

Govt has politicised key public institutions

Speakers say at seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a seminar yesterday blamed the government for politicising key public institutions including the Election Commission.

They said the nation is heading towards a crisis due to failure of the political leadership.

Citing the examples of Kansat and Shanti Akhra, the speakers warned that similar incidents may happen across the country if immediate steps are not taken to contain corruption and bring back good governance in key public institutions.

The seminar titled 'Shaping the future of Bangladesh' was organised by Bangladesh Young Economic Association at the National Press Club in the city with its President AZM Saleh in the chair.

In his keynote speech, Qazi Khiliquzzaman Ahmad, president of Bangladesh Economic Association (BEA), said the nation today is beset by some fundamental problems.

"Pervasive corruption, social violence and erosion of people's confidence in key public institutions are some of the fundamental crisis we are facing today," he explained.

Corruption has been so entrenched that even the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), set up over a year ago, has not been given the power to work independently, the BEA president added.

Another stalemate has been created in the Election Commission, which has failed to prepare an acceptable voter list for the next general election, Khiliquzzaman said, adding the chief election commissioner (CEC) and other people responsible for its failure should leave the office and pave the way for others to do the job properly.

ASM Shahjahan, former adviser to caretaker government, said how people can expect a fair poll when the CEC was appointed considering his party loyalty.

"Time has come to set up another commission to identify why the Election Commission is not working properly," he added.

Shahjahan said police and civil administration cannot serve people as they are used for political purpose.

The interest of people is totally ignored and there is serious lack of accountability, he added.

He said there is autocracy in the name of democracy and the pre-

vailing situation indicates that the country has been leased to coalition government for five years.

Shahjahan said people's right to information has been severely ignored and the 'secretariat has become the biggest cold storage in the country'.

Taking part in the discussion, Khandaib Ibrahim Khaled, managing director of Pubali Bank Limited, said all national bodies have been destroyed.

The situation has turned so bad that it has pushed the back of most commoners against the wall, he said citing the example of Kansat.

There is a serious vacuum in the political leadership and that's why it has become imperative to launch awareness programme to awake people, Ibrahim added.

There is no planning, he said, adding the economy is growing but it is not growing equitably.

Ataus Samad, advisory editor of Amar Desh, said electoral reforms discussion between the ruling coalition and the opposition combine should take place in parliament immediately as the proposed committee has not been formed yet.

SIEGE PROGRAMME 130 Netrokona AL activists sued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrokona

Netrokona police filed three cases with the Speedy Trial Tribunal accusing 130 Awami League (AL), Juba League and Chhatra League activists in connection with AL's siege programme of District Commissioner's (DC) office on May 10.

Clashes erupted between AL and BNP activists on that day as AL went forward with their siege programme to protest fuel price hike and fake voters on the voter list.

Netrokona AL President Samsujiha, General Secretary Ashraf Ali Khan Khasru, Joint Secretary Nur Khan Mitu, Organising Secretary Bhajan Sarkar, Juba League Convenor Faruque, Chhatra League President Majibul Haque Hira and Secretary Mozammal Hossen Tuku are also accused in the case.

Netrokona police searched for the AL activists at their homes. Sources said most of the AL activists of Netrokona town and upazila headquarters have fled after the filing of the case yesterday.

Police reportedly vandalised the house of Netrokona district Juba League leaders Aazharul Islam and Rafiqul Islam at Challishia in Netrokona failing to find them in their houses.

Meanwhile, at 9:00pm yesterday, BNP cadres ransacked the AL office in Kalmakanda. They also beat up 10 AL activists who were inside the office. BNP cadres also ransacked the Shidhi Bazar AL office last night and damaged 10 shops in the area. They also damaged the house of Joinal Abadin, secretary of Koilata union AL in Kalmakanda upazila.

Tributes paid to Nasreen Hug

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a memorial meeting yesterday termed Nasreen Pervin Hug, late country director of ActionAid, as 'Mother Teresa of Bangladesh' for her contribution to the welfare of distressed people in the society.

They said Nasreen was a dear friend to all irrespective of race, religion and profession with special dedication for the wellbeing of challenged people and minority groups.

The meeting titled 'Homage: In Memory of Nasreen Hug' was organised by Action Aid Family at Osmani Memorial Hall in the city.

The meeting began observing one-minute silence followed by recitations from the holy books of different religions.

In her introductory speech acting Country Director of Action Aid Shahamin S Zaman said, Nasreen introduced two new areas of work for Action Aid: gender equity and social and economic justice.

Describing Nasreen as 'vibrant person', she said, "We would look forward to fulfil her dreams of a balanced society with regard to gender and economic issues."

Mahbub Kabir team leader, and Faria Selim, associate coordinator of Action Aid, spoke on the life and works of Nasreen.

They said born in Dhaka in 1958, Nasreen took her master's degree in Nutrition Science from University College of Barkley in San Francisco, California.

Her deep love for people of the country and sense of responsibility for the society brought her back to her own country, they added.

Describing Nasreen as 'Internationalist', Action Aid Chief Executive Ramesh Singh said, "Her agenda was beyond the borders as she brought the issues of universal gender balance, and right to foods and healthcare."

Close relatives and colleagues of Nasreen from home and abroad also recalled their memories with Nasreen.

Country's leading singers and artists performed some favourite songs and poems of Nasreen on this occasion.

Nasreen died in a car accident at her residence in Dhamondi on April 24 last.

33 injured as villagers clash over harvesting paddy in Sirajganj

UNB, Sirajganj

At least 33 people were injured, five critically, in a clash between two groups over harvesting paddy at Rashidpur village in Kazipur upazila yesterday.

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Twelve houses were also damaged and looted by marauders during the clash.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Of the injured, 17 were admitted to Sadar Hospital.

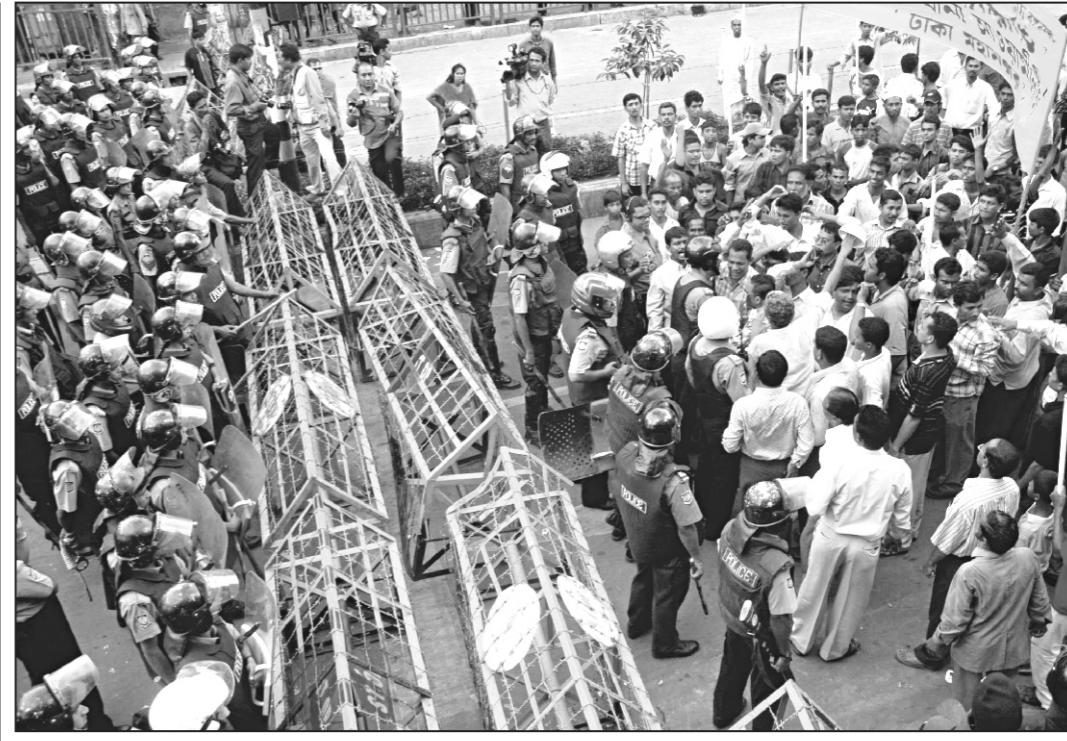


PHOTO: STAR
Police intercept a procession brought out by 14-party at Maghbazar intersection in the city yesterday demanding supply of adequate water and uninterrupted electricity.

4 lakh new Teletalk SIMs by November

BSS, Dhaka

Teletalk, the state-owned mobile telephone company, will release 400,000 fresh SIMs by November this year.

The company has already sold 264,000 SIMs. The work is in full swing to expand the network for the fresh connections.

Teletalk sources said the company would release a package named 'Rural Package' by the next month to make the mobile phones easy and available to the rural people of Khulna, Rajshahi and Chittagong.

Under the package, the people of the regions can buy a SIM for Tk 900. However, they will have to buy a Tk 300 card in addition to the SIM.

Teletalk Managing Director (MD) Engineer M Obaidullah told BSS that the 'Rural Package' would be released to reach the mobile service to the low-income people of the country excepting Dhaka.

He said the call rate of the package would be Tk 2.40 per minute in peak hours, Tk 1.80 per minute in off-peak hours and 60 paisa per minute between Teletalk to Teletalk in off-peak hours.

"As part of our commitment to providing best customer service, we are going to launch seven customer care centres across the country," he said.

Body recovered

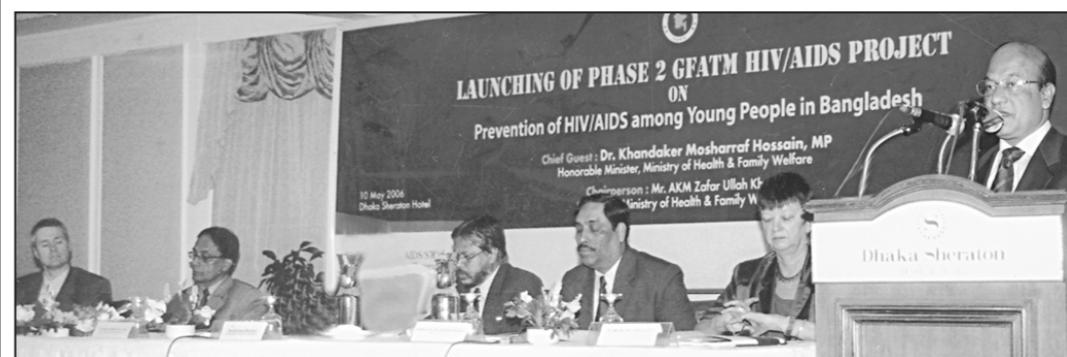
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Demra police yesterday recovered a body of an unidentified youth at a ditch from Sayedabad area in the city.

Sir Salimullah Medical College

Morgue sources said the body had marks of injury in the head.

Police suspect that he might have been killed two or three days ago and the body was buried deep into the mud in ditch.



Health Minister Dr Khandaker Mosarraf Hossain speaks at the launching ceremony of a project on "Prevention of HIV/AIDS among Young People in Bangladesh" Phase 2 at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel recently. Sitting from left are Save the Children, USA Country Director Edward Olney, Technical Committee of National AIDS Committee Chairperson Major General (Retd) Dr ASM Matiur Rahman, Additional Secretary Aminul Islam Bhuiyan, Professor Dr Md Shahadat Hossain and acting WHO Representative Dr Marizke Beckx-Bleumink.

SUST, private medical college closed

FROM PAGE 1

Medical College Hospital early yesterday. Besides, three other injured students were flown to the capital.

However, Superintendent of Police at Sylhet Mallik Fakhruddin Islam told The Daily Star yesterday that the police did not open fire on students on Friday night. Only six teargas shells were fired to disperse the students, he said.

The SUST students and JRRMC students Masum and Zakir were injured in the clash between them at that time.

On information, a group of students from the nearby SUST messes went to the JRRMC to take revenge. But the medical students confined four of them into a room, putting it under lock and key. They also gave JCD leader Abu Abdullah Chowdhury a good beating.

After about half an hour, around 200 SUST students with sticks reached the medical college and went on a rampage on the college campus and in the emergency department of the hospital.

The students of the two institutions then engaged in further clashes, leaving about 30 injured. The Medina Market, Pathantola and medical college area turned into a battlefield.

Being informed, police rushed to

the area but failed to bring the situation under control. They, however, were able to free the four SUST students from confinement at about 10:00pm.

At about 10:30pm, heavy contingents of armed police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) reached the area. At one point, SSP Glasuddin ordered his men to open fire on the SUST students without taking permission from magistrate Tofael Islam, who was present there.

The police also clubbed the students. Five SUST students were admitted to the MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital with serious wounds. Three others -- Rajib Kumar Baishya, Shamim and Niloy -- were brought to the capital by an air ambulance.

As the SUST authorities failed to control the situation, agitating students under the banner of "common students" laid siege to the vice chancellor's office at midnight demanding his immediate resignation.

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the incident. It had been asked to finish the job in a week, he said. Professor Syed Lokman Ali is heading the committee.

The JRRMC authorities have filed a GD in connection with the Friday's incident with Sylhet Kotwali Police Station.

SUST students visit the JRRMC area and its canteen almost regularly, since a good number of student messes are located in the area. However, the university is about two and a half kilometres off the JRRMC.

SUST STUDENTS AGITATE FOR PROBE

The agitating students of SUST have formed an all-party committee yesterday to realise a three-point demand that include immediate resignation of the VC, punishment to the policemen responsible for Friday night's firing and ensuring proper treatment of the injured.

The students brought out a procession on the campus in the afternoon and held a rally in front of the library building calling the authorities for fulfilling the demands by 10:00am today, otherwise they would announce fresh agitation programmes.

Meanwhile, the SUST authorities have formed a four-member committee with Professor Habibul Ahsan, dean of Life Science Faculty, as its convener to probe Friday incidents.

Other members of the committee are Professor Joinal Abedin, Major General (Retd) Nazmul Islam, principal of the JRRMC and also a member of the SUST syndicate, and Jamil Ahmed Chowdhury, registrar of the SUST.

Chittagong City Corporation Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury will inaugurate the exhibition at 11:00am.

The album will also be available at city's Current Book Centre, Batighar, Hotel Peninsula Shopping Corner and Hotel Agrabad Shopping Corner.

The exhibition will remain open for all and ten percent of the total proceeds of albums and posters will be handed over to Acid Survivors Foundation, the organisers informed.

AL calls hartal in Bogra tomorrow

UNB, Bogra

Awami League has called for a daylong hartal in Bogra town tomorrow protesting arrest and police action against the party activists.

Police arrested seven Juba League leaders from a procession in the town.

A rally of Awami League led 14-party combine was scheduled near Satmatha in the afternoon that was foiled by the police apprehending clash with ruling BNP which held a rally 50 yards away at the same time.

Police obstructed the Juba League procession at Jhautala leading to clash. Some 30 people, including five policemen, were injured in the clash. Police fired teargas shells to disperse the procession. Seven Juba League leaders were picked up from the spot.

Additional police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) were deployed at different parts of the town to ward off further trouble.

Valuables worth Tk 3.15 lakh stolen from city house

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Valuables, gold ornaments and cash worth Tk three lakh and 15 thousand were stolen on Friday night from a house in the city's Badda area.

Thieves entered Monir Hossain's house in Badda's West Padaria area on Friday evening. There was no one in the house at that time.

While fleeing the scene with the booty, the locals chased the thieves and caught a thief named Abul Kashem.

Project on prevention of HIV/AIDS launched

A project on "Prevention of HIV/AIDS among Young People in Bangladesh" Phase 2 was launched at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel recently, says a press release.

In collaboration with National AIDS/STD Programme (NASP), Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHW) and Save the Children-USA, the project will be funded by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM).

The recipient of this global fund is Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Save the Children, USA, will be the management agency to implement the project through the partners Matra, HIV/AIDS and STD Alliance Bangladesh (HASAB), PIAC, Padakhep Manabik Unnayan Kendra, ICDDR,B and their 12 associates.

The launch celebrated the successful completion of Phase 1 of the project (two years) and the beginning of Phase 2 of the project