

Delwar loyals sued

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Secretary Mohiuddin Khan Mohan, Janyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) Assistant General Secretary Amiruzzaman Khan Shimul and Organising Secretary Abdul Quader, JCD Dhaka City (South) President Rafiqul Alam Moju and General Secretary (GS) Yasin Ali, its Dhaka City unit joint Secretary Robin, Dhaka University unit GS Saiful Islam Firoz, JCD leaders Nurul Islam Naveen and Habibur Rashed Habib and Swechhchaseb Dal leader Zakir Hossain Milon.

Investigation Officer of the case SI Alraf Hossain told The Daily Star yesterday evening that they are yet to arrest any of them.

In the FIR, the complainant said that on April 17, the accused gathered at the EC gate an hour after BNP reformist Hafiz Uddin supporters came there and held rally and staged demonstrations. As a result, public order and security at that place had come under threat.

Besides, law and order was disrupted seriously as the accused made provocative speeches and chased their rivals violating the Emergency Powers Rules 2007, which ban all sorts of procession, rally and demonstration, the complainant added.

He said the filing of the case was delayed as it took time to collect names and addresses of the accused.

Denouncing the case, BNP Secretary General Khandakar Delwar Hossain yesterday said that the case was filed as part of a blueprint to destroy the nationalist forces.

"Destruction of the nationalist forces won't be allowed," he was quoted as saying by BNP acting Office Secretary Rizvi Ahmed, in protest at the filing of the case against his party people.

Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda invited both BNP's reformist faction leader and acting secretary general Maj (ret'd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed and BNP's Khaleda-nominated Secretary General Khandakar Delwar Hossain to the EC Secretariat for talks.

Both the factions accepted the invitation and Hafiz Uddin-led delegation met with CEC Huda and other election commissioners first on April 17.

As the Hafiz-led group was

leaving the secretariat through an alternative road, the pro-Khaleda faction supporters chanted slogans in front of the EC office.

A 15-member delegation of the Delwar faction, led by standing committee member Chowdhury Tanvir Ahmed Siddiqui, met with the EC later the same day. Delwar did not attend the meeting.

Soon after the BNP leaders came out after the meeting, the faction's supporters outside chanted slogans against the CEC.

Meanwhile, at least six key leaders of pro-Khaleda faction reportedly went into hiding last night to escape possible arrest in the case.

Party's standing committee member Tanvir Ahmed Siddiqui, BNP chairperson's adviser Brig Gen (ret'd) ASM Hannan Shah, Joint Secretary General Goyeshwar Chandra Roy, acting Office Secretary Ruhul Kabir Rizvi and former lawmaker Sohrab Uddin kept away from their homes since last evening, sources said.

Khaleda-appointed Secretary General Khandakar Delwar Hossain could not be contacted over telephone last night.

Talking to The Daily Star, one of the leaders requesting anonymity said, "We are out of our homes to avoid possible harassment." He however declined to disclose where he was.

A number of the leaders' cellphones were turned off.

Sources said police late last night started the hunt down for the BNP leaders, including the ones who allegedly violated the EPR. Several leaders who have been opposing talks between the Election Commission and the Saifur-led faction of BNP went into hiding fearing they would be arrested in the case.

China

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has begun the railway extension project on its side to link with the Nepal-China border, Baral said.

The Chinese communist party delegation told Nepalese officials that the railway link would be ready in five years time, said Baral.

The Nepal border town of Khasa lies some 80 kilometres (50 miles) north of the ancient capital Kathmandu.

"The railway network will be important for increasing trade and tourism for both countries," Baral added.

Landlocked and impoverished Nepal is wedged between India and China.

Analysts said such a rail link could reduce Nepal's reliance on India for many of its goods from drugs to transport vehicles and spare parts, cotton textiles and cement.

Many Nepalese are uneasy with what they say is New Delhi's dominance of the Himalayan nation's economy.

India is Nepal's largest trading partner, accounting for more than 60 percent of its trade.

The two countries recently renewed a bilateral trade treaty which allows duty-free imports into India.

Nepal's economy is heavily dependent on India. Once the railway service commences into operation it will lessen dependence on India within a decade or so," Madhavi Singh Shah, economics professor at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan University, told AFP.

Govt asked

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"How come some advisers rushed to the ulamas and formed a committee after the chief adviser had announced the policy on behalf of the council of advisers? And why a religious quarter was given the task neglecting experts and rights activists," Hameeda Hossain said, adding that chief of Hathazari Madrasa, whose students attacked Hathazari Police Station, was on the review committee.

Human rights activist Khushi Kabir said the policy was formed not only basing on religion, it aims at development of women irrespective of religion and giving in to the group's pressure would mean paving the way for turning the country into a fascist Islam state.

Asking the government to make its stance clear regarding the policy, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad President Ayesha Khanam pointed out that the policy is not for Muslim women alone.

Most of the Muslim countries have moved away from traditional provisions over the ages, Bangladesh has also done that. There are only a few cases like the inheritance issue where we are maintaining it here, Shaheen Malik said referring to Resolution of Muslim Marriage Act, 1929 and the law regarding custody of children.

"It cannot be done in the case of inheritance because there is a shortage of people to talk honestly about it with an open mind," he said.

Blasting the role of the Baitul Mukarram Khatib, former finance minister AMA Muhiut said there is no provision for priesthood in Islam.

The government did not permit Samajik Protirodh Committee to hold a meeting on April 25 but the fundamentalist forces did not bother to seek permission and indulged in violence, the speakers mentioned.

The participants demanded stopping religion-based politics and use of mosques for political purposes.

ABM Musa, Syed Abul Mokssud, Zafrullah Chowdhury, Badiul Alam Majumder, Farzana Islam and Ruhin Hossain Prince also participated in the discussion.

Hasina

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back to the makeshift jail as the hospital authorities discharged her after providing her with necessary medical treatment.

Hasina is likely to be produced before a Dhaka Divisional Special Judge's court today relocated to the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban complex in connection with the MIG-29 corruption case.

New unity proposal

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According to the proposal, Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, who was expelled by party Chairperson Khaleda Zia hours before her arrest last year, would have to be reinstated in the party and appointed as a member of the standing committee that would run the party in the chairperson's absence.

Party insiders said Speaker Sircar yesterday invited Delwar to his office to discuss the proposal after Saifur Rahman and Bhuiyan, two top leaders of the splinter group of reformists, had requested Sircar over the phone to place their proposal to Delwar.

The meeting between the two leaders started at 2:45pm and lasted 45 minutes.

Delwar neither rejected nor accepted the proposal, saying that he did not have any objection to it as long as the detained chairperson of the party approves it, the insiders said adding that Delwar also reiterated his insistence on scrapping the standing committee's decision taken on October 29 last year, before considering the new proposal.

Delwar earlier informed Saifur of his stance on the October 29 meeting when the latter made several phone calls to him, urging the need for holding discussions over the unity of the party.

On October 29 last year, a BNP standing committee meeting held at Saifur's Gulshan residence appointed Saifur Rahman as acting chairperson and Maj (ret'd) Hafiz Uddin Ahmed as acting secretary general of the party.

During the same meeting, the committee also overturned Khaleda's expulsion order of Bhuiyan, reinstated him in the party and appointed him as a member of the standing committee.

However, RA Gani, Chowdhury Tanveer Ahmed Siddique, Khandakar Mahbubuddin Ahmad and M Shamsul Islam -- four of the standing committee members who attended the meeting, later claimed that they did not gather for any formal meeting on October 29 as it was only an informal tea party.

Maj (ret'd) Hafiz later held a secret meeting with Hannan Shah, adviser to the BNP chairperson, in a Gulshan house. Their meeting, however, failed to reach any understanding.

Acting Chairperson Saifur's recent attempts to reach the senior pro-Khaleda leaders over phone were also unsuccessful.

FAO warns of 'civil war'

FROM PAGE 16
this had often made the implementation of FAO policies fall foul to those of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. "It's true that the World Bank and the IMF have, over the past two decades, policies which have dismantled systems put in place to protect farmers in Third World countries, notably in Africa," he said.

"(But) I should say that the World Bank has done a mea culpa, because it has recognised its policies in Africa were not good and that it has to change them."

However, he denied that price rises of up to 120 percent in rice's case would prove beneficial to developing world farmers.

"There has to be investment in the management of water," he said. "In Africa, on 96 percent of land, production is dependent upon rainfall."

"When you factor in poor rural transport networks... and inadequate storage facilities, (these countries) lose between 40 and 60 percent of production each year."

The FAO director-general welcomed an idea for global institutions to establish a food security fund, in the way the international community rallied to battle AIDS during the 1980s.

"I think that this proposition merits serious examination," Diouf said. "But how do we make sure that funds are in addition to resources mobilised by the World Bank, regional development banks, the EU and its bilateral aid programmes?"

Diouf stopped short of calling for a moratorium on biofuel development -- which the UN's Special Rapporteur for the Right to Food, Jean Ziegler, recently called a "crime against humanity".

He called instead for a conference on food security in Rome on June 3-5, -- which will be attended by French President Nicolas Sarkozy and Brazil's Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva -- to trigger informed research.

Diouf also pulled back from developing world calls to lower agriculture subsidies and open up access to markets in the United States and Europe -- instead pressing for similar subsidies for farmers in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

"There are two solutions: end subsidies everywhere, or give them to everyone. I prefer the latter," he said.

Diouf said the international credit crunch and faults in global financial markets could not be blamed for food price rises.

"Obviously, there are always interactions, but the real problem of the food crisis is insufficient global supply due to climatic phenomena, already low stocks and growing demand among emerging countries such as China and India."

"To that you can add the demand for biofuels which has diverted food towards energy."

"The growth in world population is 78.5 million people each year, and by 2050, the global population will have risen from six to nine billion," Diouf said.

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CNG three-wheeler

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The raised fares took effect from yesterday.

The communication ministry during a meeting raised the fare following recommendations made by the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) yesterday.

The meeting chaired by Communication Secretary Mahbubur Rahman and attended by BRTA Chairman Sunil Kanti Bose was held at the communication ministry.

Earlier in the day, BRTA officials sat with representatives of transport owners' and employees' association before making their recommendations.

The BRTA officials proposed the waiting-charge for autorickshaws be fixed at Tk 0.85 per minute but the communications ministry fixed it at Tk 1.

The waiting-charges for non-AC and AC taxis were not increased since their minimum fares were doubled, Ismail said.

Asked whether the fare of CNG-run buses would increase, he said the CNG-run buses have been charging the same as diesel-run buses despite running on CNG.

This taxi-fare hike is the first since the introduction of CNG-run vehicles in 1998. The CNG-run autorickshaw fare was adjusted May 1 last year.

The government initially encouraged people to convert their vehicles to run on CNG, one of the cleaner fossil fuels. Its use became popular since price of gasoline rose in phases in domestic and global markets.

After four years, the government raised the price of a cubic metre of CNG to Tk 16.75 from Tk 8.5 Thursday in order to reduce the losses Petrobangla was incurring due to the upward trend of prices of petroleum in global market.

Dr Kamal

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from Sherpur, Faridpur, Kishoreganj, Narsinghdi, Gazipur and other divisional headquarters under Dhaka attended the meeting presided over by Mafizul Islam Khan, president of Gono Forum, Manikganj unit.

Addressing the meet as chief guest, Dr Kamal Hossain said, "National unity is imperative to meet the present national challenge."

While talking about the corrupt politicians detained at the moment, Dr Kamal questioned why politicians who had engaged in all kinds of corruption and arrested for the same, were being referred to as political prisoners.

He urged all representatives to bring a meaningful change through a meaningful election.

Dr Kamal also said that he would serve his country to the end of his life.

AL men asked

FROM PAGE 1
make the programme a success without violating the Emergency Powers Rules (EPR).

The district unit leaders have also been asked to instruct upazila, thana, union and village units of the party to observe the 10:00am to 4:00pm programme in all educational institutions and mosques.

Leaders of the district units have already done so, party sources last night.

AL acting General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam gave the instruction to district unit leaders over telephone as they were confused about how to go on with the token hunger strike programme amid the state of emergency, and ban on indoor politics except in the capital.

The party's district unit leaders have been instructed to observe the programme either at the district press clubs or bar council premises. If the authorities do not allow this, then they should observe it inside religion establishments including mosques.

AL sources said Syed Ashraf told the district leaders that they have to make the token hunger strike a success without violating the EPR since it is the first political programme for the party president's release since her arrest.

Some former leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) -- Abdul Wadud Khokon, Rafiqul Islam Katowal, Morsheduzzaman Selim, Alamgir Hasan and Imran Miah -- conveyed Ashraf's instruction to leaders of 64 districts units over telephone from Hasina's political office at Dhanmondi.

"We have received instruction from the acting general secretary to hold the programme either at press club or bar council premises. If the administration obstructs it, we will observe the programme in mosques and pray for our leader [Hasina]," said Asgar Ali, general secretary of Kustia district AL unit.

"We have already instructed our upazila, thana, union and village level leaders to observe the programme in mosques and educational institutions," he said when contacted over phone last night.

Laxmipur district unit President M Alauddin said, "We have got instruction from the party leadership to make the programme a complete success."

Pakistan, Taliban

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five-week-old civilian administration is seeking to distance itself from that US-backed approach, which many here argue only fueled militancy.

The Pakistani government says its envoys are talking with elders of the South Waziristan region's Mahsud tribe. The tribe is accused of sheltering militants involved in attacks inside Pakistan and across the border in Afghanistan. One member of the tribe, Baitullah Mehsud, leads Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and is considered the country's top Taliban leader. He has been accused of links to al-Qaeda and responsibility for a wave of suicide bombings, including the assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Bhutto's own party has not blamed Mehsud for her killing. One of the failed deals under Musharraf was with Mehsud.

The senior official told The Associated Press that a draft of a 15-point deal under negotiation included a commitment from the Mahsud tribe to stop attacks on Pakistani government targets and to prevent their territory from being used for terrorism in Afghanistan.

The official, who asked for anonymity because of the sensitivity of his job, said it also included a commitment to evict foreigners from their area.

In return, the government would gradually withdraw the army, deliver development projects, create jobs and discuss any conflicts that arise with the tribal elders.

There would also be an exchange of prisoners, the official said.

Government officials say publicly that their talks with the Mahsud tribe in South Waziristan and groups elsewhere in the tribal areas are an attempt to isolate al-Qaeda elements in the border region, considered a likely hiding place for Osama bin Laden.

The intelligence official said the government knew that elders were discussing the draft accord with militants.

He said the outcome of the talks was uncertain. He wouldn't say whether the government had received any response from Mehsud.

Umar claimed militants across the region were ready for peace if the government met their demands to withdraw the army and release 200 militant prisoners in exchange for as many as 100 people, mostly security forces, held captive by the militants.

He insisted that militants will continue to attack US forces in Afghanistan, but suggested "if America wants peace in the area through negotiations and dialogue we are ready for talks with the Americans."

Tehrik-e-Taliban distributed fliers this week urging its followers to observe a cease-fire to give the peace talks a chance and saving violators would be "strung upside down in public and punished."

However, a five-week lull in violence was shattered at 6 a.m. Friday when the bomb went off between a police station and a market area in the northwestern city of Mardan, said Akhbar Ali Shah, a senior police official.

The bomb killed one police officer and two men working at a small restaurant near the police station. Twenty-six people, including 18 policemen, were wounded.