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Constitution violated as polls not held in 90 days

Says Akbar Ali
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Regulatory Reforms Commission (RRC) Chairman Dr Akbar Ali Khan said yesterday that the constitution has been violated, as the national elections could not be held within 90 days of the caretaker government taking over power.

"It is not my words alone, but of the court as well," Dr Akbar told journalists after registering himself as a voter at the Gulshan Model School and College in the city.

He added that the polls should now be held within 90 days after completion of the voters' list.

Meanwhile Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda, who along with his wife registered their names as voters at the same venue, said there is no possibility of mistakes in the voters' list being prepared now.

"We think the voters' list is a foundation for a free and fair election." There were many things said about the Election Commission.
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Sigh of relief on DU campus

8 students freed; demand for withdrawal of all cases

KAMRUL HASAN KHAN

The five-month long tension between the military backed caretaker government and the Dhaka University (DU) community that had started last August following the beating of some students by army men on the campus came to an apparent end yesterday with the release of all DU detainees.

The release of the students, on the heels of the release of their four teachers the day before, brought the entire DU community together in a celebration on the campus following five months of a tumultuous movement for their peers' freedom.

The eight DU students who were released yesterday in three phases yesterday are Bangladesh Chhatra Union's DU Unit President Manabendra Dev, Liton

Mahmud of the Institution of Education and Research, Deen Islam of the accounting department, Deen Islam Angel of mass communication and journalism, Moniruzzaman Sardar of history, Rafiqul Islam Sujon of Islamic history, Asaduzzaman Asad of mathematics, and Zahidur Rahman Biplob of the anthropology department.

Hundreds of students and teachers extended heartfelt reception to their just freed peers on the campus, while tears were rolling down the cheeks of many well-wishers.

Five of the students were freed on bail in a case of an army vehicle torching, while four other cases against the teachers and students in connection with the August violence had either been withdrawn or verdicts in them had been given. All freed teachers and stu-

dents were in detention for five months.

As the freed students were arriving on the campus, following their release in phases, teachers, friends, guardians and others put garlands around their necks and hugged them, some of whom were still bearing marks of torture, that they claimed had been inflicted on them by law enforcing agencies during their detentions. All the freed students, especially the ones who are now free only on bail, were showing visceral fear of law enforcing agencies when journalists were asking them about their experiences in detention.

Rafiqul Islam Sujon, who was sweating even in the winter morning, was also struggling hard to stand upright. On Monday, he was taken to a hospital for treatment.
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Credible polls not possible under present EC

Says Delwar
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Khandaker Delwar Hossain, secretary general of detained faction of BNP, said a neutral and credible election is 'impossible under the present Election Commission (EC)', as it has lost neutrality by inviting 'so-called reformists' as representatives of the party to electoral dialogues.

"Their [EC] activities prove they want to have a rigged election but the people of the country will not accept that," he said at a discussion meeting held in the National Press Club in the capital yesterday adding that his faction of BNP has lost faith in the EC.

The 1980's leaders of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal, the student wing of BNP, organised the programme marking the 72nd birth anniversary of late president Ziaur Rahman, founder of the party.

Referring to the three Dhaka University teachers who had been convicted of violating Emergency Power Rules on Tuesday morning

Sudden dip in temp kills 7 in north

Cold diarrhoea, pneumonia break out

STAR REPORT

Life has come to a virtual standstill in the northern districts for the past few days as spells of drizzle and sudden drop in temperature are forcing most people to remain indoors.

Seven children died in Rangpur yesterday due to cold diarrhoea and pneumonia with hundreds of people, most of them children and elderly, admitted to the hospitals affected by the cold-related diseases, our correspondents report.

The biting cold proved to be particularly harsh for the poor farmers, landless people, day labourers and homeless people, who cannot afford to buy winter clothes.

Dense fog, which starts setting in soon after sunset and continues for most part of the next day, is also adding to the sufferings of the locals as poor visibility has been disrupting vehicular movement on

the streets and day-to-day activities, our correspondents say.

The region saw a sharp drop in temperature, as the highest temperature for Dinajpur was recorded at 15 degrees Celsius yesterday, which was 22.5 degrees on Tuesday. In Rajshahi, it was 22.7 degrees Celsius on Tuesday and fell to 18 degrees yesterday and in Rangpur, the 23 degrees Celsius on Tuesday dropped to 15 degrees yesterday, met office sources said.

In addition to the northern districts, drizzles may occur at one or two places in Jessore, Kushtia, Comilla, Rajshahi, Sylhet and Dhaka. The night temperature may also fall in those places.

The lowest temperature in the country yesterday was in Srimangal at 10.2 degrees Celsius and the highest 30 degrees was recorded in Cox's Bazar.

Our Rangpur correspondent reports that intense cold has brought about cold diarrhoea and

pneumonia in the district that claimed seven children yesterday.

According to the hospital sources, the dead are, 15-day old boy of Mahmud of Rahimpur under Taraganj upazila in Rangpur, two-day old girl of Mominul Islam of Mominpur under Rangpur sadar upazila, eight-year old Enam Hossain, son of Farhad Hossain of Collegepara in Nilphamari, five-day old boy of Shahabuddin of Gangachara upazila in Rangpur, one-month old girl of Pradip Kumar of Borabhita under Kishoreganj upazila, two-day old boy of Momotajuddin of Uttom, and two-year old son of Shariful Islam of Velaguri under Hatibandha upazila in Lalmonirhat district. All of them died in Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

Civil Surgeon of Rangpur Abdur Rahim said that the children were affected by acute pneumonia and
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Five to die for killing jewellery trader

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday awarded death sentence to five persons including a woman for killing a jewellery trader in the capital's Uttara area in October, 2006.

The convicts are Shahdat Hossain Liton, 34, his brother Al Mamun, 26, Liton's girlfriend Shamsunnahar Sheuli, 29, Abu Syed, 30, and Farhad Alam Hira, 26.

Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 Judge Anwar Hossain pronounced the verdict in presence of the convicts at the jam-packed courtroom.

The judge also sentenced them to seven years' rigorous imprisonment for destroying evidence.

The parents of slain jewellery trader Turya Ghosh Roni could not be present at the court due to illness. Turya's uncle and other relatives, who were present there, expressed their satisfaction over the verdict.

Earlier, the prosecution and the defence had completed their arguments. The court recorded statements.
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National Professor Kabir Choudhury addressing a DUTA organised solidarity rally for freed DU teachers' and students (seen in marigold garlands) in front of Aparajeyo Bangla on the campus yesterday.

UNREST AT RU Family of killed rickshawpuller seeks justice

ANWAR ALI, from Rajshahi with EAM ASADUZZAMAN in Nilphamari

The family of rickshaw-puller Afzal Hossain, reportedly killed in police firing during last August's campus unrest at Rajshahi University (RU), has demanded justice and compensation for his death.

Afzal's wife Asma Begum along with her three minor daughters and mother-in-law are surviving on a meagre, or less, a day as they wait for justice for their loss.

The police had initially claimed that students have beaten Afzal to death. Later when his autopsy report showed that he died from shot wounds, police dropped the issue of Afzal's death from the cases filed against students for lack of witnesses or evidence of who killed him.

Afzal's family now lives in a tiny straw hut at Jalmunda village of
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DU INCIDENT Verdicts were based on poor evidence

Jurists observe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The verdicts sentencing three teachers and four students of Dhaka University (DU) in two cases for violating Emergency Power Rules (EPR) were based on "poor" evidence as most witnesses did not name the students and teachers, observed renowned jurists.

The jurists said going through the documents of 28 prosecution witnesses of the two cases they found that only two named the convicted students and teachers. Rest of the witnesses did not corroborate the oral evidence of the two witnesses given before the courts.

Reviewing the facts, noted jurist Shahdeen Malik said such weak prosecution evidence in criminal

cases invariably leads to acquittal. Preliminary perusal of the evidence could not but evoke surprise about the conviction, he said.

"It seems the evidence was not sufficient for finding of guilt and imprisonment," Malik told The Daily Star yesterday.

Justice Ghulam Rabbani, a former judge of the Appellate Division of Supreme Court, termed the criminal cases against the DU teachers and students mysterious.

"The scenario regarding the criminal cases against the teachers and students of Rajshahi University and Dhaka University appear to be mysterious and cannot be equated with the normal process of law," Rabbani told The Daily Star yesterday.

"I may be incorrect but the suspicion, which looms in my mind as a person who was in the bar for 32 years and in the bench for 10 years, is dangerous and must be removed by the persons concerned in the scenario," he added.

The caretaker government had been speaking of working for a respectful solution to the crisis that arose following arrest of university teachers and students. After releasing the four DU teachers—of them three were convicted by a court and pardoned by the president—the education adviser Tuesday said the government brought a respectful solution to the crisis.

However, in their instant reaction, political leaders, legal experts
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Bird flu alert in bordering dists

Import of poultry products from India stopped

STAR REPORT

District administrations of four northern districts -- Dinajpur, Thakurgaon Panchagarh and Joypurhat -- yesterday imposed a ban on the import of all types of poultry, poultry products and other birds from India.

The ban has been enforced as a precautionary measure to stop the spread of bird flu that has struck Indian state of West Bengal recently, reports our correspondent in Dinajpur quoting BDR and Deputy Commissioner (DC)

sources.

The Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) has been put on alert on the borders of the four northern districts to enforce the poultry import ban, added the sources.

Meanwhile, Dinajpur district administration enforced a restriction throughout the district on the transportation of poultry and other birds following several incidents of bird flu detection in the last fifteen days, said DC office sources.

Dinajpur livestock officials said
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Abul Hasnat Abdullah's property to be attached

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered attaching all properties of former chief whip and Awami League (AL) leader Abul Hasnat Abdullah in a case for concealing Tk 52 lakh in his wealth statement and illegally amassing Tk 1.06 crore assets.

Judge Mohammad Azizul Haque of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court passed the order following receipt of police report regarding arrest warrant against Hasnat issued earlier.

On January 16, Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Assistant Director Shaiful Alam, who is also
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People expect govt to complete reform, hand over power thru' polls

Says Justice Habibur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former chief adviser Justice Habibur Rahman yesterday said people would only be grateful if the government hands over power to an elected government after holding free and fair polls by the end of this year.

"We want this government to finish its reforms, hold elections and hand over power to an elected government. Only then would we thank the government," Habib said in an interview with the BBC Bangla Service last night.

Comparing the current government's agenda to his tenure in 1996, he said, "We had it much easier in 1996. The agenda and the roadmap of this caretaker government are unimaginable."

"The duty for all governments is to serve the people. The government has to know the problems of the people and the people have to know the problems of the government," said the former chief justice.

He said that the "usual" practice of dismissing each other's view has
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Many miss 28th BCS exam for long delay

SURANJITH DEABNATH

The circular for the 28th BCS examinations has disappointed jobseekers as it retained the 55 percent non-merit quota but did not relax the age limit for appearing in the examinations despite delaying the publication by two and a half years.

The latest circular of the Public Service Commission (PSC) published yesterday in different dailies mentioned that only graduates aged 30 years or below as of January 1 this year can apply for the 28th BCS examinations.

This has left thousands of jobseekers, who have crossed the age limit, deprived of the opportunity as the PSC did not publish any circular for the BCS examinations since June 28, 2005.
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The PSC usually publishes the circular every year and relaxed the age limit by at least six months for most of the previous BCS examinations.

Talking to The Daily Star, many such unfortunate candidates demanded that the PSC relax the age limit for the 28th BCS examinations by at least one year.

"The PSC usually issues at least one circular a year for the BCS examinations. It issued four such circulars during the five-year tenure of the last BNP-Jamaat alliance government. The government tried to issue another circular but failed because of various irregularities in the 27th BCS examinations," a PSC director said, seeking anonymity.

The PSC circular for the 27th BCS examinations dated June 28,
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LABOUR UNREST Production halts in 6 RMG units

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Protesting the sacking of co-workers, the garment workers ransacked two factories at Fatullah in Narayanganj yesterday forcing six export-oriented garment units in the area to halt production.

Workers and police sources said around 1,200 workers of Metro Garments located at Katherpool of Fatullah took to the street in the morning as six of their co-workers were fired on Tuesday.

At one point, they tried to get the workers of some other garment factories in the area to join their demonstration.

Failing in their attempt, the agitating workers threw stones towards the factories of Liberty and Mishu Wear Garments and ransacked those. Consequently, these
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