

DU teachers

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detainees will be freed 'within the next few days, whatever the court verdict might be'.

The DU agitators yesterday said the government's promise was not clear enough regarding in which fashion their detained peers will be freed from jail.

Former president of Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique said nobody is feeling assured that the detainees will be freed in a dignified manner any time soon. It seems the incidents of Rajshahi University are about to visit the DU campus, as the government is insisting on freeing the detainees through the 'legal mechanism', he added.

He said, "But such repetition of Rajshahi University incidents might make the situation more complicated and might not be acceptable to all. Rather it will be better if the government withdraws the cases. That will be dignified for the government and the detainees too, leading to easing of the accumulated tension between the government and the university."

The students however continued their peaceful demonstrations on the campus demanding their peers' and teachers' release by abstaining from classes for two hours yesterday for the fourth day in a row, and by collecting signatures of fellow students, with silent vigils and processions, by drawing street graffiti, and by performing agit-prop street theatres.

Hundreds of students articulated their demand for the release of the detainees by writing comments and signing their names on large banners hanging at various places on the campus for the purpose.

They will observe two-hour class abstention from 11:00am to 1:00pm today too. They will also hold a solidarity rally on the campus this morning. Students Against Repression (SAR) announced a two-hour class boycott programme from 11:00am to 1:00pm every day till January 17.

A group of SAR leaders yesterday afternoon met Vice-Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz and reiterated their demand for the release of all detainees.

STUDENTS' NEWS CONFERENCE
The agitating DU students at a news briefing yesterday said the education adviser's comment that 'the detainees will be freed within the next few days, whatever the court verdict might be' is not clear enough.

SAR, a platform formed mainly by left leaning student organisations, said there had been pledges earlier from the government and the university authorities of releasing the detainees, which were not kept.

The agitators also said release of only the detainees in two cases in connection with violating the Emergency Power Rules (EPR) 2007, will not be enough to ease the crisis, rather they demanded release of all detainees in connection with all the four cases filed in connection with the violent incidents on the campus between August 20 and 22 of the last year.

Two cases were filed against 4 teachers and 15 students in connection with violating EPR 2007, two other cases were filed in connection with torching of an army vehicle. In one of the army vehicle torching cases around 22 DU students and a few other outsiders were charged, while the charge sheet in the other case in connection with the same incident has not been submitted yet.

PROFANWAR'S STATEMENT
In a news release last evening

detained Prof Anwar Hossain's son Sanjeeb Hossain said his father in the court earlier in the day categorically protested the education adviser's statement made on the night before, and expressed deep apprehension that the incidents of Rajshahi University is about to repeat themselves in Dhaka. Prof Anwar Hossain is the general secretary of Duta.

Prof Hossain termed the education adviser's comment as irresponsible, the release said. The release quoted him as asking, why the case against them would not be withdrawn since they did not commit any crime. Pointing at the contradiction embedded in the newly appointed education adviser's statement the night before the detained professor told the court that the adviser is in 'contempt of court' by making such a statement, the release added.

According to the release the professor also said all detainees in connection with the DU incidents must be freed and all cases in connection with the incidents must be withdrawn if normalcy to be restored on the campus.

The government on Sunday decided to release the teachers and students charged in two cases for breaching the EPR 2007 during the violent incidents on the campus 'upon completion of legal process'.

DUV Prof SMA Faiz yesterday afternoon met Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed to discuss the release of his students and colleagues.

RAJSHAH UNIVERSITY
Meanwhile, students of Rajshahi University (RU) yesterday continued their demonstrations on the campus demanding release of 10 of their peers and a university employee, convicted in connection with torching of a DGEI vehicle there at the time of the DU incidents that ended up spilling over to other university campuses countrywide.

They also demanded withdrawal of the case filed by RU authorities against many other students for their involvement in the violent incidents on the campus on August 23 last year.

Earlier, hundreds of students attended their classes wearing black ribbons, and staged sit-ins in front of Shahidullah Arts Building.

They carried banners and placards demanding withdrawal of the cases and unconditional release of the convicted students and the employee. They also demanded release of the detained DU teachers and students.

Adcomm clarifies

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Adcomm, Signage, and Megavision in their clarification yesterday also said they had appealed to the 2nd Judges Court seeking to be able to pay the rent to the court under the Rent Control Act, 1991. The court accepted the petition, and since October 2007, the companies have been paying rent to the court.

Adcomm Limited further said the landlord subsequently filed a written objection. The court heard both the parties on January 7 and rejected the landlord's appeal on the grounds that the landlord has failed to satisfy the court as to why the petitioner will be bound to vacate the rented premises.

It was further ruled that the tenant petitioners namely Adcomm, Signage, and Megavision, are allowed to continue to submit rents to the court.

RMG workers

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13 with an eight-point demand that included a demand for a pay raise.

As tension mounted at MBM, authorities of around 20 other nearby readymade garment (RMG) units shut down operations at their factories in apprehension of labour unrest.

At that time rumours were spread among RMG workers that two of their fellow workers including a female were beaten to death inside Opex Style Wears Ltd by hired goons of the factory owner and their bodies were dumped inside the factory.

As the rumour spread among the workers of other factories like wild-fire, they joined in the violent demonstrations with the workers who had already been on the street. They rained bricks on the police and garment factories, damaging several RMG units.

Police at that time swooped on the agitating workers, charging batons and firing teargas shells and rubber bullets, witnesses said.

Soon the clash spread to the road stretching from Mirpur Section 10 roundabout to Kanchukhet and into all the alleys on both sides, turning most part of Mirpur into a combat zone.

Police were seen retreating several times in the face of attacks of the violently advancing workers. Several journalists on professional duty were beaten by police during the clashes.

According to witnesses, when the employees of MBM Garments Factory started agitation, the authorities of all factories in the area, excepting Opex Style Wears Ltd, shut down their activities apprehending attacks on their factories. After the closure of the factories, all the workers came out on the streets and joined the already agitating workers parading the roads in front of the factories.

Meanwhile, in protest against the continuing operation of Opex Style

Wears Ltd, the agitating workers staged a demonstration in front of the factory. At one stage, the employees of the factory attacked the agitating workers.

Workers said goons hired by Opex Style Wears Ltd swooped on them and beat to death two of their fellow workers, the bodies of whom were dumped inside the factory.

Around 8:00pm, police along with six worker representatives entered Opex Style Wears Ltd to find out whether the two workers were really killed inside the factory.

The six workers and police came out of the building half an hour later finding no dead body.

However, the situation turned volatile once again and the workers started attacking police and vandalising the factories as a rumour had already spread that the six workers who had entered Opex are flunkies of the factory owner.

Police also went into action again and resorted to baton charges, teargas shells and rubber bullets for about 40 minutes. During the action, police beat up the angry protesters indiscriminately.

When contacted, Capt (ret) M Nurul Azim, director (finance) of Opex Style Wears Ltd, denied the allegation of torturing the workers and said, "The vested quarters are trying to influence the workers to be violent."

Earlier on Sunday, police beat up a group of RMG workers in the city's Sheorapara area after the workers blockaded the busy Rokeya Sarani to drive their demands home vandalising several vehicles.

Yesterday's agitation is the fourth of such incidents in the area since January 2. Earlier, workers of SQ Sweater Ltd staged demonstrations on January 2 and 3 while workers of three other factories of the same group of companies barricaded Rokeya Sarani on Saturday in support of similar demands.

Remarkable CSR

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The research centre, which would be the first of its kind in the country, will be supervised by renowned teachers, scholars and researchers. It will also award scholarship to researchers and scholars at home and abroad.

The DBBL formally launched its operation in the country on June 3, 1996, and have been involved in philanthropic and social activities since then.

It established Dutch-Bangla Bank Foundation (DBBF) in June 2001 to conduct humanitarian activities including rehabilitation of the destitute.

The bank has so far taken various Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes including scholarship programme for the meritorious and needy students, blind education and rehabilitation organisation, HIV/AIDS assistance programme, smile brighter programme, support to acid and dowry victims, vesico vaginal fistula (VVF) operation to improve women's reproductive health, disaster management programme, and donation to different organisations.

The DBBL received an international award on CSR from Asian Institute of Management, Manila in the 3rd Annual Asian CSR Award ceremony.

Motia

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Rashid handed over Tk 1.18 lakh from Demra Thana unit of AL to Motia for the party's central relief fund.

Meanwhile Abdur Razzak, also a presidium member of AL, yesterday called on the government to lift the state of emergency in the country as soon as possible.

Briefing newsmen at the party's Dhanmudi office, Razzak said the party would discuss holding of an early election, among other things, if the government holds dialogue with the political parties.

Following a meeting of AL's committee for Relief Operation, Razzak said around Tk 1.38 crore has been deposited to the AL relief fund till January 13. Out of this Tk 98,50,000 has already been distributed among the Sidr-affected people, he said adding that they have now Tk 39,31,850 remaining in the fund.

Al is continuing its relief activities for Sidr victims, he added.

AL leaders Amir Hossain, Afzalurajit Sengupta, Syed Ashrafu Islam, Mukul Bose, Abdul Mannan, Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Akhtarzaman, Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin, Abdul Mannan Khan, ABM Mozammel Hoque, among others, were present at the briefing.

India, China

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a broad agreement to push an often testy relationship to a new level of cooperation.

The pact lifts the target for bilateral trade -- which soared to 38.7 billion dollars last year -- to 60 billion dollars by 2010, and pledges a renewed effort to solve a Himalayan border dispute over which they fought a brief war in 1962.

It also commits the two sides to another joint military exercise this year, following their first-ever exercise late last year, and to pursue a possible regional trade agreement, said Singh, who arrived on Sunday.

Singh called the document "an important milestone in the evolution of our relations."

"The profound changes taking place in the world today present both our countries with a historic opportunity to work together towards a 21st century that is conducive to peace and development," he told reporters.

"It reflects not only our common perceptions but also our desire to purposefully cooperate in the future."

However, Singh also said in a speech earlier in the day Beijing must lift market barriers to Indian goods "to bridge the rising trade deficit between us."

New Delhi is looking to rein in a trade gap with China, which it says jumped to about nine billion dollars in 2007 from four billion dollars the previous year as two-way trade has exploded recently.

Singh's three-day visit, made in the company of Commerce Minister Kamal Nath, is the first by an Indian prime minister to China in five years.

It comes as the world's two most populous nations seek to strengthen ties and overcome decades of mistrust, much of it stemming from the border dispute.

CA asks ministries

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fiscal year.

Power Division, which got Tk 3,778 crore for development projects in the current budget, spent Tk 351 crore or 9 percent in the first four months.

"It's a frustrating picture that we couldn't spend the money when the country is witnessing an acute power crisis," says a planning ministry official.

The post and telecommunication ministry spent 4 percent of its allocation, Energy Division only 2 percent, education ministry 12 percent, primary and mass education ministry 14 percent, health ministry 7 percent, local government division 18 percent, water resources ministry only 3 percent, and agriculture ministry 18 percent of the allocation.

EC studies emergency

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In Pakistan period, the historic general elections of 1970 were held under martial laws. And in Bangladesh, two parliamentary polls--second and third-- were held during the military rule of Ziaur Rahman and HM Ershad.

Questions have risen in public minds now whether the stalled ninth parliamentary polls will be held during the state of emergency since the army-backed caretaker government is yet to announce any timeframe for lifting the emergency, declared on January 11, 2007 suspending the January 22 general elections.

"We are not saying we want this (emergency). We want to examine the circumstances when the elections were held under martial laws so that we can reply to any queries by the chief adviser when we meet him," the CEC said.

"The Election Commission (EC) is yet to decide its strategy for asking the government to create an atmosphere conducive for holding polls," said Shamsul Huda.

Earlier on Tuesday last, he said they are now studying the rules and regulations formulated during the state of emergency to know how those can affect holding the parliamentary election.

The CEC avoided a reply when asked whether he still sticks to his earlier stance on revoking the state of emergency before the parliamentary polls.

He however allowed Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret) M Sakhat Hossain, who was also present at the briefing, to answer the query.

"We will ask the government to create a congenial atmosphere for holding the parliamentary polls. The government will decide whether it will lift the state of emergency or relax it to create such an atmosphere," Sakhat said.

In between October and November last year, the CEC on several occasions said the state of emergency must be lifted before the elections since polls cannot be

held under it. He also said the EC would ask the government in early January (this month) to withdraw the state of emergency in five divisional headquarters so that the long due elections to the five city corporations could be held in April.

But towards the end of December, he started saying that the EC will ask the caretaker government one and a half months before the city corporations polls to create an atmosphere conducive for holding the elections by lifting or relaxing the state of emergency.

Now, the CEC says the EC has not taken any decision on whether it will ask for lifting or relaxing the state of emergency for holding polls.

"We can at best ask the government to lift the state of emergency but it is the government who will decide it," he said. A newly appointed adviser has said the state of emergency will not be in force even for one hour more than needed, and the EC welcomes the remark, he added.

Shamsul Huda however said the commission had long ago asked the government to lift restrictions on indoor politics countrywide but the government did not respond, he said.

Since April last year, the EC repeatedly asked the caretaker government to lift restrictions on indoor politics so that it can hold electoral reforms talks with political parties. But the government allowed indoor politics only in Dhaka from September 10.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in his January 12 address to the nation however said the government is considering withdrawal of restrictions on indoor politics countrywide. He also said the government will mull lifting or relaxing the state of emergency depending on the circumstances.

Political parties had earlier demanded only lifting restriction on indoor politics countrywide but now they are demanding withdrawal of the state of emergency as soon as possible.

EC unveils new list

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The EC has reallocated seats for the districts in line with the criteria set out in the delimitation ordinance. Besides making sure the administrative units remain intact, it considered density of population and administrative convenience in the reallocation.

The commission will now mark out boundaries of the parliamentary constituencies within the districts. It aims to complete the task by June.

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda published the list at a press briefing at the EC Secretariat conference room.

He said the commission is doing the delimitation in accordance with the law.

"At this stage, there is no need for us to discuss the issue with the political parties since the law tells us everything we need to do in this regard," Huda said adding that the commission might talk to political parties once there is a draft on redrawn constituencies within the districts.

When his attention was drawn to the political parties' fear that the task might hamper the electoral roadmap, he said it's nothing to worry about. "We will still be able to hold a free and fair election," he observed.

In line with the EC's decision, each of the three hill districts--Khagrachhari, Bandarban and Rangamati--was allocated one seat irrespective of their population.

The number of seats fell to six from seven in both Sirajganj and Kishoreganj districts, five from six in Chandpur, 11 from 12 in Comilla, two from three in Barguna, four from five in either of Satkhira and Feni, and three from four in Manikganj and Munshiganj each.

Transport plan

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There will be 50 road projects under STP and the east-west road connection will be a key feature of the development of the city communications system, he said.

Communications Adviser Maj Gen (ret) Ghulam Quader said development partners including the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have expressed their willingness to fund the project. "So money won't be a problem in implementing it," he added.

He, however, said that to build a subway in an overcrowded city like Dhaka would not be very easy, as such a major construction would require stoppage of traffic movement for a long time.

Asked whether the government has any plans to improve the existing communications system, he said, "The existing facilities and infrastructure won't do, we'll have to find alternatives."

The adviser said that the rail crossings in the city cause heavy traffic jam and his ministry is also thinking about a way out to reduce traffic congestion and ease transportation for the city-dwellers.

Saying that the state-owned BRTC (Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation) management has improved, he stressed the need to improve its service more.

DU violence

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Station, the IO, gave his statement in the case filed in connection with violating the Emergency Power Rules (EPR) in August.

Metropolitan Magistrate Habibur Rahman Siddiqui recorded the witness's statement and set today for the next hearing. Defence lawyers will cross-examine Babul today. Four teachers and a student are now in jail custody in this connection.

In his statement, Babul said he went to the spot, made a sketch map and obtained pieces of evidence from there.

He was put in charge of the investigation on August 23 after the case was filed against DU teachers and students.

Following the filing of the case, two teachers and several students were arrested, Babul added in his statement. He recorded statements of eyewitnesses and obtained two video tapes of private TV channel ntv's coverage and a video CD of ATN Bangla's coverage. He also collected treatment certificates of policemen who were injured during the violence, he said.

The four teachers and a student, who are in jail custody now, were produced before the court yesterday. The magistrate, ignoring the usual procedure, allowed them to sit down during the hearing.

The accused teachers are Dhaka University Teachers' Association (Duta) President Prof Sadru Amin, General Secretary Prof Anwar Hossain, Science Faculty Dean Prof Harun-ar-Rashid, and Applied Physics Department Chairman Prof Neem Chandra Bhownik.

Meanwhile, defence lawyers yesterday continued cross-examining the IO Sirajul Islam of another case filed against the same accused.

The cases were filed against 5,000 to 6,000 unnamed students and teachers of Dhaka University and outsiders on August 22 in connection with violating the EPR, vandalising public and private properties, obstructing police performing their duty and assaulting law enforcers on the campus and its adjoining areas.

The police pressed charges against only four teachers and 15 students on September 9 in connection with instigating the violence on campus and in Shabbagh area on August 21 and 22.

Advocate Syed Zaheer Rahman, Masud Ahmed Talukder, Abdul Mannan Khan and Mosleuddin Jasim defended the accused.

Former Duta leader AAMS Arefin Siddique and several teachers and relatives of the detained teachers were present at the court during yesterday's hearing.

Delwar

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Since January 2007, adding that the party was in a similar situation in 1982 when martial law was imposed in the country.

The BNP secretary general urged the former student leaders to work together for playing a vital role in overcoming the hurdles.

Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal General Secretary Moazzem Hossain AL, former lawmaker Sohrab Uddin, Takdir Hossain Jasim, Shahjahan Mian Samrat, Mahabub Kaisar and Wazul Haque Sharif, among others, were present.

Meanwhile, Delwar has given party's acting Office Secretary Rizvi Ahmed the responsibility to lead a team for distributing clothes among the destitute in the northern part of the country.

Vote for Cox's Bazar

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global natural wonders to be decided on August 8 through internet voting. The inclusion of the country's two natural wonders in the list will have a positive impact on tourism and the economy, said an official press release yesterday.

All the citizens of the country have been urged to participate in the voting for electing the Sundarbans as a world heritage and Cox's Bazar as the longest sea beach in the world as natural wonders.

Necessary information on internet voting is available on www.natural7wonders.com.

Resource sharing

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the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc).

Expressing gratitude to Bangladesh government's support in discharging his duties, the Saarc secretary general said most of his tenure was during the period of Bangladesh's Saarc chairmanship.

Dorji said Bangladesh has successfully hosted three Saarc summits since its inception. "Bangladesh is the only country which carried out most of the Saarc activities, including holding of 14 ministerial meetings out of 42, which demonstrates the country's commitment to the regional forum."

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin who attended the 14th Saarc Summit held in New Delhi said the 14th summit has focused on addressing four major areas -- water, power, energy and climate change.

He appreciated the contribution of Chenkyab Dorji as Saarc secretary general and termed his tenure as successful and productive, said CA's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim who was present at the meeting.

Referring to the progress of the forum, Dorji informed that Mauritius and Australia have applied for Saarc observer status.

He also said the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and Japan have shown interest in funding the Saarc.

Dorji said Saarc Secretariat has taken initiatives for an orientation programme to make new Saarc members like Afghanistan familiar with the Saarc process.

He said Saarc observer countries Japan, China and South Korea also want to participate in the forum's activities.

Selim Al Deen

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As the news of the demise of this multitalented personality spread across the city, the hospital was thronged with cultural activists, relatives, his well-wishers and students. He lost his wife, relatives, a host of friends, and well-wishers to mourn his death.

Selim, a pioneer of theatre movement in Bangladesh, a researcher, an organiser and a professor of Department of Drama and Dramatics at Jahangirnagar University, was born in Shernakhal village of Shonagazi upazila of Feni on August 18, 1949.

The playwright's body is now being preserved at Birmen hospital mortuary. The body will be placed in front of the National Museum tomorrow (Wednesday) at 9:00 am. From there it will be taken to the Shaheed Minar where people will pay their last tribute to the drama prodigy.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held at Dhaka University Jaame mosque after the Zohr prayers. His body will then be taken to Jahangirnagar University. Following a second namaz-e-janaza there, Selim will be laid to rest on the campus of Jahangirnagar University (JU) -- where he was a long-time teacher at Bangla Department as well as the founder president of Department of Drama and Dramatics.

He received his master's degree from Bangla Department of Dhaka University. In 1995 he earned PhD from Jahangirnagar University on 'Medieval Bengali Drama'.

Selim Al Deen was admitted to the hospital on Friday following a cardiac arrest and had been on artificial life support ever since.

He was supposed to be flown to Bangkok yesterday afternoon for better treatment. The doctors however declared him dead at around 2:00pm.

"Bangla drama literature can be categorised into three eras -- the British era, the Shishir era and the Selim era. The Selim era has come to an end today," said Rahmat Ali, associate professor of Theatre and Music Department at Dhaka University.

Golam Kuddus, general secretary of Sammilito Sanskritik Jote, said, "Selim Al Deen started the modern drama movement and he is one of the best playwrights in Bangla literature."

Atiqul Haque Chowdhury, producer of Selim's first TV drama 'Ghum Nei' on BTV, said, "He was a world-class playwright and had contributed immensely to the Bangla literature. Shunning the western style, he gave a modern approach to the eastern drama. Bangladesh will not get a Selim Al Deen often."

Selim was a founder member of Dhaka Theatre. He along with Nasir Uddin Yusuf formed Bangladesh Gram Theatre in 1981-82 and Selim was its chief adviser.

His first article 'Negro Literature' was published on the literature page in the 'Dainik Pakistan' in 1968. His first radio drama 'Bipon Tomoshay' was broadcast in 1969 while his first TV drama 'Ghum Nei' in 1970.

He also compiled 'Bangla Natyakoshi' -- the lone drama related anthology in Bangla. Selim Al Deen's drama is included in textbook curriculum of Dhaka University, Jahangirnagar University, Jadavpur University and Rabindra Bharati University in India. He was also the originator of Fusion Theory and New Ethnic Theory.

The legendary playwright was honoured with many prestigious awards nationally and internationally, including the Bangla Academy Literature Award, National Film Award, Ekushey Padak and Oloko Shahitya Puroshkar.

Kitonkhola, Keramat Mongol, Hat Hadai, Chhola, Joiboti Koinmar, Monopangshul, Nimojon and many other plays created by Selim have left an indelible impression on the audience.

A number of his TV serials including Gronthigan Kabey and Chh