

# Grim economic situation if 'one-sided' polls held

## Say economists, legal experts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Economists, legal experts and civil society members have predicted a grim picture of political and economic situation of the country in near future if the January 22 election is held without the participation of all major political parties.

The existing crisis will intensify further, street violence will spread out and police will be more repressive as the administration is dominated by the partisan people of the BNP-Jamaat alliance, they said.

The export-import and foreign direct investment will experience a sharp decline, and there will be no tourists making the country economically stagnant, they said at a discussion on 'Abuse of constitution and the constitutional posts militate against a free, fair and credible election' organised by Sammilito Nagorik Andolon at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday.

The speakers said all should take to the streets to wage a movement to hold a free, fair and peaceful election.

"The way the country is running suggests that we are moving towards the greatest crisis. Therefore, we all should cancel all the programme at the tables and go to the streets for a mass upsurge to resist the January 22 election," said Justice Golam Rabbani presiding over the discussion.

Prof Kabir Chowdhury said there is no alternative other than a mass upsurge if the election period is not extended for an all-party election.

"If the election is held once, it will be difficult to resist the BNP-Jamaat men, as they have gripped the administration and other organs of the state," said Prof Mahabbat Khan of Dhaka University.

The January 22 election, therefore, should be resisted and 4-party alliance be socially boycotted, he said, adding, that the consequence of this election will be the destruction of the state institutions and the killing of progressive minded people of the country.

The violence and police repression on people will take a serious turn if the one-sided election is held, said Justice KM Sobhan, adding that the changes made in the administration played no role in neutralising it.

Senior Advocate Mohsin Rashid said there is no way to bring the country back to track if the January 22 election is held. "Who will be the chief of the next caretaker government when none of the judges appointed during the BNP-Jamaat rule is qualified?" he posed a question.

Economist Atiur Rahman said the government revenue and import

has already declined while the government continued to borrow loans from the banks and there is no investment in the country.

The donors will give no foreign aid if the same situation continues, he said.

The situation will deteriorate further if the January 22 election is held, Atiur noted.

He urged the advisers to give ultimatum to the president that they all will resign if he does not listen to their advice.

Director of Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs Ambassador Wali-ur Rahman in his keynote presentation said the BNP-Jamaat government destroyed all the constitutional

posts by appointing politically biased persons during its last rule and affected the nascent democracy.

Blaming the chief adviser for the present crisis, he said the armed forces could be pressurised to work in favour of the BNP-Jamaat alliance during the January 22 election.

Women leader Rokeya Kabir, Principal Ahad Chowdhury of Muktiyoddha Sangsad, former civil servant Syed Mahbubur Rashid, Kim Moway of Asia Foundation, Golam Kuddus of Sammilito Sangskritik Jote also spoke at the discussion moderated by Sammilito Nagorik Andolon leader Nasiruddin Yusuf Bachchu.



Ambassador Wali-ur Rahman speaks at a discussion on 'Abuse of constitution and the constitutional posts militate against a free, fair and credible election' organised by Sammilita Nagorik Andolon at Cirdap auditorium in the city yesterday. On his left are Prof Kabir Chowdhury and Nasiruddin Yusuf.

## Girl missing



A nine-year-old girl, who worked as a domestic help at a house at West Monipur, Mirpur, has been missing since Wednesday, says a press release.

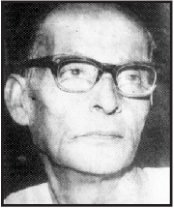
The girl, Sumi, went out of the house at around 1:00pm to dump garbage in the dustbin but did not return.

Sumi, daughter of Md Anwar, hails from Boro Machua village in Mathbaria, Pirojpur. She is 3 and a half feet and wearing a biscuit-coloured dress.

A general diary was lodged with Mirpur Police Station.

Anybody knowing her whereabouts has been requested to contact her employer at 131 West Monipur, Mirpur or call at 01712642173.

## Death anniversary



Today is the 14th death anniversary of Ustad Hasan Ali Khan, eminent artist of Bangladesh Betar and Television,

composer and music director, says a press release.

On the occasion, Qurankhwani and special doa will be held. Foods will also be distributed among the poor.

Relatives, friends and admirers have been requested to attend the programmes and pray for peace of his departed soul.

A discussion meeting and doa mahfil will also be arranged by Khan Enterprise, Bangladesh Lokageeti Shilpi Goshthi, Social Development Centre and Piss and Rights.

## MA Karim

Today is the 3rd death anniversary of MA Karim, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held after Asr prayers and feeding to the destitute after Juma prayers at Block-B, Road-5, Plot-15, Nawab Faizunnessa Waqf Estate, Duaripara, Pallabi in the city, says a press release.

## ASM Mostafa



Today is the seventh death anniversary of ASM Mostafa, a freedom fighter and former student leader, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad and doa mahfil will be held at Rahmania Jame mosque at Laxmipur village in Feni after Juma prayers.

All have been requested to pray for salvation of the departed soul.

## BILS SURVEY

# 947 workers killed at workplace

BSS, Dhaka

At least 947 working people were killed and 3,650 others injured in various accidents and violent occurrences at their workplaces in the country in 2006.

Of the killed and injured, 121 and 740 were women respectively. The number of violated working women was 48, of whom, nine were murdered after rape.

The Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS) revealed the findings after a survey conducted on the basis of news stories published in the various national dailies.

According to the survey report released here yesterday, 845 workers were killed and 3,018 injured in various occupational accidents while 129 were killed and 632 injured in violent occurrences.

The number of deceased fishermen was the highest as over 500, of them, fishermen drowned in the deep sea in the catastrophic cyclone in September 2006. More than 1500 fishermen were injured in the sudden natural disaster. They also lost all of their belongings in the sea.

The second highest number of incidents of killings and injuries took place in the garments sector where at least 141 workers were killed and 1,578 injured in various accidents and violence.

Of them, 65 garment workers were killed in a lone fire incident in February in Chittagong. Among the deceased, 47 were female adolescents. The number of violated working women was 31. Of whom, four were murdered after rape.

Nine garment workers were gang-raped near Dhaka. A pregnant garment worker received a kick on her abdomen on a factory floor.

The construction sector was in the third position of the casualties list. At least 107 workers were killed and 195 injured in violence and accidents in the sector. Wall and building collapses, mudslides and fall from rooftops caused the major accidents.

At least 35 domestic servants died in the reporting year due to torture and cruel

behaviour by their employers. At least 31 were injured and 13 violated by the employers or their relatives.

Army officers, teachers, lawyers, physicians, businessmen and a religious leader were in the list of persecutors of the housemaids. Among the victims, more than 50 percent were child domestic help.

## WEATHER TODAY

### Mild cold wave may continue

UNB, Dhaka

Dry weather will prevail over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderate to thick fog may also occur over the river basins and light to moderate fog may occur elsewhere over the country during late night to morning, said Met Office.

It said mild to moderate cold wave is sweeping over Rajshahi, Khulna and Barisal divisions and the regions of Faridpur, Tangail and Srimongal and it may continue.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country. Highest temperature 27.7 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Sandwip and lowest 06.4 degree Celsius at Rashahi.

**The sun sets in the capital at 5:30pm today and rises at 6:44am tomorrow.**

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature	Humidity in percentage		
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	24.6	12.0	69	54
Chittagong	26.4	13.5	85	75
Rajshahi	25.6	06.4	99	69
Khulna	24.6	10.1	97	71
Barisal	25.9	09.0	88	75
Sylhet	26.0	12.5	83	67
Cox's Bazar	27.2	14.5	82	69

## Restricted rights

FROM PAGE 1

Emergency is in operation, nothing in articles 36, 37, 38, 39, 40 and 42 shall restrict the power of the State to make any law or to take any executive action which the State would, but for the provisions contained in Part III of this Constitution, be competent to make or to take, but any law so made shall, to the extent of the incompetence, cease to have effect as soon as the Proclamation ceases to operate, except as respects things done or omitted to be done before the law so ceases to have effect.

**Article 36: Freedom of Movement**  
Subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the public interest, every citizen shall have the right to move freely throughout Bangladesh, to reside and settle in any place therein and to leave and re-enter Bangladesh.

**37. Freedom of assembly**  
Every citizen shall have the right to assemble and to participate in public meetings and processions peacefully and without arms, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of public order health.

**38. Freedom of association.**

Every citizen shall have the right to form associations or unions, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of morality or public order;

**39. Freedom of thought and conscience, and of speech**  
(1) Freedom of thought and conscience is guaranteed. Freedom of thought and conscience, and of speech.

(2) Subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interests of the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court, defamation or incitement to an offence.

The right of every citizen of freedom of speech and expression; and freedom of the press, are guaranteed.

**40. Freedom of profession or occupation**  
Subject to any restrictions imposed by law, every citizen possessing such qualifications, if any, as may be prescribed by law in relation to his profession, occupation, trade or business shall have the right to enter upon any lawful profession or occupation, and to conduct any lawful

trade or business.

**42. Rights to property**  
(1) Subject to any restrictions imposed by law, every citizen shall have the right to acquire, hold, transfer or otherwise dispose of property, and no property shall be compulsorily acquired, nationalised or requisitioned save by authority of law.

20(2) A law made under clause (1) shall provide for the acquisition, nationalisation or requisition with compensation and shall either fix the amount of compensation or specify the principles on which, and the manner in which, the compensation is to be assessed and paid; but no such law shall be called in question in any court on the ground that any provision in respect of such compensation is not adequate.

(3) Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any law made before the commencement of the Proclamations (Amendment) Order, 1977 (Proclamations Order No. I of 1977), in so far as it relates to the acquisition, nationalisation or acquisition of any property without compensation.

## Locals besiege Titas office for gas in N'ganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Locals of Gog Nagar, Al Amin Nagar and Char Syedpur areas in Narayanganj yesterday laid a siege to the local office of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company for one hour as the supply of gas has been stopped in the areas for 10 days.

They alleged that the residential consumers are not getting gas for the last 10 days disrupting the domestic works.

Despite repeated allegation, the Titas Gas authorities did not take any effective measures to reduce the crisis, they alleged.

Admitting the fact, Deputy Director General of the local office of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Engineer Amir Ahmed said planning division of the head office of Titas Gas has been informed about the crisis.

The agitated locals suspended their siege following the assurance of the deputy director general.

## 19 injured in AL-BNP clashes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

At least 19 leaders and activists of AL and BNP were injured and about 25 shops damaged in sporadic clashes between the activists of the grand alliance and four-party at Purbadhala, Kalmakanda and Kendua upazila during yesterday's agitation programmes of the grand alliance.

As Awami League (AL) brought out a procession at Purbadhala at about 10:00am, some BNP activists attacked the procession with sharp weapons leaving six AL leaders and activists injured.

Three AL and two BNP activists were injured at Kalmakanda upazila headquaters at about 11:00am when some armed BNP activists attacked the AL procession. In retaliation, agitated AL activists damaged about 15 shops of BNP leader and activists.

Eight AL and BNP activists were injured at Chirang Bazar under Kendua upazila at about 12:00noon when BNP activists attacked the procession.

At that time, AL activists damaged about 10 shops of BNP leaders.

## Obituary

Professor Reva Rani Sen, wife of late Justice Ranadhir Sen, passed away in Troy, Ohio, USA on January 10 at the age of 74, says a press release.

A professor of philosophy, she started her teaching career at Sylhet Women's College. She also served at Titumir College in Dhaka.

Daughter of Tarini N Dutta of Sylhet, Prof Reva relocated to the USA after her retirement from the service.

She is survived by one son, one daughter and four grandchildren.

## Advocate Salahuddin Ahmed



Advocate Salahuddin Ahmed, an income tax adviser, passed away due to liver cirrhosis at a clinic in the

city on January 6 at the age of 55, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, a minor son and a daughter to mourn his death.

He was laid to rest at his family graveyard at Sonapur West in Feni.

## Mohammad Nasirullah



Mohammad Nasirullah, president of Mohammadpur Thana committee of Bangladesh Awami League, passed away due to old age

complications at his residence on Wednesday night at the age of 77, says a press release.

Nasirullah was the former chairman of Rayer Bazar Union Parishad and Ali Hossain High School.

He left behind his wife, five sons and three daughters to mourn his death.

## Philomena Doherty



Philomena Doherty, a former employee of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry, passed away in

Chittagong on January 8 at the age of 58, says a press release.

She left behind her husband, one son and one daughter and host of relatives to mourn her death.

The Mass for the repose of the soul of Philomena Doherty will be held at her 63 Obhoy Mitra Ghat residence, Ferringi Bazaar Road in Chittagong today.

## 'Shalish can also protect women's rights in urban areas'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shalish (village court) could be an effective way of protecting women's rights not only in rural areas but also in urban areas, said the speakers at a roundtable yesterday.

They said the shalish, which is more popular than civil court in rural areas for its low cost as well as speedy resolution, may also help increase women's empowerment in the society.

The roundtable titled 'Gender, law and development: Case study of the Shalish' was organised by Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs (BILIA) at its auditorium in the city.

Presenting a keynote paper Prof Fauzia E Ahmed, director of Women Studies Department at the University

of Pennsylvania, USA said the root of shalish is quite ancient and it takes place usually in rural areas to resolve a dispute between two villagers.

Religious leaders and land lords act as jurists in the mediation process and usually there is no room to raise women's voice, she added.

Prof Fauzia suggested equal representation of gender in the jury board of shalish to ensure justice for women.

She presented two case studies of shalish on domestic violence that took place in a village of Satkhira where in one case there was a female juror and in the other, there was no female juror.

Not surprisingly, she said, the woman victim got benefits from the verdict of the jury board where there was a female juror while the other

woman victim even could not raise her voice during the hearing.

Prof Fauzia also called for strong media campaign in favour of the jury board involving woman juror.

Prof Shahrukh Rahman of IBAIS University suggested that the shalish system should be introduced in urban areas also where women often become the victims of repression and cannot protest due to family reputation and prejudice.

Prof Rehman Sobhan, chairman of Centre for Policy Dialogue, Begum Khurshid Ahmed of Ain O Shalish Kendra, M Khalid Shams, managing director of Grameen Telecom and representatives from different human rights organisations took part in the roundtable moderated by Wali-ur-Rahman, director of BILIA.

## Rejoinder, our reply

FROM PAGE 20

selected through an open tendering process are the lowest responsive bidder in their respective tenders. Therefore, the question of "one kind of balance" or favouring any group does not arise.

"When all the seven deals will be made effective, PDB will incur a loss of around Tk 1,000 crore in the next 15 years, if there is no tariff adjustment, against Tk 1800-2200 crore stated in the news," it said.

"Though tariff of the small power plant is comparatively high, it can deliver power within 5 to 7 months, after signing of the contract, whereas about 36 months are required to get power from a large power plant. Tax exemption for IPP has been allowed whereas there are no such exemptions for these rental plants," it added.

**Our reply**  
The previous government's bids for small power plants started from mid 2005 and it had to cancel one of the moves due to strong criticism from

the World Bank, as that process was highly political. This bidding process progressed with many glitches in such a politicised environment that drove away professional power companies. Barring United Group and Summit, the bidders do not have any experience in the power sector.

The loss forecast was based on the PDB's own estimate forwarded to the power ministry back in February last year. Its an estimate which can easily double, if the government continues not to increase power tariff while increasing tariff for gas or other raw materials.

The previous government had five-year time to act and address power crisis. After five years of inaction and corruption, it had opted for small power with capacity that stands like a speck of dust against the total crisis. There is no room to glorify building plants within the next 7-8 months when it has failed to build appropriate power plants in the last five years.

## Orion group pocketed Tk 596cr

FROM PAGE 1

Tk 335.45 crore without any authorisation. This money was then disbursed to current and investment accounts of various parties. A similar routine was followed in the four other branches.

After following this routine, the same money was transferred to different clients on the same day to create an illusion of business transactions. The probe found that these transactions were fictitious as many of the clients do not even exist.

A table in the report shows 320 IBD worth Tk 335.45 crore issued by Bangshal branch, 6 IBD worth Tk 66.4 crore by Principal branch, 20 IBD worth Tk 29.13 crore by Karwanbazar, 24 IBD worth Tk 48 crore by Nawabpur and a single IBD worth Tk 2.83 crore by Mirpur Road branch. The total amount of money misappropriated in this process comes to Tk 488.5 crore.

In addition, Bangshal branch issued Tk 25.66 crore loan against 17 false names, Principal branch Tk 29.13 crore against 27 false names, Karwanbazar branch Tk 32.97 crore against 10 and Nawabpur 14.73 crore against 14. In total, Tk 102.49 crore was given against 68 false clients.

Besides, Tk 5.61 crore was given to a party in another manner. The investigators deducted that vigorous monetary transactions were shown against these misappropriated money to cover the real beneficiary. These transactions created a smoke screen and Obaedul had drawn the money against illegal IBD

and fake clients without filing the necessary banking documentation.

But the central bank gathered clear evidence of Obaedul's involvement as he signed some documents describing various financial benefits that he drew up to September 30, 2005. Bangshal branch official Mahmud, who signed majority of the IBD, showed the investigators photocopy of the documents signed by Obaedul. The original copy rests with former bank manager Asif, who is absconding.

Besides, the central bank also found 'received' signatures of Nazia Akhtar, senior administration officer, and Siddika, another officer of Orion Group. They signed on white paper saying that they received pay orders or cash.

The investigators in their observations said Obaedul himself and his companies are beneficiaries of misappropriation of the money. They noted that there could be more such cases with the bank which may not have been discovered.

"Obaedul Karim has misappropriated depositors' money in connivance with bank officials by violating rules, and illegally," they said.

Those who assisted Obaedul include former manager Asif, Mohiuddin Ahmed and Mahmud Hasan. Mahmud is currently in Gulshan branch. All the currently serving officers of the bank told the investigators that Asif compelled them to sign the documents concerned.

The investigators recommended

taking the most stringent administrative and legal measures against the culprits.

Talking to The Daily Star over phone at around 7.15 pm yesterday, Obaedul flatly denied the allegations made in the central bank investigation.

"The investigation report is a biased one. I disagree with it fully. I have given a letter to Bangladesh Bank in this regard asking it to jointly conduct an audit with a reputed foreign auditor the books of the bank. If such a joint audit report finds me at fault, I will accept that," he said.

"I have been owner of this bank for only 13 months. It is not possible for me to take all this money within 13 months," he added.

When pointed out that he had taken money from 2003 as per the findings of the report, he said, "I was not the bank's owner at that time. How could I draw money then?"

On drawing money on behalf of One Entertainment or One Denim Mills, he said, "How can an employee of my organisation draw money for another organisation. Even a mad man would not do such a thing."

Earlier yesterday, The Daily Star tried to contact Obaedul over phone at his office only to be told that he was busy in a meeting. Later in the evening, an Orion Group officer called The Daily Star and said they knew that the paper was going to publish this story today. Then the officer asked, "What can be done to have the story killed?"

## BGMEA directors argue

FROM PAGE 20

The election on January 22 would be one-sided and unacceptable to the people and international community and so, the government should defer the election date, Munshi said.

But BGMEA President SM Fazlul Hoque denied having any such consensus at the BGMEA board meeting on Tuesday. The board meeting only discussed the matter but no consensus was reached, he said, adding that there was not any formal resolution in this regard at the meeting.

The spirit at the board meeting was that the government should do whatever necessary for making an acceptable and credible election, Hoque said.

He categorically said that the statement made by Tipu Munshi was his personal opinion and BGMEA does not agree to it.

But Anwarul Alam Chowdhury, another BGMEA director who supported Tipu Munshi, claimed that the board meeting agreed to make an appeal to defer the upcoming election.

He told the newsmen that some American buyers already transferred apparel order worth \$600 million to other countries observing confusing situation in Bangladesh.

At one stage when the journalists asked about the BGMEA's actual position regarding the general election scheduled for January 22, the directors present at the press conference became divided and locked into a debate.

One group claimed there was a consensus at the board meeting that the election must be deferred while others denied having any such consensus and said as a trade body BGMEA should not make any specific appeal.

When the journalists asked for a copy of the resolution of the board meeting, the BGMEA president at first

agreed to provide it but later he declined.

The press conference at the BGMEA headquarters was called to brief the journalists about the BGMEA delegation's meeting with President and Chief Adviser Iajuddin Ahmed on Wednesday.

At the meeting with the president, the BGMEA placed a seven-point demand to the government for saving the RMG sector against the backdrop of a volatile political situation.

"We are in a deep crisis as politics is becoming volatile day by day," Fazlul Hoque said at the press conference. The apparel sector has been passing through the worst situation it ever faced, he said.

The placement of orders has dropped drastically and the export

earning has been showing downward trend that can be seen in the export figure of September and October last year.

The export earning from RMG was recorded at \$908.92 million in August but it dropped to 701 million and 663.07 million in September and October, he said.

The sector has been experiencing volatile situation for the last six months, he added.

The BGMEA president also urged all the political parties to keep the apparel sector out of the purview of political agitation programmes in the greater interest of the country and its economy.

"Please, don't let the sector bringing \$8 billion dollars annually shift to other areas," he said.

Tipu Munshi and Anwarul Alam Chowdhury also said the country's major export earning sector is heading towards an adverse situation due to political uncertainty in the country. The buyers are refraining from placing new orders while many orders that had been placed earlier were cancelled, Munshi said. The apparel sector would face serious hardship if the election is not credible and acceptable to all, he said.

The BGMEA placed seven-point recommendation which include shifting the schedule of term loan for at least six months without interest so that no factory faces loan default cases, disbursement of loan on easy terms for payment of at least three months' salaries and allowances to the workers, increasing the time limit for payments against back to back letter of credit by at least 60 days, instructing the banks to increase the cash limit and payment option for gas and electricity bills in long term instalments for at least one year.

## DHAKA TODAY

### Open discussion

Karmojibi Nari organises an open discussion on 'Women's agenda in current politics'. Venue: National Press Club. Time: 10:00am.

### Roundtable

Jatya Samajtantrik Dal will hold a roundtable on 'Free and fair election and interim national unity government'. Venue: National Press