

HC stays govt order

FROM PAGE 1

Dhaka, the government on Thursday appointed Mohammad Ayub Miah, a joint secretary at the industries ministry, as an administrator to take over the charges from the BGMEA executive committee to oversee the election within the next six months. The lower court order came on a petition filed by BGMEA member MA Masud.

Although the administrator did not come to assume his office, the appointment sparked off intense agitation among the BGMEA leaders and members.

In their submission to the High Court on behalf of the BGMEA petitioners yesterday, Barrister Rafique-ul Huq and Dr M Zahir said a vested quarters in the government wants to politicise the country's largest trade body ahead of its election.

The appointment was made under the Section 10 of Trade Organisation Ordinance, 1961, which says the government may appoint an administrator in a trade body if it deems that the body is not being run properly.

However, the law dictates that the government must seek written opinion of the trade association before taking the decision. But, in this case, as the government did not seek opinion of the BGMEA, the appointment is illegal, the counsels pointed out.

Barrister Huq said the government intervention came at a time when the country is trying to get a duty-free access to the US market. The appointment has tarnished the image of Bangladesh abroad.

Dr Zahir said the apparel sector alone accounts for over 75 percent of the country's total export earnings amounting to some \$5.6 billion and about 20 lakh people, mostly women, and employed in the sector.

He said BGMEA did not file writ petition against the lower court rule, rather it is against the government order.

Respondents of the writ petition are the commerce secretary, director of trade organisations at the commerce ministry, the administrator

and MA Masud.

Assistant Attorney General Rajik-al-Jalil represented the government side in the writ petition.

At a press conference after the High Court verdict, the BGMEA president said, "Certain quarters is trying to seize the association coming through the back door, as they do not believe in election and democracy. We will prevent such undemocratic moves at any cost and continue our struggle to help each other to compete in a quota-free regime."

He lauded the government for its continued fiscal and policy support for the garment sector. The government has recently exempted all export-oriented industries from the value-added tax and allowed loan rescheduling without any down payment.

Customs procedure at Kamalapur inland container depot has been cut down to six from 38 steps. The government will also set up one-stop cells for garment export at the Chittagong port and Chittagong Customs House this month.

Huq said the government has always been a promoter and facilitator of the garment sector. "We talked with the commerce minister about the duty-free market access to the US on January 6. Unfortunately, later on the same day, we received a letter from his ministry about appointment of an administrator," he recalled.

He said there is no crisis in the BGMEA that calls for appointment of an administrator, adding the government should not try to control the trade bodies.

Huq said the BGMEA would talk with the foreign buyers and try to offset the harm to Bangladesh's image caused by the unfortunate episode.

Former BGMEA president Quazi Moniruzzaman, Senior Vice President MA Salam, Second VP Alamgir Rahman, VP M Gulam Faruk, VP (Finance) Anwar-ul Alam Chowdhury and other directors and members were present at the press conference.

CPB meets Gono Forum, Workers Party

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) said yesterday in separate meetings with Workers Party and Gono Forum leaders that they were not considering any political alliance with the Awami League, said sources.

The CPB leaders also discussed the present state of 'simultaneous' opposition movement as well as the role of the left 11-Party alliance.

A meeting source said Workers Party and Gono Forum leaders tried to bridge the differences growing between AL and CPB following the latter's abstaining from a combined opposition meeting.

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Parliament Affairs Salahuddin Qader Chowdhury's recent meeting with AL President Sheikh Hasina and repeated hartals called by AL's front organisations are said to have created the hiatus.

At the meetings CPB leaders said that as they do not deem AL a like-minded party and the CPB would not go for a political alliance with them.

CPB would continue their efforts to establish a "left democratic alternative" that would be independent of influence of the BNP and AL.

The party leaders however said they would continue to take part in the ongoing 'simultaneous movement' and do everything possible to resist the rise of religious extremism 'patronised by the alliance government'.

CPB President Manjurul Ahsan Khan, General Secretary Mujahidul Islam Selim, Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon and General Secretary Bimal Biswas, and Gono Forum leader Pankaj Bhattacharya were present in the meetings.

CHUADANGA GANG RAPE

Women rights bodies demand speedy trial

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushtia*

Thirty-five women rights organisations in ten southwestern and one northern districts reiterated their demand for early trial and punishment of policemen involved in a housewife Doly Khatun rape in a Chuadanga police camp on December 18 last year.

The organisations yesterday in a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner concerned demanded immediate arrest of the rest of the policemen involved in the incident and formation of a special court for trial of the culprits.

They alleged that police in collaboration with some doctors in Chuadanga hospital damaged all evidence of rape.

Several organisations also shared similar programmes in the capital.

Thousands of people attended demonstrations and human wall programmes in the district towns organised by Governance Coalition, a combine of 35 rights groups, sources said.

Fourteen policemen of Gokulkhali camp including its charge Abdul Kuddus and Habildar Rokumuzzaman allegedly gang raped the housewife at the camp after picking her up from Doliapur area in Alamganga upazila of the district on December 18 last year.

In the face of countrywide protests, district police suspended five of the accused and arrested them. They are Kuddus, Rokumuzzaman and constables Harun, Sabir and Harunur Rashid.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, a Dhaka based women rights organisation has kept the victim under their safe custody and they will provide her legal support.

ACC attaches

FROM PAGE 1

Miah told *The Daily Star* last night.

The Cabinet Division in a circular on January 3 cited a serious conflict between the government and the newly formed ACC and formally announced 1,107 BAC employees as reserved employees of the government, ordering them not to work with the commission.

The rule left ACC Chairman Justice Sultan Hossain Khan and commissioners Prof Moniruzzaman Miah and Maniruddin Ahmed as the only commission officials aided by a few personal staff.

Yesterday's ACC meeting discussed running the under-trial cases and absence of commission staff in the district-level offices.

The commission also decided to send a proposal to the government for creation of 40 posts in addition to 36 newly created ones for running essential jobs of the ACC.

Although the commission had earlier disagreed with the government's proposal for hiring experts from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to lay out the ACC's organogram, yesterday it agreed to sit with foreign consultants.

"The ACC members suspect the administration wants to hold sway over the ACC through consultants from the ADB, where they have a lot of control," said an ACC source.

The commission however thinks it does not need any involvement of consultants from any foreign funding agency right now as it can design the organogram itself.

Following his confessional statement, the Rab men took him

Bangabandhu

FROM PAGE 12
Day of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

On this day in 1971, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman returned home after a long confinement in the then West Pakistan during the Liberation War in 1971 that led to independence of Bangladesh.

On the night of March 25, 1971, Pakistani army arrested him at his Dharmendra residence and the following day sent him to custody in a West Pakistani jail.

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Witness says Chhatra Samaj leader shot Ahsanullah

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A prosecution witness in the Awami League lawmaker Ahsanullah Mian case yesterday told the court that he saw Jatiya Chhatra Samaj leader Nurul Islam Dipu, his brother Shahidul Islam Dipu and their gang firing at the lawmaker.

Mohammad Jamal, an eyewitness in the case was giving his deposition before the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1, Dhaka.

Judge Shahed Noor Uddin recorded the deposition of the witness and he was cross-examined by defence lawyers. He will be cross-examined further today.

In his deposition, Jamal told the court that at about 10:00am he was standing in front of the Sahara Market at Tongi in Gazipur district. After a long time, he saw a white private car coming towards the Market and then saw Dipu and Shupu getting down out from it. They went to Nurul Islam Sarker, the prime suspect in the case, who was sitting in the driving seat of another car. Nurul Islam then patted them on their backs, the witness said.

Later, Jamal and a friend of his, Farid, went to the Sechchabazar League's conference at Noagon High School. After a while, he heard sounds of blasts and gunshots and he came to know that the MP and some others were injured, the witness added. Jamal then told the court that Dipu and Shupu went to Amoli and Nurul Islam Sarker left the scene with his car.

Twelve of accused are Nurul Islam Sarker, Rakibuddin Sarker alias Pappu, Boro Zahangir, Amir, Zahangir, Mohammad Ali, Nurul Amin alias Amin, Ayub Ali, Mahabubur Rahman, Monir Hossain, Dulal and Kabir Hossain. Of them, Kabir, Pappu, Ayub and Nurul Amin are on bail, while the rest are now in the custody.

Dipu and 17 others are still at large.

Special Public Prosecutor Abdul Latif Talukder and advocates Mahibul Ahmed, Sahara Khatun, M Sajay Hossain, Mohammad Ali, Kamru Islam and Monzazuddin Mehedi appeared for the state. Advocates Nazrul Islam, Abin Sharuddin Khan Mukul, Jasimuddin and Sanaullah defended the accused.

The programming committee was earlier scheduled to meet on January 3-4, the standing committee (comprising foreign secretaries) on January 5-6 and the Council of Ministers on January 7-8.

Chakha had announced earlier that all preparations for the summit were complete and it would need only seven to 10 days to put the summit in infrastructure in place.

The Saarc summit preparation cell, headed by Reaz Rahman, is holding meetings every Tuesday and Thursday to keep the preparations up to date, foreign ministry sources said.

The Saarc summit earlier sched-

5 nations agree

FROM PAGE 1
media on Saturday that Foreign Secretary Riaz Khokar had contacted other Saarc foreign secretaries about the fresh dates and Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Maldives and approved them.

Bhutan's position is it would accept the dates approved by the other member states, Morshed said.

Pakistan would finally announce the dates for the Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) summit upon India's response to the proposed dates. In case of India's refusal to endorse them, it would continue the process of consultation with the member states, he mentioned.

Meanwhile, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is now visiting the tsunami-hit Indian territories of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, while External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh has just returned from a world leaders' summit on tsunami crisis in Indonesia.

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behind an abandoned textile mill at Jalkuri to seize firearms of his gang. As they reached the spot, Rubel's men opened fire on the law-enforcers, a Rab press release said.

"During the firefight a bullet hit Rubel and he died instantly," the press release added. After the incident, the Rab members seized one revolver, one pistol and nine bullets from the spot.

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Another team of Rab and police arrested Apon at Karapara in the town on Saturday and interrogated him. Following his statement, the joint team took him near Satfola Wapda Cross-dam in Sadar upazila in search of firearms.

When they reached the spot, Apon's followers opened fire on the law-enforcers to snatch their leader. The law-enforcers then returned fire. "Apon was killed on the spot," said a Rab official seeking not to be named.

After the incident the Rab men seized one revolver, four bullets, eight cartridges and six powerful bombs from the spot.

According to Rab, Apon was an absconder accused in 15 criminal cases including three murder cases. He was involved in forcible occupation of shrimp enclosures, extortion, abduction for ransom and rape, locals and police said.