

Admin officials hit

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to have 15 years' experience to be the chief judicial magistrate or chief metropolitan magistrate while a judicial cadre will need only 10 years' experience.

An administration cadre needs to have 12 and eight years' experience for being appointed as additional chief judicial magistrate and senior judicial magistrate or metropolitan magistrate while a judicial cadre will need only seven or four years' experience, Abu Hossain mentioned.

Abdul Mulyeed Chowdhury, former secretary and adviser to the caretaker government said, "Bringing the magistracy under the law ministry is not separation of the judiciary." To ensure true separation of the judiciary, the magistracy needs to be brought under a separate secretariat under the Supreme Court, he added.

Demanding scrapping of the law for contempt of court, Magistrate Rokon-Ud-Doula said, "The media is writing about the corruption of ministers and bureaucrats, but it cannot write anything about the judges' corruption in fear of contempt of court."

Pointing out that an administration cadre has to retire from job at the age of 57 while the judges retire at 67, he said, "This discrimination cannot go on."

Rokon called for suspending all activities at the secretariat and district and upazila offices if he is sued or arrested for saying this.

He urged all magistrates to come to Dhaka after withdrawal of the state of emergency to force the government to scrap the contempt of court law.

Columnist Farhad Mazhar said he will oppose the separation unless an elected government implements it.

"As if the court has become an NGO - we will not accept the court if it takes a single penny from the foreign donors," he said, hinting at

a capacity building project for the judiciary funded by the World Bank.

The speakers welcomed separation of the judiciary from the executive but said the government did not consult all parties concerned before fixing November 1 for implementing the separation.

They said the separation will only shift the control of the judiciary from the establishment to the law ministry - will not make the judiciary independent.

The magistrates said after returning to their stations they will recommend how to address the "anomalies" resulting out of the hurried implementation of separation of the judiciary.

The BCS Admin Cadre Association will accumulate the recommendations and send for the government's consideration.

Former deputy commissioner of Dhaka Abdul Mobarak, Bangladesh Biman Airlines Ltd, Managing Director MA Momen and BIAM Director General Mohammad Sadique also addressed the seminar.

ID cards

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voting in different elections and participating in insurance schemes, admission to educational institutions, marriage registration, purchasing vehicles, connection of gas, electricity, water, telephone, mobile phone, internet and cable for satellite TV channels, government facilities like subsidy and assistance, filing of cases, appeal or petition with the court, applying for share and opening of BO account and other services and facilities.

The draft ordinance has also proposed a provision authorising the government to relax the stringent conditions for the use of the national ID cards.

AL meet today

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office of detained party chief Sheikh Hasina at Dhanmondi with Zillur Rahman, acting president of the party, in the chair.

Earlier, on Friday, Awami League (AL) received the EC's formal invitation to the dialogue. The EC in its invitation sought 10 names who would represent the AL at the dialogue.

The 10 AL leaders who are to represent the AL at the dialogue are likely to be nominated from the following: presidium members Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta and Motia Chowdhury, advisory council members Abul Mal Abdul Muhith, Advocate Rahmat Ali, Acting General Secretary Syed Ashraf Islam, Joint General Secretary Mukul Bose, organising secretaries Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Abdul Mannan, Mahmudur Rahman Mannan and Akhtaruzzaman, said sources.

To thoroughly review the EC's draft proposal for electoral reforms, the ALCWC will also form a separate powerful committee today comprising the party's presidium members, members of the advisory council, the joint general secretary and the organising secretaries. After its formation, the committee will have to place its recommendation within a week.

Highly placed sources in the AL told The Daily Star that either Tofail or Muhith might head the committee.

On the eve of today's ALCWC meeting, a number of senior AL leaders last night held a meeting with Zillur Rahman, the acting party chief, at his Gulshan residence, the sources said.

Sources attending the meetings told The Daily Star that the issues they discussed with Zillur were primarily over the dialogue with the EC and the ways to get release of the detained party leaders including its chief Hasina.

AL leaders Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Motia Chowdhury, Syed Ashraf Islam and Saber Hossain Chowdhury attended the meetings among others.

On the other hand, the dissident reformist leaders of the AL last night held a meeting at the party's Organising Secretary Mahmudur Rahman Mannan's Gulshan residence. Among others, Joint General Secretary Mukul Bose, A b d u l M a n n a n, Akhtaruzzaman, KM Jahangir, Mostofa Jalal Mohiuddin, Nazma Rahman, Ali Ashraf and Habibur Rahman were present at the meeting.

The ALCWC meeting today will be the second one without its party chief after the partial lifting of ban on indoor politics. The first ALCWC meeting after the ban was lifted was on September 12 when four senior AL leaders - then acting general secretary Mukul Bose, Organising Secretary Abdul Mannan, Prof Abu Sayeed and AKM Jahangir Hossain - were manhandled by some rowdy and ordinary activists of the party.

Syed Ashraf, acting general secretary of the party, warned of severe organisational actions against any member of the party causing any trouble during today's ALCWC meeting. Assistance from Dhaka Metropolitan Police has also been sought to ensure law and order during the meeting, he added.

Meanwhile, AL President Member Suranjit Sengupta, while talking to reporters at his Jigata residence in the capital, yesterday said the ALCWC meeting will discuss the dialogue agendas with the EC. He hoped that the meeting would take a decision that would be appropriate and worthwhile.

Over the idea of holding national dialogues with the caretaker government, he said a politics-friendly atmosphere is needed in the country first before holding such a discussion.

Condemning the move, they also added that the group is even trying to create disorder in the administration.

The BCS Coordination Committee also expressed its support to the separation effort and urged the government to implement its decision without any hesitation.

Bangladesh Law Association at a news release demanded legal steps against those who are opposing the separation despite clear directives of the SC in this regard.

He mentioned that some of the problems the BCS body is raising now are not only objectionable but also baseless.

Referring to the issue of distinction raised by the opposing admin cadres, he said they were earlier given the option to choose between the judiciary and the executive.

But only 20 out of several hundred admin cadres have so far embraced the judiciary option, he pointed out.

The district judge, who is also one of the petitioners of the sensational judiciary separation case popularly known as Mazher Hossain Case, told The Daily Star, "I'll say the statement the admin cadres have made and the way they've made it are not correct."

"As the government has taken initiatives for the separation following directives from the Supreme Court, statements given today [Sunday] by the admin cadres are apparently a challenge to the order of the Supreme Court."

"And some of their statements is also contempt of court," he added.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) Coordination Committee, Bangladesh Law Association, and Peshajibi Shamannay Parishad in separate statements demanded complete separation of the judiciary from the executive at any cost.

It is a precondition for ensuring legal rights of the people and establishing the rule of law, they explained.

They also expressed deep concern over the activities of a group of bureaucrats and government cadres who have been creating obstacles to fair implementation of the separation process.

The Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) Coordination Committee in their statement said the judiciary separation was hindered and could not be implemented earlier due to feudal values and conception of a group of bureaucrats.

They also added that a group of

Unity call louder

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secretary general Ashraf Hossain said they will take into consideration any amendment to the draft reform proposal, adding that the proposals were meant for making the party acceptable and democratic.

He, however, again claimed Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan to be the lawful popular leader whose leadership has made the party stronger. We have to remain alert so that the party does not plunge into confusion. The BNP's unity must remain intact," Delwar said while addressing them.

Meantime, Khandaker Delwar Hossain is rapidly notching up support of senior party leaders and front organisations, seemingly boosting the pro-Khaleda faction.

Some senior leaders, who earlier lunched towards reform initiatives of Mannan Bhuiyan, are now budging from their position due to the changed circumstances, sources said.

The big chunk of party leaders, however, believe that the expulsion of Bhuiyan and Ashraf should be lifted to make the party united and strong because, in their view, the former secretary general is crucial to organising the party in the present situation.

Standing committee member M Shamsul Islam and Jatiyatobdo Jibuo Dal General Secretary Moazzem Hossain Alal, who both sided with Bhuiyan before, met Delwar yesterday at his apartment where Brig Gen (retd) Hannan Shah, the BNP chairperson's adviser, was also present.

Earlier another standing committee member Dr R A Gani and Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan expressed their support to Delwar.

Mainul

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officials, the law adviser said, "We are also capable of having laws to strengthen the executive branch. It is our responsibility and we will do so."

battle between good and evil where the dark forces eventually succumb to the divine.

Yesterday was a public holiday marking the occasion. President Md Jafuddin Ahmed and Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed met the leaders of the Hindu community.

On the occasion, President Prof Dr Md Jafuddin Ahmed and his wife Prof Dr Anwara Begum hosted a reception to the Hindus at Bangabhaban yesterday.

The state-run and private television channels and radios aired special programmes while newspapers published special supplements on the great religious festival.

Nirmal Chatterjee, organising secretary of Mahanagar Sarbajanee Puja Committee, said idols from around 58 Puja Mandaps were gathered at Dhakeshwari Temple for the procession.

Hindu community leader CR Dutta, among others, attended the immersion ceremony at Wataghosh.

Idols from around 50 Puja Mandaps were gathered at Shankhari Bazar Puja Mandap and immersed in the Buriganga at Ganakuti. This year 165 mandaps were established in Dhaka to celebrate the festival.

Thousands of devotees from all corners of the city, carrying the idols gathered since morning along the beach and immersed the Durga idols in a mood of gloom.

Durga Puja ends

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near Dhakeshwari National Temple with 58 trucks carrying idols of Durga.

The procession ended at Bahadur Shah Park after parading through different streets of the capital. In the evening, the idols were immersed in the Buriganga amid sadness and tears.

The government took tight security measures as members of different law enforcement agencies escorted the processions until immersion of the idols. A huge number of law enforcers including Rapid Action Battalion stood guard over the puja mandaps.

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Better Business

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on that in Cambodia.

But a number of business leaders have told The Daily Star that they do not prefer the Cambodian model as the situation in the Southeast Asian country and Bangladesh is not the same.

Mahbubur Rahman, president of International Chamber of Commerce-Bangladesh (ICC-B), welcomed the government move and said a consultative body of this kind is needed for proper formulation and implementation of the government policies.

With the publication of the fourth list, the number of alleged high-profile graft suspects stands at 177.

Earlier, names of 142 graft suspects were published by the ACC in three phases. The first list of 50 graft suspects was published on February 18.

According to the watchdog's rules, on receipt of ACC notices a graft suspect will have seven working days to submit his or her wealth statement. Anyone can apply for extra seven days, if they feel the need to do so.

The commission will go for legal actions or file a case against a suspect if he or she does not submit the wealth statement within the stipulated time.

He noted that the forum should be formed as soon as possible as the present economic situation warrants some urgent policy decisions.

A number of DU employees had earlier sent letters to the Anti-Corruption Commission, Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Bangladesh Human Rights Commission and the DU authorities, demanding punishment of the three employees for their involvement in corruption and irregularities, said sources.

The three fourth-class employees of DU have allegedly amassed huge wealth through corruption and irregularities in exchange for jobs in the university by using their political influence during the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition government.

All of them, however, denied the draft proposal.

Proposed to be a high profile public-private body of over 40 members, the forum would be run through a secretariat, said sources.

Its chairperson will sit twice a year with the members while the finance adviser who will be the executive chairperson will sit in every two months, according to the draft proposal.

Leaders of the Parishad also expressed concern as a group of people in public cadre service are opposing the initiative showing lame excuse that separation of judiciary would create imbalance in federal level administration.

Parishad leaders asked all to consider separation of the judiciary from the executive positively in the greater interest even at the cost of temporary loss.

The DIG (Prisons) said that they would hand the letter over to Hasina tomorrow. "Usually, we do not hand over letters if there are political contents in it," he said.

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