

Razzak's reform plan

FROM PAGE 1
presidium members, who made similar recommendations for reconstituting the party.

Speculations were ripe since early morning yesterday regarding an impending reform proposal from Razzak, confusing journalists about whether he would publicise the proposal at all as several contradictory announcements were made regarding the schedule of the announcement.

He finally released the reform proposal to the media following direct intervention from a few of his senior party colleagues and gave a verbal statement to the media admitting that the document of his official proposal still contains a number of errors.

Talking to reporters in his Dhanmondi residence, Razzak however said his reform proposal do not intend to minus anyone from the party. He said activists of AL are the source of the party's strength and their will ultimately will guide the party in the future.

Razzak claimed that the reform proposal he placed is his own although several reformist leaders including AL Acting General Secretary Mukul Bose had repeatedly told the news media that the reformist leaders had handed over 'their amended reform proposal to Razzak'.

Razzak also said he made the proposal public to strengthen the party. "If there is any mistake in it, please forgive me and if it is correct, then please accept it," Razzak asked of his party colleagues.

PROPOSALS FOR WIDE-RANGING NATIONAL POLITICAL REFORM

The reform proposal Razzak announced to the nation yesterday does not only seek reforms in AL but also suggests sweeping reforms in the body politic of the country.

His proposal suggests ensuring the deserved national recognition for the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, execution of the verdict of his murder trial, ensuring state level respect for the four slain national leaders who were killed in jail in 1975, bringing of their killers to book, and preservation of the 'correct history' of the liberation struggle and the liberation war.

It also suggests abolition of communal politics and establishment of a secular democratic Bangladesh.

Some other reforms the proposal suggests as absolutely necessary are: economic reforms, administrative reforms, establishment of a free and impartial judiciary, implementation of the Election Commission proposed reforms, and enabling the Anti-corruption Commission to function independently.

Razzak also proposes amendments to the national constitution for bringing a balance of power between the president and the prime minister of the country.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM IN THE PARTY

Razzak said his reform proposal aims to install a much higher level of democracy in AL, practice of democracy at all levels of the party, and accountability and collective leadership in the organisation instead of any individual's leadership.

The proposal criticises as wrong decisions, the now defunct five-point deal signed between AL and Islamist fundamentalist Khelafat Majlis, and the hoax of an announcement made by the currently detained general secretary of AL, Abdul Jalil, about unseating the immediate past ruling alliance by April 30, 2004.

The proposal suggests that all party funds should be deposited in a bank under the party's treasurer's supervision, who will submit treasury reports to quarterly party meetings.

AMENDING THE PARTY CONSTITUTION

Razzak's reform proposal suggests a set of amendments to the party constitution including the following:

1) An individual cannot remain in the post of the party president or general secretary for more than two terms in a row. The same rule will be applied to district and upazila level top party posts to encourage new leadership.

2) An individual cannot simulta-

8 rescued from human traffickers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

neously hold a party and a governmental position. This rule will also apply to the party president and presidium members as well as the general secretary and other party secretaries.

3) All committee members of the party will be elected through secret ballots.

Anyone who is anti-liberation or a war criminal will not be considered eligible for membership of the party. It shall be made mandatory to be nominated from the grassroots through democratic procedures for candidature in national elections.

Anyone convicted of a crime or owners of 'black money' will not be eligible for electoral nominations.

4) The national committee of the party must be made functional. If a party member is convicted in a criminal case or by the highest court of the country then that person will not be eligible for appointment to any post in the party and will not be eligible for nomination in any election.

SURANJIT DID NOT KNOW

About Razzak's reform proposal, another reformist Presidium Member of AL Surajit Sengupta told The Daily Star that he did not see the proposal. "It is Abdir Razzak's personal proposal. First I have to see his proposal then I will comment on it," he said.

Asked whether he will place his own reform proposal like Razzak, Surajit who was the first among the AL reformists to talk to the media about bringing drastic reforms to the party, said he is not thinking of doing so.

MOTIA'S REJECTION

"This [Razzak's reform proposal] is the thinking of a person, not a reform proposal. I treat it as a political essay," Motia told journalists as she was being barred by law enforcers from entering Sudha Sadan.

She also said, "Reform proposals have to be placed before the working committee of the party and then a council will approve those proposals."

She said she would consider Razzak's reform proposal seriously if it was placed before the party's working committee.

Ershad

FROM PAGE 1
activists of JP Rangpur have declared that they will quit the party if Ershad stands down as the party chief.

Rangpur Municipality Chairman Abdur Rouf Manik said, "We feel hurt at his decision. Hundreds of the leaders and activists will leave the party if he resigns."

Manik, also the vice-president of JP Rangpur district unit, said, "According to the party constitution, Ershad can take any decision. But he could have talked to the grassroots leaders before the announcement."

President of JP Rangpur sader upazila unit Mostafizur Rahman said, "We never questioned his decision-be it good or bad. But we will never accept his decision to quit."

The Star correspondent also reached a number of former JP lawmakers. But most of them declined to comment on it.

Contacted over cellphone, GM Quader, Ershad's younger brother and former JP lawmaker, said, "Ershad must not do anything that might prove bad for his party. He did what he thought was good for the Jatiya Party."

President of Rangpur JP Karim Uddin Bharsa said, "Ershad did not talk to me about the matter. I did not even know this before you called me."

Former JP lawmakers Mohammad Ali and Mostafizur Rahman however welcomed the decision. They said reforms in the political parties is the demand of time.

British police

FROM PAGE 1
to be a second bomb is obviously troubling, and reinforces the need for the public to be alert," he said.

The plot rattled London a week before the second anniversary of the July 7 suicide bombings that killed 52 commuters on the city's transit system, and two days after Prime Minister Gordon Brown took office.

"London on the Edge" said the front page headline in The Independent newspaper on Saturday, while the Daily Mail asked, "Where's the Next Bomb?"

Brown urged people to be alert, saying Britain faced "a serious and continuous security threat."

The Times newspaper reported that police had distributed a document to nightclubs two weeks ago warning of the threat from "vehicle-borne explosive devices" car bombs. The document, prepared by the National Counterterrorism Security Office, took the form of general counterterrorism advice for British clubs.

The government's crisis committee, code-named COBRA, was due to meet Saturday and police said they were strengthening patrols in the city to reassure the public.

Tens of thousands of people were expected to march through central London later Saturday in the annual Gay Pride parade, which ends at Trafalgar Square.

Terrorism experts said the improvised devices discovered Friday were similar to ones used by home-grown terror cells much like the bombs used in the July 7 attacks although the discovery of the second device suggested a coordinated and more sophisticated attack.

Since 1992 Birstem authorities have been recruiting doctors on contract in the indoor section and had been renewing their jobs time to time.

Birdem doctors

FROM PAGE 16
Doctors on strike at Birdem Hospital did not make any comments after the Diabetic Association of Bangladesh made its decision public yesterday. They said they would decide on the issue after their meeting scheduled for 7:30am today (Sunday).

The Diabetic Association of Bangladesh made the decision in a meeting held at Birdem Hospital last night.

The meeting decided that "Universal Service Rule" for all doctors working in Birdem Hospital would be made effective within July after the National Council approves it. It also decided that policies on doctors' training and better service at the hospital would be modernised.

About 550 doctors are currently working in the 600-bed hospital, sources said. Doctors at the hospital said doctors working at the outdoor section of the hospital have permanent jobs there and a number of third and fourth-class employees also have permanent jobs, but the indoor doctors who joined after 1992 are working on contractual jobs.

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Finance adviser

FROM PAGE 1

The government has slightly changed the tariff structure on textile machinery, computer, powder milk, newsprint, mobile set and income tax slab in the budget for FY 2007-08, Badiur Rahman, chairman of National Board of Revenue (NBR), said at the press conference.

The import duties on textile capital machinery has been reduced from proposed 10 per cent to 5 per cent for FY 2007-08, the NBR chairman said.

The exemption limit of income tax for an individual has remained unchanged to Tk 1.50 lakh. But the minimum income tax has increased from proposed Tk 1800 to Tk 2000 in the final budget of the FY 2007-08.

Besides, there are changes in slabs for those in the high-income brackets. The income tax bracket of Tk 2.5 lakh increased to Tk 2.75 lakh, whereas persons of the slab will have to pay 10 per cent taxes.

The income tax bracket of proposed Tk 3 lakh increased to 3.25 lakh and the proposed bracket of Tk 3.5 lakh increased to Tk 3.75 lakh. The taxpayers of these brackets will have to pay 15 per cent and 20 per cent taxes.

Rest of the high-income people earning over Tk 3.75 lakh will be subject to the highest tax slab to pay 25 per cent.

The government exempted import duties on newsprint only for newspaper uses. The newspaper owners can enjoy zero tariff in importing newsprint following quotas of information ministry.

But commercial importers will have to pay duties as per government's structure in the final budget.

The proposed 10 per cent duty on computer changed to 5 per cent in the final budget.

But as the 4 per cent infrastructure development surcharge has been removed, the total duty on computer accessories will stand 1 per cent.

Import duty on milk powder (bulk) reduced to 15 per cent from earlier proposed 25 per cent.

The government has increased taxes on mobile phone set import from Tk 1000 to Tk 300, which was Tk 500 in the proposed budget.

The private universities have been kept out of the value added tax (VAT) net.

Economist Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman said the present anti-corruption drive has broken the culture of impunity. He said that illegal money recovered could be used for social activities for creating awareness among people about corruption.

He suggested that donations to the political parties should be stopped by introducing a system through which the government will fund the parties. Through this system, funds might be collected from others through persuasion, not coercion. The parties should have vouchers and annual audits to ensure transparency in them, Prof Mahbub said.

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Stressing the need for specific agenda of the caretaker government, he asked the armed forces not to be involved in the political process.

South East University Vice Chancellor Professor Shamsher Ali and Probe magazine Chief Editor Ittiza Nasim Ali also spoke at the seminar moderated by its Editor Ayesha Kabir.

BNP constitution

FROM PAGE 1

see Shah Alam, who has been paralysed for the last five years. No senior or mid-level leader was present at this time.

Asked about the reform proposals announced by party Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Khaleda said, "The party councillors will decide which reforms to be implemented. If necessary, the council will be held for three days so that every councillor gets a chance to speak."

"Nothing will take place beyond the party constitution...I have some proposals too, which I will place in the council," she said.

"Everybody in the party wants to see a strong BNP, not a divided one," Khaleda said, adding that the councillors established the BNP, so nothing will be done keeping them away.

When asked if she will take any disciplinary action against any party leader for violating the party constitution, the BNP chairperson said time will tell.

Asked what she will do if she is made the chief adviser to the party, Khaleda said she will accept the decision if it is taken by the party councillors.

The pro-reform leaders of BNP are meanwhile continuing their preparations to hold party council as soon as possible. They are planning to seek government permission soon to hold a council to implement their reform proposals placed by Mannan Bhuiyan on June 25.

Many grassroots level leaders yesterday met Mannan Bhuiyan to express their solidarity with his reform proposals.

"About 200 former lawmakers of the party are in favour of the reform, so the preparation to hold the council is going on," said BNP Joint Secretary General Ashraf Hossain.

"We will seek permission from the government for holding the council if the ban on indoor politics is not lifted soon," he said, claiming that more than one-third party councillors are ready to support the council.

ZA Khan, one of Khaleda's advisers, said, "We are preparing to hold a credible and effective council to implement the reform proposals to ensure intra-party democracy but it will take some time to complete the process."

In many cases salary and other facilities that are written in the job contract letters in Bangladesh are changed once the workers arrive in the destination countries, he said.

Lack of awareness among the migrant workers is also responsible

Falu sent to jail

FROM PAGE 1

television channels ntv and Rtv and daily newspaper Amar Desh, was arrested at his Cantonment home on February 6.

On March 2, security personnel recovered 605 corrugated iron (CI) sheets and 63 blankets meant for government relief only at a ward commissioner's office in Tejgaon in the capital. Falu was taken on seven days' remand in two phases in this case.

KCCI PRESIDENT SENT TO JAIL

A court in Khulna yesterday sent President of Khulna Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Shaharuzzaman Murtoza to jail custody, our Khulna correspondent reports. He was arrested Friday evening after a case was filed earlier that day in connection with violating Passport Ordinance 1973. He allegedly had two passports in his possession.

Another Khulna court yesterday sent Conservator of Khulna Circle Sheikh Mizanur Rahman to jail custody on completion of his five-day remand. Mizanur was arrested on June 24 at his home in Khulna in connection with amassing huge illegal wealth and keeping contraband substances.

Ex-Jamaat MP

FROM PAGE 1

Project Implementation Officer (PIO) Awlad Hossain with Choudhogram Police Station on Friday night.

The NBR chairman said the board has decided to expand its drive phase by phase all over the country and 20 teams will be deployed from today in eight cities outside the capital to bring more taxpayers under the tax net. The move will continue till December 2007.

According to new duty slabs for the budget 2007-08, a total of 211 products (HS lines) will enjoy zero tariff while the number was 510 in the last budget.

A total of 1804 products (HS lines) will be kept in 10 per cent duty slab, 1703 products in 15 per cent and 2659 products in 25 per cent duty slab.

Rest of the high-income people

earning over Tk 3.75 lakh will be subject to the highest tax slab to pay 25 per cent.

Replies to the reporters' question, secretary to the information ministry said they have discussed the matter of new wage board with the journalists and newspaper employees and it will be finalised after discussion with the owners.

Danida staff

FROM PAGE 16

In the meantime at Bolipara BDR zonal headquarters, the security forces along with detectives have been quizzing seven NGO officials

including Kirti Nishan Chakma, senior programme officer at Danida.

Four others have also been arrested in connection with the abduction, said another source.

40 fishermen

FROM PAGE 16