

HSC exams deferred

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school teachers led by Prof Abul Kalam Azad and Kazi Fazlul Haque at Muktangon vowed to continue their strike until their demands were realised.

On the other hand, several hundred government primary school teachers of Bangladesh Government Primary Teachers Association, led by Abdul Awal Talukdar, issued a seven-day ultimatum to the government to meet their demands. They have been observing hunger strike until death at the Central Shaheed Minar in the capital since Saturday.

Several hundred community primary teachers under the banner 'Bangladesh Community Primary Teachers Association' have also been continuing their hunger strike until death at the Central Shaheed Minar since June 18 demanding nationalisation of their jobs.

Meanwhile, Jatiya Shikkhak Karmachari Front, a platform of non-government high school and college teachers and employees, led by Prof Kazi Farukque Ahmed observed a daylong hunger strike at the Central Shaheed Minar yesterday demanding cent per cent salary from government exchequer.

Several hundred teachers and employees of non-government high schools and colleges started to gather at the Central Shaheed Minar around 10:00am where leaders blasted the four-party alliance government for failing to give them a payraise following price hike of essentials.

Meanwhile, Shikkhak Karmachari Front, a platform of non-government high school, college and madrasa teachers and employees led by Selim Bhuiyan held a rally at Muktangon in the capital and submitted a memorandum to the prime minister also demanding cent per cent salary from government exchequer.

They also threatened to go for indefinite strike from July 6 if the government did not meet their demands.

A four-member team led by Bhuiyan submitted the memorandum to Harris Chowdhury, political secretary to the prime minister, with

the 10-day ultimatum to meet their 10-point demand.

Their demands include extending the retirement age of teachers to 65 years, introducing service rules for the employees and repealing the provision of Managing Committee in the institutions.

Underscoring the importance of unity among the teachers, Bhuiyan called upon all non-government teachers and staffs to join the movement if they truly wanted to see their rightful demands realised.

CEC

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that requires formation of a supreme judicial council to remove him.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, former adviser to the caretaker government M. Haizuddin Khan said the CEC must quit now. "Time has come to form a supreme judicial council to remove him on grounds of misconduct and inability to continue in the post," he said.

Referring to Aziz's recent remarks challenging the jurists who said there is no legal bar to visiting door to door for updating the existing voter list, Haizuddin said, "no mentally balanced person" can speak this way.

PREPARE THE VOTER LIST

CEC Aziz said yesterday, "The voter list will be prepared in accordance with the judgment of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court and the Electoral Rolls Ordinance, 1982 and the Electoral Rolls Rules, 1982. I am going as per the laws and will not go beyond the laws."

He said there are three steps in the voter-listing job—preparation, amendment and correction, and revision. "We are now taking up the procedure for amendment, correction and inclusion in the existing voter list," he said.

Meanwhile, the CEC is yet to launch its campaign for the month-long task for preparing the voter list from July 1. The CEC said it will start soon.

When reporters requested the CEC for talking to the press regularly ahead of the next election, Aziz said, "Is it a factory that produces news everyday?"

Hasina finally receives

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marked the end of the speculation if she would accept it as controversy had been dogging the credibility of the organisation that gives the award.

The decision to go to Kolkata was taken at the last minute as she was supposed to fly to Dhaka from New Delhi yesterday morning.

Difficulties in availing a direct flight to Dhaka yesterday morning made her aides to change the route and go via Kolkata. Hasina's aides had indicated that she would make a transit stopover at Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport at Kolkata but she chose to enter the city, receive the award and call on Jyoti Basu.

Sources close to Hasina said the visit to Kolkata city gave her an opportunity to interact with Jyoti Basu as part of her meetings with the Indian political leaders.

Wrapping up her five-day visit to India, AL chief Hasina yesterday suggested that relations between the two countries are bound to improve if there is trust and friendship.

"If there is trust and friendship, the bilateral relations are bound to improve," Hasina asserted before reporters on the sideline of the award giving ceremony at the hotel.

She cited in the context that the 30-year Ganges Water Sharing Treaty signed between India and Bangladesh during her tenure as prime minister and said the agreement was worked out without any third party mediation.

Asked about India's persistent concerns over Indian insurgents operation from Bangladesh territory, Hasina said, "terrorism is a global phenomenon and Bangladesh is no exception."

She said she herself had been subjected to terror attack in her own country, an obvious reference to the August 2005 grenade attack on an Awami League rally in Dhaka.

Answering a question if her party, if voted back to power, would concentrate on further improving Bangladesh's relations with India, Hasina said AL would give importance to ties with all neighbouring countries. "It is our principle," she added.

Hasina said the first priority of AL, if they returned to power, would be poverty alleviation in Bangladesh as poverty has been a scourge not only for her country but the entire South Asia.

The AL chief called on his Marxist leader Jyoti Basu at his residence at Salt Lake in Kolkata.

Referring to the 40-minute meeting with Basu, she said a wide range of Indo-Bangladesh relations came up for discussion, including the Ganges water sharing accord.

Hasina said she was thankful to Basu for his role in clinching the accord and taking 'great interest' in improving relations between India and Bangladesh.

Nonagenarian Basu thanked Hasina for visiting his residence and recalled his association with former Bangladesh president and her father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his stellar role in the liberation of Bangladesh.

Basu also recalled his visit to Bangladesh and his ancestral home when Hasina was the prime minister and enquired about the house and how it was being maintained. He voiced anxiety over the attack on Hasina at the August rally in Dhaka and said, "This sort of incident is worrisome."

Hasina expressed her fear that the alliance government in Bangladesh would resort to malpractices in the next general elections.

"I am afraid BNP government would again resort to malpractices in

the elections in my country to hold on to power," she told reporters.

Hasina expressed her confidence that AL would regain power if the election is allowed to be held in a free and fair manner.

This was the first time during her current tour of India that Hasina chose to talk to the media and mentioned about the coming elections in Bangladesh.

NO CONTROVERSY OVER AWARD

Hasina chose not to talk with journalists on her arrival at Zia International Airport last afternoon but her political secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury rebutted reports of controversy involving the Kolkata award.

Saber said the AL never said that Hasina would not receive the award, our staff correspondent reports.

"She (Hasina) could not go to Kolkata on June 24 to receive the award as she had meetings with Vajapeyee and IK Gujral in New Delhi," he said.

It was reported in the media that Hasina had declined to join the award-giving ceremony as questions arose in the Indian foreign ministry over the credibility of the organisation.

Saber, however, said it was a registered organisation of the Indian government and there were no controversies over the reputation of the organisation.

"As meeting schedules with a number of Indian leaders were changed, she could not go to Kolkata to receive the award," Saber said, adding that the chief of the organisation handed over the award at ICT Sonar Bangla Hotel in Kolkata at 11:00am yesterday.

Asked whether Hasina's visit was a "political pilgrimage" as interpreted by some in the ruling coalition government, Saber said those politicians who interpreted things like that visit foreign countries for political gains.

Hasina held series of meetings with Indian political leaders including India Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, former prime ministers Atal Bihari Vajpeyee, IK Gujral, Leader of the Opposition LK Advani and Jyoti Basu during five-day visit.

Hundreds of party workers thronged the airport to welcome the AL chief home. A number of senior leaders including Zillur Rahman, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Abdur Razzak, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Motia Chowdhury, Mohammad Nasim, Farook Khan, Abdur Razzak and Tanjim Ahmed Sohel Taj were present at the VIP lounge to greet Hasina.

Allocation

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state minister for religious affairs said in parliament yesterday.

"Allocation for the mosque-based mass education programme, which was Tk 94 crore in the third phase, was increased to Tk 216 crore in the fourth phase," State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharraf Hossain Shahjahan told the House.

Replied to a query of a Jamaat-e-Islami lawmaker, the state minister said in a written answer that the government has no plan to stop the mosque-based education programme.

This programme was launched in 18,767 mosques under 479 upazilas in addition to 12,000 centres across the country, the state minister said.

The government has also planned to launch mosque-based Quran teaching programme in 12,000 mosques from July 1, 2006, he added.

Akbar

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College and Hospital in Gulshan around 8:35pm yesterday and the doctors declared him dead at 9:40pm.

He was the second minister of the BNP-led alliance government to pass away within a span of little over a week after the death of Women and Children Affairs Minister Khurshid Jahan Haque, also Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's eldest sister.

Akbar left behind his wife, four sons, a host of relatives, friends, colleagues and well-wishers to mourn his death.

Born on December 2, 1941 at Kashan Patti in Comilla town, Akbar joined the army at Kakul Military Academy in Pakistan on May 8, 1966 and was commissioned to join the 31 Baluchi Regiment. He received his BA from Dhaka University in 1969.

He joined the Liberation War in 1971 first under Khaleda Mosharraf and then with the 'Z' force headed by late president Ziaur Rahman. For his heroic role in the War of Independence, he was awarded the title of Bir Protik.

After the independence, he took voluntary retirement from the Bangladesh Army on December 31, 1973. He then got actively involved with politics and joined the United People's Party (UPP) on January 1, 1974. He was the vice-president of UPP.

In 1977, when UPP merged with Ziaur Rahman's Jatiyaatabadi Front, Lt Col Akbar actively joined in the formation of BNP. He was first made special secretary and then he held the position of joint secretary general and was one of the vice-presidents of BNP till his death. He was also the convener of Comilla district unit of BNP till his death.

He was made Minister for Petroleum and Mineral Resources in Ziaur Rahman government's cabinet in 1978.

Late Akbar was first elected MP from Comilla-8 constituency in 1979. Then he was elected MP from the same seat in 1991, 1996 and 2001.

He was appointed Minister for Environment and Forest in October 1993, during the first tenure of Khaleda Zia's government.

He was made Minister for Shipping on October 10, 2001 when the BNP-led 4-party alliance won the 8th Jatiya Sangsad election with a two-third majority and Khaleda Zia became the third time prime minister of Bangladesh.

In his long political career, late Akbar actively participated in the anti-autocracy movement and in all democratic movements. He was a devoted politician and popular people's leader in his district.

Receiving the sudden death news of her cabinet colleague, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia rushed to see his body at his Gulshan residence. She stayed there for some time consoling his grief-stricken family members.

Earlier, on hearing the news of his death, a number of ministers, MPs, party leaders and well-wishers rushed to Shikder Hospital, BNP Secretary General also TGRD and Cooperatives' Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Health Minister Dr Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain, Environment Minister Tariquil Islam and other ministers and leaders visited the hospital and the residence of Lt Col Akbar.

CONDONCE MESSAGES

Acting President Jamiruddin Sircar expressed profound shock at the sudden death of Shipping Minister Lt Col Ahsan Hossain. In a condolence message yesterday, he recalled the contributions of late Akbar to the country's independence, its rebuilding and democracy.

"The nation has lost a valiant freedom fighter and politician at his death," the acting president said.

Sircar expressed deep sympathy for the bereaved family members and prayed for salvation of the departed soul.

In a message of condolence, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia expressed deep shock at the death of Lt Col Akbar Hossain. She recalled Akbar's contribution in the War of Independence and said the country lost a patriotic politician and an efficient minister in his death.

She said the nation will remember with respect late Akbar's role in democratic movements and his contributions to nationalist politics. BNP lost a devoted leader in his death, she added.

Khaleda Zia prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

Mosharrif Hossain Shahjahan said his party will remember with respect late Akbar's role in democratic movements and his contributions to nationalist politics. BNP lost a devoted leader in his death, he added.

Khaleda Zia prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

As a veteran freedom fighter, he will be given a guard of honour and the national flag will cover his coffin.

He will be laid to rest at Sharifin in Laksam at 5:00pm today.

Donors doubt

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He said the donors expressed satisfaction over the government's performance in implementing the action plans.

He said the government's inability to draw up projects with long term perspective and in line with the requirements of inter-sectoral coordination, coupled with corruption in the process of implementation are depriving the country of expected return from investments. Poor governance is also discouraging private investors, he added.

He noted that corruption transfers at least Tk 48,000 crore every year from productive and hardworking people to non-productive extortions working inside the government and under its protection.

He said the government's inability to draw up projects with long term perspective and in line with the requirements of inter-sectoral coordination, coupled with corruption in the process of implementation are depriving the country of expected return from investments. Poor governance is also discouraging private investors, he added.

The government clarified that civil service reform is a lengthy process but the establishment ministry already undertook several initiatives including merit based promotions and postings, and pay incentives for employees.

The government also informed the donors that it had introduced a PRSP Harmonisation and Action Plan Cell in the ERD early this month for better implementation of the PRSP.

The meeting was participated by representatives from the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, USAID, DFID, and UNDP, and government representatives from Japan, and Norway.

AL wants JS body

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charge. The government should make its decision clear whether the president will continue or not.

Speaker Jamiruddin had undergone bypass surgery twice, but he can perform as the acting president. Then why President Iajuddin cannot discharge his duties after similar surgery," Nasim questioned saying that in a parliamentary system of government the president is the head of the state but he has nothing to do except signing a few files.

In reply, the health minister said the president has not taken charge as the medical board suggested him rest for another 15 days. Besides, he has developed some complications due to old age.

"But many people have tried to cook up controversies over the president's illness. Many of them have misinterpreted that the country has two presidents. But it is not true -- there is only one president and the Speaker is the acting president," Mosharraf said.

Later, participating in the discussion on proposed budget for

FY07, AL lawmaker Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim asked why president Iajuddin's car did not bear the president's flag when he was returning to Bangabhaban.

Taking floor on a point of order, BNP lawmaker Syed Moazzem Hossain demanded formation of a parliamentary body to make public all information regarding the India visit of the leader of the opposition.

Acting Speaker Akhtar Hamid Siddiqui however did not say anything about the demands of AL and BNP lawmakers for parliamentary bodies.

Meanwhile, lawmaker Abu Hena, who was expelled from BNP in November last year for his stance against patronage of militancy by the ruling party leaders, for the first time joined the session.

Speaker Jamiruddin had reportedly been asked to stand in front of her and threatened to arrange for his punishment by complaining to her parents about his lewd behaviour with her, said the DAG. He said the information came from the statements made by Shazneen's two sisters Shahzeh Haq Shehzadi and Simin Hossain.

Although Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar on the day he was expelled from BNP said "Abu Hena has become an independent lawmaker," Hena yesterday took his seat in the treasury bench. Independent lawmakers usually sit in the row of the opposition bench.

After the hearing, DAG

ABM Walir Rahman Khan yesterday in his argument before the High Court (HC) Death Reference Bench said on April 1, 1998 Hasan tried to grope Shazneen in a bathroom.

He said Hasan also met 15-year-old Shazneen about four to five hours before the murder. Seeing Hasan, angry Shazneen then shouted at him saying how he dared to stand in front of her and threatened to arrange for his punishment by complaining to her parents about his lewd behaviour with her, said the DAG. He said the information came from the statements made by