

Dhaka asks Delhi to stop push-ins

Diplomats told it might lead to human disaster

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Even as Dhaka called on New Delhi to stop push-ins yesterday, an estimated 4,000 Bangla-speaking Indian Muslims were being assembled on the border by the Indian Border Security Forces (BSF).

The foreign office summoned Indian Deputy High Commissioner Dilip Sinha yesterday afternoon and told him that push-ins should be

stopped in the interest of closer ties between the two neighbours.

The foreign office also briefed foreign diplomats on the push-ins and said India made at least six such attempts.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Reaz Rahman told diplomats that if the attempts continue, it might lead to a 'human disaster'.

Reaz said the BSF tried to push

400 people into Bangladesh Saturday night.

He noted that the timing of such push-in attempts is a particular matter of concern for Bangladesh because it happened when home secretary level talks between the two countries were underway in Dhaka.

He hoped that the situation would not be allowed to deteriorate

further in view of the 'humanitarian ramifications of the evolving situation.'

Diplomats barring those of the South Asian countries attended the hurriedly called briefing at the state guesthouse, Padma.

Earlier, Liakat Ali Khan, director general (South Asia) of the foreign ministry, told the Indian deputy

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Hasina accuses president of violating constitution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The main opposition Awami League yesterday said it boycotted the opening of the Jatiya Sangsad's maiden session of the year, protesting placement of the controversial indemnity ordinance and the presidential speech in the House.

"We didn't attend the House as the infamous indemnity ordinance was placed and the president, its promulgator, addressed the House," said Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina.

Addressing a press conference at the opposition conference room, Hasina accused President Iajuddin Ahmed of violating the constitution through his approval to the ordinance that indemnified all responsible for "53 custodial deaths" in the army-led anticrime crackdown.

"We cannot witness the deliberation of a president who had promulgated the ordinance in violation of the constitution. The president is oath-bound to protect the constitution, but he violated basic human rights guaranteed by the constitution," she said explaining reasons for the boycott.

However, the opposition leader said her party will join the session

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AL boycotts session Indemnity ordn placed in JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jatiya Sangsad yesterday went into New Year's session amid an opposition boycott while the President called for action from both ends of the bench to build up democracy.

The home minister placed the controversial Joint Drive Indemnity Ordinance 2003 before the House. None from the opposition composed of both Jatiya Party factions and Bangladesh Krishak-Sramik-Janata League protested the placing of the ordinance.

In his first address of the parliament after coming to office on September 6, 2002, President Iajuddin Ahmed emphasised partnership between the government and opposition.

"If people's welfare be the main objective of all, irrespective of party affiliation, then with mutual understanding, partnership and concerted efforts the foundation of democracy in this country could be strengthened and consolidated," he said.

The President urged the lawmakers to get across the political divide and thrash out the issues at hand.

"It is my firm belief that in future

appropriate solution to national issues will be worked out through consensus built on mutual trust."

The session runs through March 6.

The presidential speech over, the session was adjourned till 4:00pm February 2.

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Condensed milk: BSTI order stayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday stayed for two months orders of the Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) to cancel licenses of four condensed milk companies and to seize their products.

The court order came following writ petitions filed by the companies.

Meantime, a mobile court led by a city magistrate seized 605 cans of Danish brand and 283 cans of Star Ship brand condensed milk from six shops at two city markets yesterday.

Dr Kamal Hossain appeared for Abul Khair Condensed Milk Industries Limited that produces

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BGMEA polls foiled under cop siege

M SHAMSUR RAHMAN

Police sealed off the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) office in the early hours of yesterday to foil the elections to the country's largest trade body.

Voters who turned up in hundreds at the capital's BGMEA office early morning came under attack by some people allegedly led by Zainal Abedin Faruk, a ruling BNP lawmaker and leader of the Oikya Jote, one of the two panels contesting the polls. The other panel is styled Sammilita Parishad Forum and led by Kazi Muniruzzaman and Annisul Huq.

In Chittagong, police also foiled elections and hundreds of garment workers allegedly belonging to an Oikya Jote panel supporter laid siege to the BGMEA office to prevent voters from entering the building.

The BGMEA later moved to the High Court against the police intervention and the court directed the police to withdraw from the association offices. It also asked the BGMEA to hold elections immediately.

The BGMEA election fell prey to the government's power play after some incumbent and former BNP lawmakers formed the Oikya Jote and mustered the government's support.

A senior police official of the Tejgaon Police Station told the BGMEA officials yesterday morning that the office had been sealed off following two interim injunctions on elections by lower courts.

BGMEA President Kutubuddin Ahmed then tried to explain the situation to voters, but he was cut

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BNP MP's men swoop on voters, HC orders immediate elections



PHOTO: STAR

Voters, tired after hours of tussle and tension, sit on the stairs of the BGMEA office yesterday, as police sealed off the association office to foil elections to the largest trade body.

Police act like gangsters, observes HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday came down heavily on the government and the police for their roles in the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) elections.

The court criticised the Directorate of Trade Organisation for unleashing the law enforcers like greyhounds to enforce its order and said the police were acting now-days like gangsters.

The division bench of Justice MA Aziz and Justice Nazrul Islam Chowdhury made the remarks while hearing a petition against the government move to stop the BGMEA elections.

While moving the petition, Barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud told the court that the BGMEA had to call

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BGMEA polls in BNP power play

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BGMEA election this time witnessed unprecedented government interference in support of the Oikya Jote panel, which enjoys ruling-BNP blessings. The panel led by Fazlul Azim, a former BNP lawmaker, used his prime minister's office links to talk the commerce ministry into issuing a postpone-order.

The idea was to buy some time to create a split in the Sammilito Parishad Forum and thus, make the passage easier for the Oikya Jote.

Two panels are contesting the election this year -- the Sammilito Parishad Forum led by Kazi

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Union Parishad polls 100 hurt as second day sees violence too

Death toll now 4, polling suspended at 10 centres

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police opened fire on troublemakers in Lalmonirhat, Gaibandha and Rangpur while polling was suspended at ten centres on the second day of the Union Parishad elections yesterday.

A series of clashes at different polling centres marked voting in 63 unions across the country, leaving more than 100 people injured.

Also yesterday, at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, two persons, including a police constable, died from wounds they had

received in polls-related violence the day before.

Sheikh Sayed received serious head injury when miscreants attacked the West Ewazbalia Primary School Centre in Noakhali.

The 30-year-old policeman was first taken to the Good Hill Hospital in the district and later to the DMCH at around 11:00pm.

His body was sent to his ancestral home at Langolkot in Comilla for burial.

Meanwhile, nine people were arrested in connection with his killing.

The other victim, 22-year-old Anis, received bullet wounds as supporters of two UP chairman candidates clashed in Munshiganj.

The latest deaths put the number of people killed in violence over the first two days of the UP elections to four.

In Lalmonirhat, police yesterday arrested a Harati union chairman candidate after violence at a polling centre left at least 30 people injured. Several victims received bullet wounds.

The trouble began when

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Sony murder Charges framed against 15

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Speedy Trial Tribunal, Dhaka Division, yesterday framed charges against Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) cadre Mohammad Hayat

Khan Muki and 14 others in the Sabequn Nahar Sony murder case.

Judge Shahed Noor Uddin fixed January 30 for trial of the case. The accused pleaded not guilty before the court.

The 14 other accused are Musfiq Uddin Tagar, Mockbul Hossain Mukul, Sirajul Islam alias Wasim, Zakir Hossain Patwari alias Munna, Nurul Islam Sagar alias Tepa Nurul Islam, S M Masum Billah, Sheikh Solaiman alias Babul, Dulal, Rafiq alias Rafiq Chacha, Mohammad Masum, Sujon, Ayub, Year Mohammad and Mohiuddin.

Of them, three are now on bail, seven in jail custody and the rest five, including Mokammel Hayath

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Sabequn Nahar Sony