

Put back election date to save nation from crisis

Speakers tell discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Legal experts and civil society members at a discussion yesterday suggested putting back the date of the national election as they feared that holding the polls as per the current schedule may lead to anarchy.

They also observed that the January 22 polls would not be acceptable as the Awami League-led grand alliance is boycotting it.

Having a free, fair and peaceful election is more important than merely fulfilling the constitutional obligation to hold the elections within 90 days of the caretaker government, they said.

Shushashoner Janney Nagorik (Shujan) organised the discussion on 'Present political situation and our role' at The Hunger Project auditorium in the city.

The speakers suggested that the president/ chief adviser to the caretaker government should refer the issue of putting back the election to the Supreme Court (SC) in order to save the nation from a disaster.

The Election Commission (EC) that has many flaws and failed to prepare a correct voter list should take an initiative to appeal to the SC for more time to prepare a flawless electoral roll for fair polls, they said.

"It is not possible to hold a fair election amid present political situation," Shujan President Prof Muzaffer Ahmad said, adding that the intervention of the Supreme Court in this regard is a must.

The present political situation has proved that there are many inconsistencies in the caretaker government system, which should be corrected, he said.

Shujan Secretary Dr Badiul Alam Majumder said the election could be put back for the sake of democracy and peace.

He feared that there would be more damage than public welfare if the January 22 election is conducted haphazardly.

There are inconsistencies in the printed version and CD version of the voter list of 2000 and the lists updated in July and finally in December last year, he said, adding that the EC should inform the

SC of such flaws and seek more time to correct the electoral roll.

As the EC has not done so, the president/chief adviser should refer the matter to the Supreme Court as a way out in order to ensure a peaceful election, Badiul Alam said.

The 90-day time limit to conduct the elections is not important, Advocate Dr Shahdeen Malik said, adding that if the people fail to exercise their right to vote, it will be a violation of constitutional rights.

The main spirit of the constitution is more important than the constitutional provision for holding election within 90 days, he said.

He also observed that the January 22 election should be resisted because the majority will not be able to participate in it, thereby losing its credibility.

"What is the use of such an election where the voters do not have choices?" former adviser to caretaker government ASM Shahjahan said, stressing the need to recast the EC in order to regain trust of the people.

The silence of the President and

Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed is totally unexpected during a critical period of the nation, he said, adding that mass arrest is also not acceptable during the tenure of the caretaker government.

Describing the present political situation as a grave national crisis, Bangladesh Economic Association President Prof Kazi Kholiquzzaman Ahmad said the election held in 1996 without the participation of major political parties was not acceptable and such elections will also not be acceptable in future.

A delayed election might harm economy for the time being but will yield better results in the long run, he said.

The speakers also urged the political parties not to enforce hartal or blockade programmes, which are harmful to economy and education.

Former adviser to caretaker government M Hafizuddin Khan, Justice Ebadul Haque, Prof Tofael Ahmed of Chittagong University, Ajoy Roy and researcher Sazzad Zahir also spoke.



Jubo Sangram Parishad stages a demonstration at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday in support of the countrywide blockade slated for today and tomorrow and demanding cancellation of the election schedule.

ELECTION CAMPAIGN

4-party candidates face resistance from voters

RU CORRESPONDENT

Most of the BNP-led four-party alliance aspirants in the forthcoming general lection have been facing public wrath and resistance during their campaign in Rajshahi.

In recent days three former lawmakers faced massive protests from the people and fled the campaign venues.

They faced harsh criticism for abnormal price hike of essentials, power outage, corruption and terrorism.

During the last week, deprived BNP leaders and activists from Rajshahi-4 (Puthia-Durgapur) constituency distributed thousands of posters and leaflets against former lawmaker and General Secretary of Rajshahi city unit BNP Nadim Mostafa with a call 'Say No for Nadim Mostafa.'

The printed leaflets also contained a 16-point charter of corruption committed by Nadim during his five-year tenure.

The rival leaders and activists also

called upon local voters not to vote for Nadim.

Earlier, a vast majority of BNP leaders from Puthia and Durgapur upazilas formed a committee styled as 'BNP Raksha Committee' to protect them from the torture of Nadim.

Nadim however brushed aside the allegations and said, "A section of greedy BNP men are making propagandas against me."

On Thursday, Rajshahi City Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu who is also a four-party alliance candidate from Rajshahi sadar-2 (Paba-Boalia) constituency, faced an angry protest from female voters who blasted him for skyrocketing prices of essentials and unprecedented power outages in last five years.

Minu and some of his party members went to Ward No 19 for campaigning but the fury of women voters upset Minu so much that he left the area immediately.

Minu, unable to give any satisfactory answers to their questions, was

so shocked by their fury that he almost ran away from them and lay down on the veranda of a thatched house to recover from their onslaught.

Earlier on Wednesday, Abu Hena, a former BNP lawmaker from Rajshahi-3 (Bagmara-Mohonpur) constituency, regretted his rebellious conduct in the past.

At a public rally in Mohonpur Upazila Degree College playground, he also apologised to his fellow party leaders for criticising them.

"I failed to maintain close communications and misbehaved with you during the past five years. It resulted in an inadequate development of the area. Though I was expelled from the BNP but I never left it. The party high command has again nominated me to retain the seat for the BNP," said Hena.

At a meeting at Rajshahi Parjatan Motel on October 17, 2005, Hena accused Rajshahi BNP-Jamaat leaders of patronising Islamist militancy at Bagmara.

TWO-DAY BLOCKADE

Mass arrest condemned

Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee yesterday condemned the mass arrest ahead of the AL-led grand electoral alliance's two-day countrywide blockade slated for today and tomorrow, says a press release.

The mass arrest once again proved that the caretaker government (CG) led by Iajuddin Ahmed is nothing but an extension of BNP-Jamaat coalition, stated the release signed by its Advisory Council President Kabir Chowdhury, Central Executive Committee's Acting President Shahriar Kabir and General Secretary Kazi Mukul.

Both the Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed and Acting Chief Election Commissioner Justice Mahfuzur Rahman are echoing the speeches of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Jamaat Ameer Motiur Rahman Nizami, stated the statement. It seems they are the spokespeople of the CG.

The statement also said BNP-Jamaat coalition and their loyal CG's move to hold a farcical election is pushing the country towards a confrontation and destroying the democratic atmosphere. But pro-liberation war entities will foil such conspiracies at any cost, it added.



Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal organises a rally in front of BNP's Naya Paltan office in the city yesterday protesting AL's decision to boycott the national polls.

Man beaten to death by in-laws

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man was allegedly beaten to death by his in-laws for torturing his wife in the city yesterday.

He was identified as Al Amin, 22, of Behari Camp at Pallabi.

The incident occurred when an altercation between Amin and his wife Ruma started at around 1:00am, said police.

At one stage of altercation, Amin beat up his wife.

This angered his in-laws who in retaliation beat and strangled him.

Nargis Begum, mother of Amin, said as her son's marriage with Ruma was not accepted by her family, he was forced to live at his in-laws' house.

The body of Amin was sent to Dhaka Medical College Morgue for autopsy.

Ruma along with her family members has been absconding since the incident.

Political situation not congenial for polls

Khulna journos tell EUEOM observers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Atwo-member delegation of European Union Election Observation Mission (EUEOM) in Bangladesh held a view-exchange meeting with local journalists at Khulna Press Club yesterday.

The delegation, comprising Christian Kapfensteiner and Gunilla Ann-Charlotte, who have long been working as observers of EUEOM in Bangladesh, discussed on current political situation of the country and security of newsmen in the south-western region.

They said they have come here not to make any comments on the current political situation rather to observe and gather views to report it to their headquarters.

EU observers were told by journalists that the current political situation is not at all congenial for holding the national elections since the grand alliance boycotted the polls while President/Chief Adviser Iajuddin

Ahmed is determined to hold the elections at any cost.

The journalists added that they might fell victim to untoward situations while covering news if political violence erupts in Khulna following January 22 election. Extremists also pose a major threat to newsmen in the south-western region, they added.

Presided over by Khulna Press Club (KPC) President Makbul Hossain Mintu, the view-exchange meeting was addressed by Khulna Correspondent of The Daily Star Quazi Amanullah, Khulna Bureau Chief of the daily Prothom Alo Shaikh Abu Hasan, Secretary of KPC Md Shaheb Ali, Khulna Correspondent of UNB and BTV Shaikh Didarul Alam, Shubir Roy of Bdnews24, Khulna Correspondent of the New Age Tapos Kanti Das, Khulna Bureau Chief of the daily Aker Kagoj Shudhangshu Mallick and Staff Reporter of the daily Purbanchal Mithun Mahtuz

2 sent to jail for preaching 'armed revolution'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

A court in Nilphamari has sent to jail two people who were arrested on suspicion of their militant connection from Suthibari Jame Masjid at Dimla on Friday.

The court rejected their bail prayers and sent them to jail.

Earlier yesterday, Dimla police produced the two before the court showing them arrested under section 54.

The arrestees Monwar Hossain, 40, son of late Abdus Samad Khan, and Saidur Rahman Sayeed, 27, son of Chan Mia, were detained by local people after Juma prayer on suspicion of being members of a militant group.

They were later handed over to police.

Both of them hailed from Tangail district.

Monwar and Saidur were delivering fiery speech before the musallis (devotees) urging them to participate in armed revolution to establish Islamic law in the country.

During police interrogation, both of them first confessed that they are the members of Islamist militant group 'Hizbul Touhidin'.

But afterwards they claimed that they were just preaching Islam among the local people.

Police also said both of them were arrested earlier by Panchagarh police with some militant booklets and mobile phones from Badeswary village under Boda upazila in Panchagarh district on December 22.

But they got bail before Eid-ul-Azha on December 30 and came to Suthibari.

Meanwhile, local people started agitation as police showed them arrested under a weak section of CrPC.

Rafi Ahmed, a college student, said police should seek their remand for further interrogation.

Akhter Hossain, officer-in-charge of Dimla Police Station, said they are investigating the matter.

After getting proper evidence, they will seek their remand within a couple of days, he added.



Officers and employees of Atomic Energy Commission form a human chain in front of the High Court in the city yesterday demanding cancellation of the contractual appointment of Dr AAziz as its chairman.