

Form united front to foil conspiracy against polls

Gono Forum urges democratic, pro-liberation forces

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gono Forum yesterday called on the progressive, democratic and pro-liberation forces to form a united front based on similar action programmes to foil any conspiracy against the upcoming elections.

The call came at a presidium meeting of the Gono Forum held at its office in the city, with Pankaj Bhattacharya in the chair.

The leaders also called on all not to compromise with deposed autocrat, communal forces and war criminals in the name of election strategy.

25 repressed journos demand release of Janakantha editor

DU CORRESPONDENT

A total of 25 repressed journalists in a joint statement yesterday demanded release of Atiqullah Khan Masud, editor of the daily Janakantha.

The journalists in the statement said Masud is now suffering from neurological problems, heart disease, intestinal disorder and kidney and eye complexities and undergoing treatment at the prison cell of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

Recently doctors have advised him to go abroad for better treatment, the journalists said and urged the government to release him on humanitarian grounds saying that his release on bail would not hamper the legal process of the charges framed against him.

They also said the daily Janakantha has also been in severe financial crisis because of the detention of its editor and so its journalists, employees and their family members are leading a miserable life.

Immediate release of Masud can be the only solution to this end, the journalists observed.

They also said the daily Janakantha always provided support to the repressed journalists and protested all kind of repression against journalists.

Signatories to the statement include Shahrar Kabir, Enamul Haq Chowdhury, Tipu Sultan, Sumi Khan, Showkat Milton, Shaiful Haq, Mithu and Jahangir Alam Akash.

ANSAR MAN MURDER

None arrested yet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police could not arrest anyone in connection with the murder of Nasirullah Khan, an assistant adjutant of Ansoo who was shot dead at his Uttarkhan residence on Saturday.

Police said they have started investigating into the incident and recording statements of the deceased's wife, daughter and neighbours.

Shamsuddin Khan, brother of the deceased, filed two cases - one for murder and robbery and the other under the explosives act on Saturday.

He accused 20 to 25 people without mentioning anybody's name.

Meanwhile, Md Saifur Rahman, assistant coordinator for director general of Ansoo VDP Headquarters, said that Nasirullah Khan was not a former Ansoo man, he was working as an assistant adjutant at the Ansoo Headquarters and he was 56.

Police informed that Nasirullah was an ex-Ansoo man while his relatives mentioned his age 60 in the death registrar of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

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Buddhist students' body executives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two-year long 41-member committee of the Bangladesh Buddhist Students Council was formed with Shuvo Barua as president and Saikat Barua as general secretary.

This committee was formed at a meeting at Dharmarajik Buddha Bihar on Saturday.

View exchange meeting Council for National Agenda and Universal News Agency jointly organise a view exchange meeting and iftar party. Venue: Hotel Sundarban. Time: 4.45pm.

Coal miner succumbs to burn injuries

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

A miner of Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Ltd (BCMCL), who was seriously wounded in the mine on September 24, succumbed to burn injuries at Dhaka Medical College Burn Unit yesterday morning.

BCMCL officials said Md Sultan Mahmud, 28, son Md Iskandar Ali, of Khalipur Sardarpara village under Parbatipur upazila in Dinaipur received severe burn injuries on that midnight while the miners were repairing a machine of a water pump.

They were repairing a water pump machine, but it caught fire from electric short circuit leaving two miners, including a Chinese one, wounded, they added.

Sources said 70 percent torso of the victim sustained burn injuries in the fire. The authorities sent him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Soon after the fellow miners heard the news, they busted into agitation on the company premises and demanded a fair investigation into the incident.

The authorities, however, assured the family of the victim of paying compensation for the incident.

Meanwhile, Yasmin, wife of Sultan, alleged that her husband was murdered and demanded the authorities carry out a fair investigation into the incident.

The Chinese miner Hu Chong Ziang is also being treated at DMCH.

On September 25, BCMCL formed a one-member investigation committee to probe into the incident and asked the body to submit the report within seven days.

Low moves to Rajshahi-Ishwardi region, heavy rainfall likely

BSS, Dhaka

The well marked low moved away from south western region to Rajshahi-Ishwardi and adjoining area yesterday and is likely to sail away further north-northwest ward, Met office sources said.

But it has refused to weaken fully as yet and propped up the monsoon to trigger heavy to very heavy rainfall before leaving the country towards northern west Bengal.

Though the rains have slowed down along the southern region but rains are likely in Rajshahi, Ishwardi, Khulna, Jessore and Kushtia region.

The Met office said, under the influence of the well marked low and the active monsoon very heavy to heavy rainfall is likely at places over Chittagong, Barisal, Khulna, Dhaka and Rajshahi divisions during the next 24 hours beginning at 10:00am yesterday.

Meanwhile, the Met office warning for the maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla to keep hoisted local cautionary signal number three have remained in force as the north Bay still remained stormy under the influence of the steep pressure gradient due to the low pressure since Friday.

The Met also warned all fishing boats and trawlers in the north Bay to keep close to the coast and negotiate the rough sea cautiously.

Two detained over Delhi bomb blast

AFP, New Delhi

Indian police detained two people over a deadly bomb attack on a busy shopping area in New Delhi, officials said yesterday.

Detectives in Faridabad, outside the Indian capital, said the pair were held within hours of the blast on Saturday afternoon on the busy shopping area that killed two people including a 10-year-old boy.

"They are being questioned in connection with a call made to the police on Friday which warned of a bomb attack in New Delhi," a police spokesman said.

Spokesman Rajan Bhagat said so far no one had been arrested in connection with the attack which also left 22 people injured.

The explosives killed the child as he picked up the package mistakely thinking that two motorcycle riders had accidentally dropped it.

No one has claimed responsibility for the attack, Bhagat added.

Saturday's attack came two weeks after several markets in New Delhi were hit by explosions that killed 24 people and injured at least 100.

Those blasts were claimed by an Islamist militant group called the Indian Mujahideen.



Transport workers stage a demonstration at Kadamtal bus terminal in Chittagong yesterday while police beat up one during a clash over rumour of death of a worker. (Story on Page 16)

ILL-GOTTEN WEALTH

Tac to hear pleas of 10 today

UNB, Dhaka

The Truth and Accountability Commission (Tac) is scheduled to hear the pleas of 10 corruption suspects today for considering clemency in return for their ill-gotten wealth.

According to Tac sources, the three-member commission, headed by Justice Habibur Rahman Khan, will hear confessions by 10 government employees from Titas Gas, Land Ministry, the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications and Roads and Highways department.

With these 31 applications, the total number of cases sent by the ACC will rise to 110. Earlier, the

already heard 120 corrupt individuals, who have pledged more than Tk 16.5 crore in exchange for mercy.

Meanwhile, the commission is likely to receive applications of 31 corrupt persons from the Anti-Corruption Commission today. These individuals, who have earlier applied to ACC for referring their names to Tac, include a politician, members of police, sub-registrars, employees-officials from Forest Department and Local Government Engineering Department.

With these 31 applications, the total number of cases sent by the ACC will rise to 110. Earlier, the

anti-graft watchdog forwarded 79 applications to Tac for considering their clemency claim.

Tac has so far received applications from 252 corrupt individuals. Of them, 218 are government servants, wives of 19 of them, eight businessmen and seven other professionals.

Apart from the names referred by the ACC, 10 have directly applied for clemency, 166 have been referred by the National Coordination Committee (NCC) on serious crime and corruption, and three cases have been referred by the courts.

Political crisis paralysing Malaysian economy

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

The political crisis in Malaysia since March elections that humiliated the ruling coalition has stifled the stock market, deterred foreign investment and crimped growth forecasts.

And economic observers said that with Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi still clinging to power despite mounting calls for a speedy departure, there is no end in sight to the uncertainty.

Abdullah has said he may not seek re-election as ruling party leader in internal polls next year, but

the coalition also faces an unprecedented challenge from the opposition, which says it has the numbers to seize power.

The prospect of a messy change of government - the first in the history of Malaysia, which has been ruled by the Barisan Nasional coalition since independence in 1957 - is making investors very nervous.

The Kuala Lumpur Composite Index, which reached an all-time high of 1,524 points in January, dived to 1,157 shortly after the March elections that saw the government lose its two-thirds majority in parliament for the first time.

On September 18, the bourse plunged to a two-year low of 963, and ended last week at 1,020.53, in a malaise worsened by the stream of bad news from Wall Street.

"It has been on a downturn since the general elections and we expect it to remain so as there are no signs that the political situation is easing," said Stephen Soo, a senior analyst at local brokerage TA Securities.

He said the political turmoil, combined with the turbulence in the US financial markets, offered "not much hope" for the market to revive before year-end.

Ex-AL MPs vow not to contest

FROM PAGE 1

iftar party at AL leader Abdul Hamid's Nam flat organised on the occasion of Hasina's 61st birth anniversary.

Abdul Hamid, former deputy leader of the opposition, said the caretaker government can easily withdraw all charges against Hasina and release her permanently if it wishes.

Abdul Hamid said adding that without Hasina the party lawmakers of the seventh and eighth parliament will not contest the elections under any circumstance.

Referring to the present speaker's statement, AL presidium member Suranjit Sengupta said, "He (the speaker) can not conduct campaign for a certain political party being in office and taking public money. He should resign

immediately." Suranjit asked the speaker to publicly apologise for what the AL leader termed was an unethical act and violation of oath.

Hamid said it is unethical and unjust to make such remark while holding the post of speaker.

"He (the speaker) has failed to play his role," added the AL leader.

Former AL lawmakers including Asaduzzaman Noor, Col (ret) Faruk Khan, Abdul Matin Khasru, Abdus Shaheed, Shahjahan Khan, Atiqur Rahman, Abdus Sattar, Zahid Ahsan Russell, Mahbubur Rahman, and Sharif Shamsur Rahman Dilu were present.

Earlier in the morning, AL acting general secretary Syed Ashraful Islam said his party would start election campaign in full swing after the Eid.

Hasina will return home after completing medical check-up on October 17, Ashraf told reporters after a milad organised on the

occasion of Hasina's 61st birth anniversary at her Dhanmondi office.

Acting AL president Zillur Rahman demanded permanent release of Hasina immediately saying that the cases filed against her are baseless.

"False cases were filed against Hasina in a bid to keep her away from people," Zillur said.

AL leaders and activists prayed for early recovery of the party chief at the milad attended by among others Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Amir Hossain Amu, Suranjit Sengupta, Mukul Bose and Saber Hossain Chowdhury.

Later, Zillur cut a cake to celebrate Hasina's birthday in the evening when members of Sheikh Russell Jatiya Shishu Kishore Parishad went to meet him at his Gulshan residence.

Zillur and other party leaders also greeted their party chief over the phone.

Power Cell seeks better bidders

FROM PAGE 16

experience shows that if we provide too much lead time, it gives contractors enough time to manipulate the system for their own benefits."

As there had been a lot of disagreements over project sites, the tender document for the Sikalaha project specifies it.

"But the Cell should have really considered handing over a prepared project site instead of just specifying the location. All project delays have been caused by unprepared sites that are not suitable for installation of heavy machinery," quips the official.

The bid documents also kept a fuel provision that protects a corrupt practice of fuel oil theft.

"There are allegations that a section of unscrupulous employees of Power Development Board (PDB) and Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) systematically steal huge oil from the government storage tanks," says a source.

Recently, British company Aggreko has lodged a complaint with PDB in this regard.

The bid document says, "Liquid fuel will be measured by dip stick method or by any other mutually agreed method."

official. In addition, the bid document says the fuel oil delivery point would be PDB's oil storages instead of the outbond oil supply line.

"This again ensures comfort of the oil thieves and will either deprive the rental power contractor or make the contractor join the gang of thieves," he adds.

"To have genuine bidders, the government first blacklist contractors that won bids by lying and making promises that they could not deliver. The government must also streamline the customs procedures so that power companies can quickly import spares," he notes.

WOES OF RENTAL POWER The Cell had awarded a number of small 15-year rental power deals from 2006, but only one of those came into operation as all of these deals went to incompetent and novice companies.

In January, the Cell went for a three-year rental scheme and awarded four deals equivalent to 170mw capacity to Energy Prima, one 33mw deal to another novice consortium of Venture Energy Resources, one 40mw deal to British company Aggreko and another 50mw deal to US company Alstom.

These companies were supposed to launch their plants within May.

Inexperienced Energy Prima was favoured because of Hosaf Chief Moazzem Hossain's political connection. Brother of former BNP parliamentarian from Feni, Moazzem is an accused in the Barapukuria coalmine graft case filed by the Anti Corruption

Commission. However, Alstom did not pursue its project. Aggreko launched its Khulna 40mw project 12 days behind deadline, while Venture Energy completely failed and Energy Prima grossly failed.

Energy Prima however launched a 50mw plant in Kumargaon two months behind schedule on July 23. It has announced that it will launch its Shajbazar 50mw plant in phases from September 23 to 30 on test -- four months behind schedule. Its two other plants are yet to be launched.

Sources say after a long delay, PDB slapped a fine of \$1.7 million on Energy Prima and was asked to extend bank guarantees against its projects.

The PDB also slapped a fine on Aggreko for 12 days delay and another fine on GBB for delays in implementing a 15-year rental power scheme in Bogra.

At a recent meeting the power secretary blasted Moazzem Hossain for the repeated failure of Energy Prima to keep the deadline.

Moazzem was defended at the meeting by Anisul Haq, president of the Federation of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FCCI).

Sources say Hossain has involved Haq recently with him to exert influence on the authorities.

"I have financial stakes in the Kumargaon power projects. I got involved in rental power project only six months ago by taking over Desh Energy (which is partnering with Energy Prima)," Haq told The Daily Star.

Resignation of speaker demanded

DU CORRESPONDENT

Over 200 teachers of Dhaka University yesterday demanded immediate resignation of Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar for his comment on Awami League at a discussion on Friday.

The statement made by the speaker that "the AL would not be able to protect itself from the election disaster even if it forms an alliance of one hundred political parties" has shocked all the upright people, the teachers said in a joint statement.

They said Jamiruddin, as a speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad, should act as a neutral person, but he made the statement like a partisan person, flouting the rules and traditions, thereby undermining the post of the speaker.

Such partisan attitude eventually makes parliament ineffective, they observed.

The people will decide who will form the next government, but the speaker has already declared the election results through such a statement, the teachers added.

Signatories to the statement include Prof Anwar Hossain, Prof AAMS Arefin Siddique, Prof Harun-or-Rashid, Prof Akhtaruzzaman, Prof Sheikh Abdus Salam and Dr Zinat Huda.

Obituary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Dr Halima Khatun, former president of Gonotrantri Party of Mymensingh district unit and a noted doctor in Mymensingh and, passed away due to old age complications at her residence at Nawmahal in the town on Saturday night at the age of 90.

She was buried at Bhatkeshor graveyard yesterday.

Abul Hossain

BSS, Mymensingh

Abul Hossain, editor of the local daily Aiker Smitree, passed away at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital early hours yesterday at the age of 69.

He left behind his wife, one son, two daughters and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

He was buried at his family graveyard in Nandaal upazila.

Shah Firoz Kabir

BSS, Gaibandha

Shah Firoz Kabir, a senior member of Gaibandha Bar Association and son of the first speaker of Jatiya Parishad Shah Abdul Hamid, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at Sadar Hospital in the town on Friday morning at the age of 69.

He left behind three sons, three daughters and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

Shah Firoz Kabir, a senior member of District Bar Association, was buried at Poura Graveyard after namaz-e-janaza at Railway Jame Mosque.

Death anniversary

METRO DESK

Today is the ninth death anniversary of Asiruddin Ahmed, a retired cooperative inspector in Rangpur, says a press release.

On the occasion, Quorankhwan, doa and iftar party will be held after Asr prayers at his residence (House-3, Road-228, Mulate) in Rangpur.

Relatives, friends, colleagues and admirers are requested to attend the programme and pray for peace of the departed soul.

Dewan Abdul Baten

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 8th death anniversary of Dewan Abdul Baten, former headmaster of Barodi Bahumukhi High School in Narayanganj, says a press release.

On the occasion, a milad mahfil will be held at his residence in Narayanganj.

TWO TOP LEADERS' TALKS Stress on dialogue may hinder national polls

Says Ibrahim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Kalyan Party (BKP) Chairman Maj Gen (Retd) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim yesterday said preparations for holding the national elections on December 18 might be hampered if the government gives much importance to the dialogues between the two top leaders.

He said this at an iftar party at

his New DOHS office in the city. Some people also joined BKP on the occasion.

The BKP chief urged all concerned to show self-control with the spirit of the holy month of Ramadan and keep the political arena peaceful.

BKP Secretary General Abul Kalam Azad and business leaders Md Shawal Khan and Enayet Karim also spoke on the occasion.



Leaders of the BNP-led four-party alliance hold a meeting at the Nam flat of BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

TRANSPORT MINISTER RESIGNS Japan's new PM faces setback

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's new Prime Minister Taro Aso yesterday faced his first political setback just days after taking office as his transport minister was forced to resign over a series of embarrassing gaffes.

The resignation was a serious blow to the outspoken, flamboyant Aso, who had been expected to call a snap election -- perhaps as early as this week -- to capitalise on his government's honeymoon period.

Instead, his administration has fared poorly in initial public opinion polls after taking the reins on Wednesday, and observers said the resignation of Transport Minister Nariaki Nakayama would only make things worse.

Nakayama made a series of blunders last week in his very first interview, one of which was saying that Japan was "homogenous" -- a remark which raised the hackles of the country's indigenous Ainu people.

He also said schools with unionised teachers had lower standards, and accused farmers fighting for land seized for airport construction of "making profits by whining."

"I have resigned from the post," Nakayama told a hastily arranged

press conference after an early morning meeting with Aso. "If my remarks have made any impact on parliamentary proceedings, it would not be what I had intended."

Former administrative reform minister Kazuyoshi Kaneko, 65, will replace him.

Aso apologised over the incident, calling Nakayama's comments "extremely inappropriate."

"I apologise for my heart to the people subjected to his remarks," the prime minister told reporters Sunday.

Aso's government is expecting some tough battles in parliament, with the opposition in control of the upper house and piling the pressure on the prime minister to put his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) on the line by calling early elections.

Opposition leader Ichiro Ozawa said Nakayama's resignation was "no surprise," telling reporters: "I believe the prime minister bears significant responsibility."

Aso, a conservative who has vowed new budget measures to revive the world's second largest economy, took office on Wednesday, replacing the unpopular Yasuo Fukuda, who resigned early this month.

WEATHER TODAY

Thundershowers likely

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely at most places over Rajshahi and Khulna divisions and at many places over Barisal, Chittagong, Sylhet and Dhaka divisions in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Moderately heavy to heavy rainfalls are also likely at places across the country during the period, Met Office said. Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

Highest temperature 32.7 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Patuakhali and lowest 22.1 degrees Celsius at Sandwip.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:48pm today and rises at 5:50am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	30.8	25.7	82	80
Chittagong	28.8	23.4	99	85
Rajshahi	26.6	24.6	100	100
Khulna	30.5	24.4	81	88
Barisal	32.0	24.2	89	83
Sylhet	31.2	24.3	94	85
Cox's Bazar	29.0	24.0	96	85