNP; local BNP leaders Alam and Shamiul; JCD leader and Vice President of Bangladesh Institute of Technology (SUBIT) Students Union Rashed Ahmed; AL leaders Nurun Nabi, and Joynal Abedin Chand were present at the meeting, Tushar said.

Golam Kuddus of Jamaat-e-Islami, who was elected commissioner in ward 26 defeating Moklesur Rahman Khalil and Zakirul Islam, was not present at the meeting.

At the meeting, some local BNP and Jubo Dal activists complained that Dulu had cuffed Masud Rana

and misbehaved with him after the polls results were announced.

Dulu confessed his guilt and apologised to Rana.

As Dulu stopped, Rashed stood up and told the meeting that AL workers in Bhadra often harass BNP workers.

All of a sudden, some BNP and Jubo Dal activists shouted from behind saying, "No arbitration, we want to retaliate".

Saying so, they swooped on Dulu and stabbed him fatally, Tushar claimed. Some others who were present at the meeting also corroborated Tushar's statement.

Nazma Begum and Anwarul Amin Ajab could not be contacted for comment despite repeated attempts.

Khalil of AL lost the polls to the Jammat candidate with 145 votes.

After the result was announced, there was an altercation between supporters of the AL and the BNP candidate in ward 26. AL workers were angry with BNP workers saying that had all of them worked for Khalil, he would not have been defeated with such a small margin, sources said.

AL protest rally at Rajshahi tomorrow

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Awami League will hold a rally in Rajshahi city on May 2 to protest what it termed rigging in Rajshahi City Corporation election and murder of Juba League leader Waznabi Dulu.

Party leaders Abdul Jalil, MP, Mohammad Nasim, MP, Motia Chowdhury, Dr Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, A K M Zahangir Hossain and S M Kamal Hossain will attend the rally.

May Day

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rights of the working people. Since 1890 this day is being observed worldwide.

In the present world perspectives, newer demands from trade unions are coming up, such as free labour market in keeping with the free market economy, free labour movements as of free trade and investment flow.

To mark the day different sociopolitical, cultural and trade unions have taken elaborate programmes. Those include rallies, discussions, patriotic songs, etc.

President Prof AQM Badrudoja Chowdhury, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Opposition Leader Sheikh Hasina gave separate messages on the occasion of the International Labour Day.

It's a public holiday. Newspapers will publish special supplements and radio and televisions broadcast and telecast various programmes highlighting the significance of the day.

Major political parties, including ruling BNP, Awami League, Jatiya Party and left-leaning parties, have taken up programmes like rallies and discussion to observe the day.

Jatiya Party (Ershad) will hold a public meeting at Konabari industrial unit in Gazipur at 5 pm.

Different trade unions like National Garment Workers Federation, Bangladesh Sanjuktta Sramik Federation, Bangladesh Hawkers Federation, Bangladesh Mukto Sramik Federation, National Sramik League, National Sramik Jote, Jatiya Garments Sramik Jote, Bangladesh Mukto Sramik Federation and Bangladesh Trade Union Sangha have also chalked out programmes to mark the day.

Move to scrap SPA

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relevant laws were required to achieve that goal.

More than 10 lakh cases are now pending with the lower courts across the country.

Law Commission member Naimuddin Ahmed said, "We had an informal meeting where we discussed why trials are often delayed. We have said we need specific references from the government to find out ways."

He added that the commission, which recommends structures of any new law, has not yet scrutinised the CrPC or the CPC to this end. "If the government asks us, we will do it. But it will take some time," Ahmed observed.

Law ministry sources, on the other hand, said the ministry would soon send to the commission a specific proposal in this regard. Once the commission scrutinises its aspects and submits its recommendation, the government would frame an amendment bill and seek the cabinet's approval for placing it in the Jatiya Sangsad.

Sources said the meeting also discussed sending some cases straight to the High Court and dis-

posing of some others at the district or sessions courts, which means the district or sessions courts will act as appeal courts.

And, to relieve the lower courts of burden of cases all civil cases involving valuation to the tune of Tk 1 lakh to Tk 10 lakh or above would go directly to the High Court, Law Commission Chairman ATM Afzal suggested at yesterday's meeting.

The government may also consider strict rules for appeal against interim order, and for imposition of stay order of the higher court in the context of revision or quash petitions.

The Law Commission also suggested introduction of the arbitration mediation system at the courts, now practised by the Family Court. The meeting also discussed whether such provision could be made available to Money Loan Court.

The meeting held at the Old High Court Building was also attended by commission members Naimuddin Ahmed and AKM Sadeque and secretaries to the law ministry and Law Commission.

Ganges Treaty

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period ended on December 12 last year.

Bangladesh faced an acute shortage of water in 1997 and some shortage last year as well, sources said.

Asked about the review, a high official of the foreign ministry yesterday said, "We are reviewing the status of the agreement and the situation on the ground. We will make a proposal for review after the study is completed."

This year, two joint committee meetings were held to record and reconcile the monitored data on water sharing and its measurement. At both meetings -- the first held in Dhaka and the other in Kolkata -- the committee expressed satisfaction with the measurement and flow of the Ganges water.

The committee was set up invoking a clause of the Ganges water sharing accord.

According to data released by the Joint Rivers Commission, Bangladesh, Dhaka received 72,146 cusec of water against the stipulated amount of 67,516 cusec in the first cycle of January. Of relevance, every month is divided into ten-day cycles.

In the second cycle -- January 11 to 20 -- Bangladesh received 61,281

cusec of water against its stipulated 57,673 cusec.

In the third cycle -- January 21 to 31 -- Bangladesh received 55,047 cusec of water against designated 50,154 cusec.

From February 1 to 10, it received 57,733 cusec against designated 46,323 cusec. From February 11 to 20, Dhaka received 52,240 cusec against designated 42,859, while in the last cycle of February (from 21 to 28), Dhaka received 53,301 cusec against 39,106 cusec marked in the treaty.

In the dry season from March 1 to 10, Dhaka received 51,177 cusec of water against the stipulated 35,000 cusec. From March 11 to 20, it received 40,424 cusec against designated 35,000 cusec, while in the last cycle -- from March 21 to 31 -- 35,628 cusec was received against designated 29,688 cusec.

In the first cycle -- from April 1 to 10 -- Dhaka received 39,031 cusec of water against 35,000 cusec stipulated. In the second cycle -- from April 11 to 20 -- it received 39,846 cusec against 27,633 cusec.

Experts, basing on the recent trend, predicted that the flow of Ganges water during the last cycle of April would be more than the level marked in the treaty.

Beximco shares

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Market analysts say Beximco's decision to offer low dividend is a tactic to pressurise the government into rethinking its policies.

Beximco Group Director, finance and corporate affairs, Osman Kaiser Chowdhury, explained that Beximco mostly relied on income from its textile companies and it could not risk giving out handsome dividends as the finance minister has announced stoppage of cash subsidy to export-oriented industries.

"The government owes us Tk 70 crore in cash subsidy for the last 7-8 months. Now, we have decided to take a prudent policy to ensure smooth running of our companies," he said.

"We have also been refused working capital from the Sonali Bank," Chowdhury said, stating reasons for offering low dividends.

Meanwhile, the market witnessed panic selling amidst confusion because of the suspension. The day ended at the Dhaka bourse with only 12 gainers against 156 losers. The DSE general index shed 1.24 per cent, dipping to 763.704 points.

At around 12:30 the DSE top-10 volume leaders' window was short of four companies to display a full list.

"Investors were in a panic to sell off their stocks of Beximco companies as they found the dividends too

low to have a bearing on the securities' prices. They were faced with heavy loss," an analyst said.

He said investors' expectations were high as unaudited half-yearly balance sheets of the 11 companies reflected good earnings.

Talking to The Daily Star, SEC Chairman Maniruddin Ahmad said the 11 Beximco companies proposed dividends without announcing dates of book closure and annual general meeting as per the regulation about price sensitive information.

Although no shares of the 11 companies were traded on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE), the Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) received the suspension order a bit late and by the time it suspended trading, some six transactions of the companies were executed.

The trading included 100 shares of Shineeupur Holdings and 150 shares of Beximco Pharma.

Meanwhile, the SEC yesterday directed the 11 Beximco companies to immediately submit their balance sheets to check why they proposed such low dividends.

Beximco's Osman Kaiser Chowdhury declined to make any comment on the SEC charge of inadequate price sensitive information since a meeting has been scheduled for Thursday.

"We don't want to make any comment before the meeting," Chowdhury told The Daily Star.



PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia addresses a public meeting at Tungibari in Munshiganj yesterday.

PM asks law enforcers Act fearlessly against trouble-mongers

UNB, Munshiganj

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday reassured the people that her government would leave no stone unturned to free the country, from violence and corruption which she termed a 'vicious legacy' of the past Awami League's rule.

She asked the law-enforcement agencies to take action fearlessly against those involved in violence and ensure peace and security of the citizens.

The prime minister, whose government has armed itself with a tough law that provides for speedy trial of the perpetrators of violence, gave the directive at a public meeting here.

Presided over by Minister for Land M Shamsul Islam, the rally was also addressed, among others, by State Minister for Textiles Mizanur Rahman Sinha, Mahi B Chowdhury MP, Begum Khwaja Ahsanullah and local BNP leader M Saiful Islam.

Local BNP and its front organisation leaders, including Mojibur Rahman Molla, Sajul Kamal, ABM Fazlul Karim and Shahjahan Shikdar, Ameer of Munshiganj District Jamaat-e-Islami ABM Fazlul Karim, and Advocate Mojibur Rahman, Sheikh Mohammad

Hannan, Ali Asgar Ripon, Mizanur Rahman and Abdul Hye also spoke on the occasion.

The opposition, using the wealth plundered during their five-year rule to patronize terrorism, is obstructing the development process initiated by her government, she alleged.

"They are carrying out anarchic activities with only one aim -- to create indiscipline in public life," the prime minister told her audience.

Charging the Awami League with looting crores of taka through corrupt deals like purchasing MIG fighter jets and naval frigate, she said the money looted could ensure a lot of development.

The Prime Minister said BNP believes in politics of development and people have faith in the party.

Referring to election pledges of BNP, she said the present government of four-party alliance had taken up a lot of development programmes.

She mentioned free education programme for girls up to higher secondary level, stipend for girls and cash incentives for families of poor children.

Khaleda said the programmes in the education sector would create employment opportunity for a large number of teachers.



PHOTO: STAR

Businessmen form a human chain in front of the Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry Office at Agrabad yesterday, demanding immediate rescue of Monir Ahmad, an abducted businessman.

Human chain in Ctg demanding rescue of Haji Monir

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Different business associations of Khatusang and Chaktai formed a human chain in front of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) office at Agrabad here yesterday, demanding immediate rescue of abducted businessman Monir Ahmad.

The business leaders warned that if Haji Monir is not rescued within 24 hours, they might consider stopping payment of taxes from tomorrow (Thursday).

Over 500 businessmen participated in the one and a half-hour human chain from 4:30 pm.

Addressing the gathering, business leaders resented that the authorities failed to rescue Monir even seven days after his abduction on April 23.

They withdrew a scheduled three-hour shutdown at Khatusang and Chaktai today but called for a meeting of businessmen at CCCI auditorium Sunday afternoon.

Those who spoke included CCCI directors Md Amirul Haq, Syed Ahsanul Haq, Nurul Alam, Noor Mohammad, Amir Market Businessmen Welfare Association leader KM Sirajul Islam, Chittagong Stock Exchange director Nasiruddin Chowdhury and Chittagong Dairy and Poultry Owners Association leader Shahedul Alam Quader.

The CCCI president in a press statement yesterday called for effective steps for rescue of the kidnapped businessman.

So far seven persons including

Ibrahim Hasan, son of Monir's business partner Md Idris Mia, were arrested in connection with the abduction. They were placed on remand.

Titas probing

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man.

Sources said the meter reader has more than one passport and he used to go abroad frequently.

Immediately after his arrest, some influential persons rushed to Airport police station to arrange his 'release'.

Despite having specific charges against him, police showed him arrested under Section 54 of the CrPC.

He was produced before the CMM's Court on the following day with a prayer for a one-day remand. However, he was released on bail.

Diploma engr

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Chandpur district, used to stay at his mother-in-law's residence.

The victim's brother Mahmud Hossain filed a case with Kafur police, who arrested nine people for their alleged involvement in the killing.

The arrested included the wife of owner of the building where Sharif resided and some construction workers.

The reason behind the killing could not be known immediately.

JS team to visit Raozan temple

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A seven-member parliamentary team led by chief whip of the opposition in parliament Abdus Shahid is scheduled to visit the Hingala Woara Puyan Buddha Bihar at Raozan today.

The team will investigate the assassination of the Buddhist monk Gyanojoyoti Mohasthorir. Gyanojoyoti was slain at the Buddhist temple-cum-orphanage on April 21. The team consists of Faruq Khan MP, Abdur Razzak MP, Syed Ashraf Islam MP and Motahar Hossain MP. And local AL lawmaker Fazle Karim Chowdhury and lawmaker from the neighbouring constituency of Fatikchhari Rafiqul Anowar will join the team on the way.

Nor'wester

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damaged and a large number of trees uprooted in the storm.

Our Staff Correspondent from Sylhet reports: At least 200 people were injured and several hundred houses damaged as nor'wester lashed different upazilas of the district in the early hours of yesterday.

The badly affected areas are, Companyganj, Gowainghat, Jaintapur, Golapganj, Beanibazar, Kanaighat, Balaganj and Fenchuganj upazilas.

In Companyganj upazila, over two thousand dwelling houses were damaged by the storm and the tinshed of Kolabari Junior High School, Padua Tashil office, Noagaon Dakhil Madrassah, Shimutaila Asrayan Project (cluster village) and two structures at Kalasadek Border Outpost and another at Betmura Border Outpost were flown away during the storm.

Pak referendum

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A Reuters team also saw ballot boxes being stuffed with "yes" votes by an official at one polling station in the city of Rawalpindi.

Pakistan's political parties oppose the referendum as undemocratic and unconstitutional and have called for a boycott, but Musharraf has dismissed them as being divorced from public opinion.

Forced to vote

Many of Pakistan's roughly five million public-sector employees complained they were being forced into polling booths.

At one polling station at a government college for women in Rawalpindi, the presiding officer stuffed ballot boxes with several "yes" votes in view of a Reuters team.

"I have been told by the principal to complete 500 votes at my booth," she told Reuters, explaining that only 150 people had cast their votes. "What can we do? We are government servants and we have to do our job."

Also in Rawalpindi, around 100 employees of the state's Water and Sanitation Authority arrived at the Islamia High School polling station with their superiors.

"We are being dragged to vote," one employee, who declined to give his name, told Reuters.

The government denied putting pressure on its employees.

"If you force me to go and vote, you cannot force me to say 'yes,'" Information Secretary Anwar Mahmood told Reuters. "If you force me, I will go and vote 'no'."

Journalists saw a police inspector open several ballot papers at the polling station to see which way people had voted, and he also brushed aside polling agents' objections when one man turned up to vote without an identity card.

There have also been fears Musharraf supporters will vote more than once, especially as there is no

Bangabandhu Bridge

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ment estimates that the repayment would be completed much before the deadline.

The finance minister exchanged views with the bourse operators to find ways and means of rejuvenating the market.

"We will create a bond market," he said, referring to his next move towards giving a nudge to the capital market after having been busy with macroeconomic issues in the first couple of months.

He told the reporters that the government was also considering taxation and monetary measures under the package programme for the bailout of the stockmarket. "It might be tax incentives on dividends and interest rate cuts for lending against stocks."

Led by CSE President M Salman Ispahani, the delegation comprised Vice-President Syed Mahmudul Huq, directors Abdul Mueyed Chowdhury and Waliur Rahman Bhuiyan and Chief Executive Officer Wali-ul-Marooof Matin.

In response to their concern over lack of confidence of the investors, Saifur underscored placement of good shares and management reform.

However, he felt the need for political consensus and a minimum state of good governance for revival of the market as well as the economy.

He appreciated the nine-point prescription from the CSE for breathing fresh life into the stockmarket, which has long been sluggish following a crash.

SSA terminal

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the private container terminal.

In the land lease agreement for container terminal in Pangaon, it was proposed that the land be leased out to the SSA for 99 years with a provision for automatic renewal for another 99 years. However, the secretaries' committee thought it was a major mistake in the deal.

The terms of reference (TOR) of the committee was to look into the interest of the government and users of the container terminal, and how fast the deal could be implemented.

Finance Secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan, Shipping Secretary Ghulam Rahman, Commerce Secretary Suhel Ahmed, Law Secretary Afzal Hossain Ahmed and Secretary to the President Md. Abdul Huq was present in the meeting. M Saiful Islam, who was the shipping secretary when the deal was sealed with then SSA, was not present in the meeting as he joined the Asian Development Bank.

Secretary to the President Md Abdul Huq, who served as the joint secretary to shipping ministry in the late 1990s, was included in the committee since he was involved in the negotiation process for the private container terminal. And the law secretary was later included in the committee to see the legal aspects.

The committee with shipping, finance and commerce secretaries was first formed in late 1998 after the government approved the deal for private container terminal. Later, the committee was expanded with the induction of law secretary, former shipping secretary and secretary to the president into it, as they were involved in the initial negotiation.

electoral list.

In Lahore, a group of around a dozen people, each with both thumbs marked with indelible ink indicating they had already voted twice, turned up at one polling station to try to vote a third time, but were refused permission.

At several polling stations in Peshawar indelible ink was not being used, and local councillors openly told people to vote "yes".

"While working in government, you can't say 'no'," said one civil servant voting alongside his colleagues in Islamabad.

Claiming himself as friend of Tareq Rahman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detectives arrested a person in the city Monday evening, who swindled many out of money claiming to be a friend of the prime minister's son Tarek Rahman.

Mohammad Mahbubur Rahman, 37, son of Mostafizur Rahman, was arrested at house No. 1, road No. 23, DOHS, under Kafur thana at about 7.00 pm. Earlier, one KM Saifuddin filed a case with Kafur Police Station accusing Rahman of an attempt to cheat Tk 40 lakh out of him.

Sources said Rahman black-mailed many people, faking friendship with Tarek. "He swindled a huge amount of money from various offices of the Bangladesh Steel and Engineering Corporation, claiming that he was a friend of the prime minister's son," said a police release yesterday.

Rahman was arrested on charges of defamation and swindle, it explained.

BNP: Rancour

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cooperation from the PMO because most of the officials in the PMO are 'inefficient'.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, a senior minister said every time he has to persuade officials of the PMO for 'approval of summary' by the prime minister. "Even urgent files do not get clearance instantly and take at least a week."

Another minister alleged that it is 'very difficult to trace' the PM's political secretary as he is 'hardly seen' in his office and is busy with other matters.

The secretary of an important ministry, seeking anonymity, also said it is so difficult to get clearance or approval of decisions as files sent to the PMO does not move in time, resulting in unnecessary delay each time.

"A top official is now virtually holding three other posts -- cabinet secretary, secretary to the PM and press secretary to the PM-- causing stagnation in the administration," he added.

A policymaker of the BNP observed that the administrative set up at the PMO is 'worse' than that during the tenure of the previous BNP government.

Senior party leaders also alleged that they are not being allowed to meet the party chief and prime minister for urgent consultations as 'political appointees' in the PMO have become 'more powerful' than bureaucrats.

BNP sources said a number of senior ministers and policymakers of the party now feel 'frustrated' as their views and suggestions are not being taken into consideration.

Rejoinder

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rule of Awami League only to harass him.

He said the report has harmed his reputation in his party BNP and in his ward (ward-77).

In his rejoinder, Asad has said inclusion of his name in the report was motivated and what was said about him was false and fabricated. He claimed that he was neither wanted by police at any time nor his name was published in newspapers. His name was deliberately mentioned in the report as a criminal, he added.

The report was unjustly maligned him before members of the public, Asad said. He felt that he should have contacted him or the voters of his ward no. 3 before incorporating his name in the elected criminal commissioner list.

"Neither I was involved nor I am involved in any sort of terrorist activities which is well known by voters of my ward," he said adding that he had to suffer imprisonment at different times during the AL rule only because of 'my political ideology'.