

Volatile situation during caretaker govt if talks fail

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The situation during the next three months of the caretaker government would be volatile if the proposed dialogue between the ruling party and the opposition fails to reach an agreement on electoral reforms before the expiry of the tenure of the present government, speakers at a roundtable said yesterday.

They said it would not be possible to bring about reforms during the caretaker government and that militancy would raise its ugly head taking advantage of the conflicts

among the political parties.

Academics, diplomats, high government officials and eminent citizens took part in the roundtable organised by the Institute of Development Strategy (IDS) and the Centre for Development Research, Bangladesh (CDRB) at the National Press Club.

CDRB Chairman Dr Mizanur Rahman Shelley presented the findings of an opinion poll on 'Comprehensive reform for good election and better Bangladesh'. The IDS and CDRB conducted the survey on 2000 people. The questionnaire was also posted on web site.

According to the survey, 80.28 percent of the respondents said no-one should be allowed to contest the parliamentary election from more than two constituencies, and 87.5 percent said the candidates must disclose certain personal information such as net wealth, financial and business interest and taxes paid.

About 78 percent of the respondents said the Election Commission should be further empowered and made independent. Every voter should also be provided with an identity card, said 92.23 percent of the respondents.

About 71 percent of the respondents are in favour of a ban on hartal, and 60.68 percent said the number of ministers should be limited to 15 or 18.

On student politics, 83.5 percent of the respondents said there should be constitutional restriction on dragging students into party politics or violence.

Speaking at the roundtable, Brigadier (retd.) Sakhawat Hussain said conflicts among the political parties are responsible for the rise in terrorism in the country and that the evil forces would rear their ugly head if the political stand-off over electoral reforms is not resolved within the next 24 days.

Mentioning a report of the Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB), Jatiya Party Secretary General Sheikh Shahidul Islam said 29 legislators in the present parliament did not pass the SSC examinations.

He suggested that the Election Commission should introduce a new provision regarding the educational qualification of candidates. The candidates for parliamentary election must be graduates and the legislators should not be involved in any businesses other than making laws, he added.

Dr Ataur Rahman said the Article-17, which does not allow a candidate to speak against his party's decision in parliament, should be amended to make parliament effective.

Prof Nurul Islam, Selina Hossain, Mosleh Uddin Ahmed, columnist Jagul Ahmed Chowdhury and former lawmaker Nuruliddin also spoke at the roundtable moderated by Dr Mustafizur Rahman.



PHOTO: STAR

Dr Mustafizur Rahman speaks at a roundtable organised by the Institute of Development Strategy (IDS) and the Centre for Development Research, Bangladesh (CDRB) at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right is CDRB Chairman Dr Mizanur Rahman Shelley and on his left is Dr R A Gani.

Form labour tribunal outside EPZ, reinstate workers

Demands BCWS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Centre for Workers' Solidarity (BCWS) yesterday demanded reinstatement of all suspended and terminated workers as well as convenors and members of all Workers' Representatives and Welfare Committees (WRWC) in Export Processing Zone (EPZ).

The centre also demanded immediate formation of EPZ Labour Tribunal and EPZ Labour Appellate Tribunal outside the BEPZA and EPZ areas.

It also demanded withdrawal of false cases against all WRWC members and workers.

The demands were made at a press conference organised by Bangladesh Centre for Workers Solidarity (BCWS) at the National Press Club in the city.

Addressing the press conference, BCWS leaders alleged that some factory owners and in some cases BEPZA authorities are illegally sacking the workers and WRWC members.

They also alleged that nine WRWC members of A-One BD Ltd were forced to resign and in other cases they were terminated as they protected the interest of workers.

Harassment of workers has become a regular phenomenon in the EPZ as the authorities often lodge false cases against the workers whenever they speak of their legal rights, they said.



Appeal for help

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 'father' of a 'ten-year-old' boy, who had been suffering from congenital heart defects, has sought financial assistance for the surgery his son underwent at a city hospital recently.

Manjurul Haq, a student of class V, had two 'holes' in his heart. Prof Dr Asit Baran Adhikary and his team performed a successful operation on the boy on September 21.

The treatment involves Tk 1.80 lakh, but his father, a day-labourer, could not afford such a huge expenditure.

He has appealed to the generous people to extend a helping hand.

Contributions can be sent to SB A/C No. 21069399, United Commercial Bank, Mohammadpur Branch, Dhaka-1207.

In a written statement, Babul Akhter, law and research secretary of BCWS, said many workers including WRWC members of Red Point Jackets, Yang One, Ring Shine Textile and SGWICUS BD Ltd are being harassed by filing criminal cases against them.

The workers are also deprived of their legal rights as there is no EPZ Labour Tribunal or EPZ Labour Appellate Tribunal.

Kabir Hossain, a temporarily suspended WRWC convenor of LSI Industries Ltd, said they are extremely oppressed as they do not have any place to go for justice.

"The only place to go to seek justice is BEPZA which always

serves the interest of owners instead of us," he alleged.

Kalpona Akter, secretary general of BCWS, said the workers in EPZ never get justice as they do not have the right to form trade union.

Though the EPZ workers get a little much higher salary than the other workers, they are deprived of their rights, she added.

Kalpona demanded reinstatement of all suspended and terminated workers of EPZ including those of A-One BD Ltd.

Workers of different factories also spoke at the conference.

2 RMG workers found dead in Gazipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Police recovered decomposed bodies of two garment workers from a fish farm of Faulkal village in the district.

Md Helal, 20, and Al Amin, 19, used to work at the Nilo knitting as sewing operators. Al Amin, son of Abdul Barek hailed from Fulbaria upazila of Mymensingh while Helal, son of Abdul Matin, hailed from the Muktagechha of the same district.

They went missing from Monday evening.

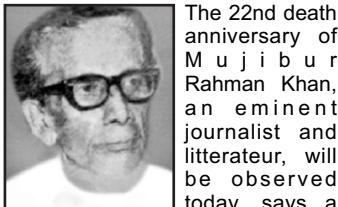
Police and family sources said they used to stay at Iqbal's house near the garment factory. Jaydevpur police recovered the bodies from a fish farm seven kilometres away from their house.

Talking to the workers from the Nilo knitting, it is learnt that both of them were trying to have a love affair with a female worker from the same garment factory.

Police picked up the female worker to the Jaydevpur police station to quiz on the matter.

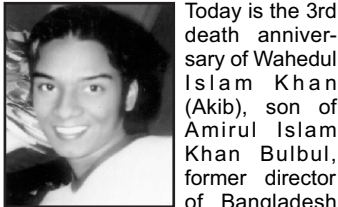
Investigation Officer Sub-Inspector Shafiqul Islam told the journalists that the bodies got rotten and it was difficult to determine any marks of torture on them.

Death anniversary



He was also the founding president of the Jatiya Press Club. Jatiya Sangbadik Sangstha will hold a discussion in his memory at the Jatiya Press Club at 4:00pm today.

Wahedul Islam Khan



Academy, says a press release.

Milad mahfil, Qurankhwani and special prayers will be held at his residence at 1/2, Block-C (Shaptak Apartment), Lalmatia at 4:00pm today and at the mosque adjacent to Uttara Sector-4 graveyard tomorrow.

Foods will also be distributed among orphans on the occasion.

Wahedul Islam Khan Memorial Sangsad will also organise a milad mahfil and discussion at Barisal.



PHOTO: PID

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia offers munajat at an Iftar party hosted by her for diplomats at a city hotel yesterday.

9 killed, 56 injured in road accidents

STAR REPORT

At least nine people were killed and 56 others injured in separate road accidents in Narayanganj, Munshiganj, Jessore and Tangail on Tuesday and yesterday.

UNB from Narayanganj reports: Three people, including two of a family, were killed and 40 others injured when a bus plunged into a roadside ditch at Kamtal Malibagh on Dhaka-Chittagong highway yesterday.

Witnesses said the Com-panyganj-bound bus from Sayedabad of Dhaka fell into the ditch while it was overtaking another bus.

Later, divers recovered bodies of two children and a woman from the drowned bus.

The deceased were identified as Sujan and Shahinur, 8, and her mother whose name could not be known immediately. They were going to Muradnagar upazila in Comilla from Dhaka.

Another report from Jessore adds: Two people were killed while another was injured in separate road accidents in the district yesterday.

Locals said Al-Amin, 13, son of Motiar Rahman was injured when a truck hit him near Rajarhat in Sadar upazila while he was returning home from mosque after Fazr prayers.

Al-Amin succumbed to his injuries on the way to General Hospital.

In another incident, Dr Motabber Hossain alias Debu, 50, was killed and his younger brother Bulbul, 43, was injured when a bus hit their motorcycle on Jessore-Satkhira road in front of Muradpur Degree College at about 6:00am.

The accident took place when the two brothers were going to their village home at Parkhajura village in Monirampur upazila.

Meanwhile, Two people were killed and five others injured in two separate road accidents at Nimali on Dhaka-Mawa highway in Munshiganj on Tuesday and yesterday.

Police and witnesses said an

unidentified young girl, aged about 18, died on the spot, her mother and rickshawpuller sustained serious injuries when a bus hit their rickshaw at 10:00am yesterday.

The angry mob put up barricade on the highway protesting the accident leaving hundreds of vehicles stranded on both the sides of the highway for several hours.

On Tuesday night a Dhaka-bound truck from Sirajdikhan upazila collided with a Mawa-bound passenger bus at the same place, leaving an unidentified young man dead and three others injured.

Our Correspondent from Tangail reports: Two people were killed and ten others seriously injured in a collision between a truck and a covered van on Dhaka-Tangail highway yesterday.

Police and witnesses said the head-on collision between a fertiliser-laden truck and a covered van of Continental Courier Service took place at Bhatkura under Sadar Upazila at

around 5:00am.

Two passengers of the truck died on the spot. Their identity could not be known immediately.

The injured people were rushed to Tangail General Hospital.

Constitutional committee of Sramik League formed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Humayun Kabir and Habibur Rahman Akand were made president and general secretary respectively of the constitutional committee of Bangladesh Sramik League at its bi-annual conference in the city recently.

A 30-member committee was also formed in the light of an amendment to the constitution of the league.

Leader of the Opposition and Chief of Awami League Sheikh Hasina attended the conference as chief guest.

The first session was held at Kamalapur Railway Station presided over by Shiraj Ullah, convenor of the conference preparation committee.

AL Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader, Labour Secretary Habibur Rahman Shiraj and other central leaders of Jatiya Sramik League attended the meeting.

The second session was held at Mahbub Ali auditorium.



PHOTO: STAR

Karmojibi Nari, an organisation of working women, forms a human chain at Muktangan in the city yesterday demanding implementation of the tripartite agreement to end the suffering of garments workers.

EMS can cut operation cost in super markets

BSS, Dhaka

Establishment of the Environment Management System (EMS) in super markets could reduce operational cost and power use, and improve corporate value.

The EMS for the super markets includes waste management, use of environment-friendly products, environment campaign and training.

This was stated yesterday at a videoconferencing seminar on 'Promoting environment education,' organised by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) at its conference room in the city.

Manager of the Seiyu Ltd, one of the largest chain retailers of Japan, Kazunari Take and Fumie Ooka of the Japan Environment Association gave two lectures from Tokyo of Japan through the videoconference while environment experts from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Malaysia,

Cambodia and Indonesia joined it from the JICA offices in their respective countries.

The seminar presented two case studies, including Seiyu, which has 404 retail stores in Japan, and Junior Eco Club, a networking organisation of Japanese school children, which have taken environment awareness raising initiatives.

Kazunari said they usually maintain four environmental activities, including selling of environment-friendly products, energy reduction, organising training and workshop for their staff and local community.

"We set boxes at a corner of every store where our clients throw various waste, including paper milk cartons, toilet papers, food trays, plastic and PET bottles," he said adding that "Recycling companies take the waste from our stores which reduce our waste caring

cost."

Besides, to increase the corporate value, the company promotes some campaigns like 100 yen will be paid when a customer refuses to receive plastic shopping bags for 20 times.

Replying to a question from Bangladesh, Kazunari informed that no ban on use of plastic bags has yet been imposed in Japan though the government formed a legislation to reduce use of plastic from last year.

Later, Operation Manager of Agora, a chain shops of Bangladesh, Shams Haider told BSS that they are also planning to set some big boxes to collect and separate the waste.

PM takes Iftar with diplomats, judges

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday had an Iftar with diplomats, judges and former caretaker government advisors.

The PM hosted the Iftar party at Hotel Sonargaon where Ambassadors and High Commissioners of various countries, representatives of UN organisations and international development partners, Supreme Court Judges, former caretaker government chief and advisors were present.

Khaleda exchanged pleasantries with the guests. A munajat was offered seeking divine blessings for the welfare of the country and the people.

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman, Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan, Law Minister Moudud Ahmed, Science and ICT Minister Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan, Chief Justice Syed ZR Mudassir Husain, former caretaker chief Latifur Rahman, Chief Election Commissioner Justice MA Aziz, US Ambassador Patricia A Butenis and British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury were present on the occasion.

Journo restricted from entering RMCH

RU CORRESPONDENT

Rajshahi Medical College and Hospital (RMCH) authorities have imposed restriction on journalists and photojournalists from entering the hospital to perform their professional duties.

Sources said some reporters accompanied by photojournalists went to hospital's emergency section on Monday noon for collecting information about a road accident patient when they were roughed up by hospital Director Bazley Quader.

"You must seek permission before taking any photographs of patients, otherwise you will have to face eventualities," he warned the journalists.

Rajshahi Protection Movement Council yesterday expressed grave concern over the imposition of restriction on the journalists.

In a statement, council Convenor Jamat Khan said corrupt medical authorities are trying to hide their misdeeds.

Rajshahi Press Club President Anu Mostafa and other journalists have also expressed concern over the imposition of restriction

RRSP lays siege to PDB chief engr's office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi Rakkha Sangram Panishad (RRSP) yesterday laid a siege to the chief engineer's office of Power Development Board in Rajshahi demanding uninterrupted power supply.

They handed over a memorandum to the chief engineer demanding solution to the power crisis within seven days. They threatened in the memo that RRSP would not be responsible if any untoward incident occurs after seven days.

They said the continuing loadshedding added salt to the rising temperature, and fasting Muslims and patients are the worst victims of loadshedding in the hot spell.

They said normal life was paralysed for power crisis and students cannot study for it ahead of their final examinations in weeks.

RRSP convenor Zamat Khan, Khandaker Hafizur Rahman and Manjur Hasan were present during the siege.

DHAKA TODAY

Roundtable

COAST-Coastal Association for Transformation Trust-organises a roundtable on 'Experience of September Cyclone: Ways to Protect the Fishermen'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

Roundtable

Bangladesh Institute of Development Research organises a roundtable on 'strategies to reduce inequality in access to quality education'. Venue: BIDS. Time: 10:30am.

Discussion

Coalition for Urban Poor (CPU) will hold a discussion to mark the World Habitat Day. Venue: CUP secretariat. Time: 3:00pm.

Feeding programme

Kochi Kontho Foundation organises a feeding programme for destitute children to mark the World Child Day. Venue: Shishu Sharga Jagorini Chakra