

Old Dhaka

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continue and administrative and department offices would remain open.

OCCUPIED 12 DORMS
Soon after the BNP-led alliance government came to power in 2001, the DCC occupied the Bazul Rahman dormitory at Bongshal and set up Shaheed Ziaur Rahman High School there, according to sources.

Local criminals grabbed Shaheed Anwar Shafig hostel at Mahut Tuli, Saidur Rahman hostel on Tipu Sultan Road, Rouf Majumder hostel on Jadunah Bosak Lane, Nazrul Islam hostel on Gopi Mohan Bosak Lane, Shaheed Azmal Hossain hostel on Romakanta Nandi Lane and Crown Bhaban at Patuati.

Moreover, families of policemen grabbed Habibur Rahman hostel on Golok Paul Lane, Tibet hostel at Wiseghat and Abdur Rahman hostel at Armanitola.

A police camp was set up in one part of Shaheed Shahabuddin hostel at Tanbazar while shops were set up in the other part.

The Bani Bhaban is partially used by the university as a part of it is under the control of local powerful people.

On February 12 last year, the then VC Sirajul Islam Khan submitted a memorandum to the education ministry mentioning the state of the occupied dormitories.

YESTERDAY'S VIOLENCE
Witnesses said the clashes erupted around 10:30am when police charged truncheons on a few thousand students who have been demonstrating to have their dormitories returned to them.

A few thousand students gathered on campus in the morning under 22 banners of 22 departments, according to witnesses. They had a scheduled programme of laying siege to the Bangabhaban yesterday.

When they headed towards their destination, police stopped them at the university main gate leading to scuffles which sparked the three-hour-long clashes.

Witnesses said police charged truncheons while the students retaliated with bricks.

Dispersed by the truncheon charge, the students vandalised at least 20 vehicles around campus and damaged window-panes of the Bangladesh Bank office near the university.

Police then fired teargas and charged truncheons again that left at least 75 students injured. The students kept on hurling bricks at police and chases and counter chases took place between them.

Students alleged that law enforcers snatched a number of cellphones from students during the clashes.

Traffic was at standstill in the surrounding areas during the

Dhaka-Ctg

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He said submission of performance guarantees in US dollars within a maximum of 28 days of pre-qualification is incorporated as a requirement in the fresh tender invitation.

Iqbal said the priority level of the project to the new government is right after the Padma Multipurpose Bridge.

The project will be implemented soon, since not only it has important socio-economic ramifications, but also because it will ease the traffic, he added.

Amid a political chaos in the country, the last BNP-led first party alliance government first invited tender for upgrading of the 190-kilometre highway between Daudkandi and Chittagong in September 2006, but the project never made any headway due to bureaucratic red tapes and negligence through the tenures of two governments.

The project was thrown into further uncertainty when the communication ministry, and the Roads and Highway Department (RHD) engaged in a blame game over the details of the invitation for tender.

In the second invitation, it was said that performance guarantees must be submitted within seven days of pre-qualification, while PPR allowed a maximum of 28 days for it.

RHD was in favour of seven days while the ministry termed the position a gross violation of PPR, and scrapped the bidding.

Both sides since then were blaming each other for the delay in implementing the project.

Project Director Mostafa Kamal yesterday said there will be a slight change in the design of the highway.

"I hope all formalities will be completed by the year end, so construction may start early next year," he added.

The country's busiest highway linking the prime port city and the capital has become a death trap due to its narrowness while the number of vehicles on it has been rising geometrically over the years. All governments gave utmost importance to the highway's expansion, but none could move the project forward successfully.

Once the highway is upgraded, the communication secretary believes, the country will be connected with the proposed Asian Highway, boosting international trade.

Highway crashes will also be significantly reduced, he noted.

clashes and panic gripped students and locals.

Zahidul Islam Selim, a forth semester student of political science, said police charged truncheons on students entering classrooms and other places where they had taken refuge.

Witnesses said police also beat up female students who were overwhelmed by panic. They beat up and picked up students and a few pedestrians.

Several eyewitnesses said Chhatra League activists had joined police in beating up the agitating students.

Talking to The Daily Star Chhatra League Jagannath University unit President Kamrul Hasan Ripan claimed activists of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal and Islami Chhatra Shibir were trying to make the law and order situation on campus unstable.

Sources said the injured students were admitted to Mitford Hospital, nearby private clinic Sumona and National Medical College Hospital.

Students Mizanur Rahman, Kabir Hossain, Zahidul Islam, Saikat Majumder, Abdul Mannaf, Abdul Baten, Abul Khayer, Suman Sikder and Onik Sarkar were under the custody of Kotwali police.

Abdul Malek, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (Kotwali Zone), told The Daily Star, "Police resorted to firing 117 teargas shells to disperse unruly students who damaged vehicles, a Bangladesh Bank office and other establishments in the area."

He also said over 25 policemen were injured during the clashes and police detained a number of the students.

The agitating students during a press conference at the Jagannath University Journalists' Association office, held before the university syndicate emergency meeting in the evening, declared boycotting of all classes and exams for an indefinite period protesting the police excess and to press home their demand.

Meanwhile, Jagannath University Teachers' Association General Secretary Prof Kazi Saifuddin condemned the police excess on students and demanded a judicial enquiry.

Govt-opposition

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managing the seed sowing. BNP Secretary General Khandaker Delwar Hossain told a press briefing at the party chief's Gulshan office.

Abdus Shahid, chief whip of parliament, said they do not approve of the current seat arrangements made by immediate past speaker Jamiruddin Sircar, and so they are seeking changes to those.

According to the treasury's proposal, the opposition should have three seats in the front row and four in the second.

At present, they have 10 seats in the front row on the left of the House chair. Of those, nine belong to BNP lawmakers and one to Oli Ahmed, the lone lawmaker from Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

The second row that has 12 seats too has been set aside for the opposition lawmakers.

Annoyed at the arrangements, the treasury bench has requested the new speaker to 'redress the situation'.

"I'm under tremendous pressure from both sides, I'll try to solve the issue before the session resumes tomorrow," Speaker Hamid told reporters yesterday afternoon.

He said, "The treasury won't sit in the House without rearrangement while the opposition chief whip has said they won't accept any change."

"I'm trying my best. But I wonder how I'll make either side happy equally."

Mentioning three-fourth majority of the AL-led grand alliance, the speaker said, "Things have got quite embarrassing for me."

"If seats are distributed in proportion to the number of a party's lawmakers, the opposition will get only three seats in the front row. In the eighth parliament, the then opposition Awami League that had 62 MPs was allocated six seats on the front row."

Such discord would not have arisen, had Sircar made the arrangements in consultation with the ruling party, he added.

As of filing this report at 11:00pm, the speaker was trying to settle on five to six front-row seats for BNP. The remaining seats on that line might be given to the grand alliance partners, said sources at the parliament secretariat.

Earlier in the afternoon, after an hour-long meeting at the speaker's office, opposition chief whip told reporters that the seating arrangements must be kept as they are now.

"We cannot accept only three seats in the front row," Faruk said.

Shahid told reporters that they have asked the speaker to reorganise the seat chart as per proportional representation in parliament.

The speaker can finalise the seating arrangements in consultation with the chief whips. However, doing so is not mandatory as the rules of procedure leaves the matters at his discretion.

Khaleda

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inaugural session of the House.

"He (Iajuddin) failed to do his duty properly and breached his oath (as president) by imposing illegal and unconstitutional rule on the nation on January 11, 2007. And that is why we asked for his impeachment," the BNP secretary general said.

Asked whether they will place any formal proposal for the presidential impeachment, he said, "We are not majority in the parliament, so why we have to place the proposal. They (ruling Awami League) can start the process."

Blaming the prime minister for breaking the promise on appointment of deputy speaker from the opposition, the BNP leader said it was nothing but a pledge to misguide the nation.

"We did not want the post of deputy speaker from them (ruling party) but they promised to the nation that they will pick an opposition lawmaker for the post, and we thought it will create a positive trend," he said. There is no need to amend the constitution for creating another such post, he added.

Delwar criticised the AL for violent activities after the recent elections, and said 21 BNP men have been killed in post-polls violence. Allegations of vote rigging proved true after the upazila election with the recovery of stamped ballot papers, he said.

"The Election Commission itself suspended poll results in 13 upazilas, and polling has been postponed in 166 centres," he said. And polling agents of BNP-backed candidates were forced to leave about 11 thousand centres, he alleged.

BNP Joint Secretary General Nazrul Islam Khan and Office Secretary Rizvi Ahmed, among others, were present at the briefing.

New wing

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Sources said the main target of the project is to curb crimes related to drug, money laundering, trafficking in women, cyber crime, etc.

The proposal placed by the planning ministry before the Ecnc meeting said the type and technique of crimes is changing with the change of time. As a result, previous strategies are proving to be ineffective to check crimes, it said.

No separate central crime control centre has been set up under the police department and police headquarters is performing the task with various limitations.

Planning ministry sources said a seven-storey building with a foundation of 20-storey would be constructed for the time being to run its activities.

The Ecnc also approved Tk 50 crore for strengthening mushroom development project, Tk 108 crore amended project for construction of a bridge on Dhaleswari river at Elasin in Tangail, Tk 155 crore district road development (Rangpur zone) project, Tk 30 crore project for construction of 12 administrative building-cum-barracks among newly approved police stations, Tk 99 crore drinking water supply from the deep tube-well of irrigation (2nd phase) (1st amended) project and Tk 45 crore project for setting up a 50-bed BDR hospital at Satkania, Chittagong (1st amended) project.

Thailand

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framework of four countries -- India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Thailand -- so that the problem can be addressed at its origin," Abhisit told reporters at parliament.

A UNHCR spokeswoman told AFP on Monday that her organisation had not received a response from the Thai government to its request for access to the Rohingya, many of whom claim abuse back home in Myanmar.

Accusations of mistreatment surfaced earlier this month after nearly 650 Rohingya were rescued off India and Indonesia, some claiming to have been beaten by Thai soldiers before being set adrift in the high seas to die.

Hundreds of the boat people are still believed to be missing at sea.

Abhisit said the authorities were investigating CNN's claims that photographs it had obtained showed Thai security officials towing refugees out to sea before cutting them loose and abandoning them.

But he said plenty of other evidence showed humane treatment of refugees.

"There is a lot of evidence and there are many photographs showing how we have treated them," he said.

Thousands of Rohingya people leave Myanmar every year, many escaping poverty or fleeing persecution by the military regime. Myanmar denies the Muslim minority citizenship rights, leading to their abuse and exploitation.

Multi-party JS body

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Vice-president and lawmaker MK Anwar said they welcome the initiative.

Policymakers of both ruling and opposition parties have opposed the caretaker government's frequent promulgation of the ordinances, some out of necessity and some not.

Apart from the special committee, one or two more committees including the House Committee might be constituted today, parliament secretariat officials said.

PM'S QUESTION-ANSWER
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will reply to queries from the lawmakers at the beginning of today's sitting for half an hour, a source in the parliament secretariat said citing from the orders of the day.

She is expected to take at least four questions in writing and a number of supplementary questions raised by the lawmakers.

With hers begin the ministerial question-answer sessions in the ninth parliament. In a parliamentary form of

government, question-answer sessions are considered an effective tool to hold the ministers accountable to the legislature.

Meanwhile, the chief whip might today table a thanks-giving motion on the president's address and begin a discussion on it, parliament secretariat officials said.

BAC MEETING
Before resumption of the House proceedings today, the Business Advisory Committee (Bac) will meet to decide on length of the inaugural session and other businesses.

Leader of the House Sheikh Hasina, Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia and other senior lawmakers, who are members of the committee, have been asked to attend the meeting, parliament secretariat officials said.

Speaker Abdul Hamid will preside over the meeting scheduled to begin at 3:35pm. Whether BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will skip the meeting like leaders of the opposition in the past could not yet be known.

PM seeks

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issue of war criminals so that Bangladesh can avoid any "unfortunate" experiences.

Hasina and Renata also discussed the role of local government for sustainable development in the grassroots level.

The prime minister said in the upazila system, the parliament members should have some roles in its activities for the welfare of the people as well as country's overall development.

Sheikh Hasina also sought UNDP assistance in imparting training to the new members of parliament for making the parliamentary system more effective.

About the post of deputy speaker from the major opposition party in the House, she said the opposition didn't propose a candidate for the post before the election of the deputy speaker and the deputy speaker according to the Rules of Business. "We can't propose on behalf of them," said the prime minister.

About post-poll incidents she said from the very first day after the election, her party leaders and activists had been asked to show restraint and not to take the law in their own hands.

She, however, pointed out that during the rule of the 4-party alliance government,

her party leaders and workers were subjected to inhuman torture and repression.

As such, "It was very difficult for me to keep them calm. But they obeyed my order and didn't go for reprisal," Hasina informed the UN coordinator.

Dessalieu stressed reconciliation among political parties through bringing qualitative changes. "It would be very challenging for the new government to bring back the pace of development as the country was under an undemocratic government for long," she remarked.

In response, the prime minister said it would not be that difficult for the government as her government believes in the strength of the people who are the source of all powers. She is confident about carrying out development on all socioeconomic fronts.

In this context, she referred to the 1996-2001 tenure of her Awami League government and said despite consecutive hartals by the opposition, her government had achieved a tremendous success in developing the country in all sectors.

Prime Minister's Office Secretary Kazi Aminul Islam and Press Secretary to the Prime Minister Abul Kalam Azad were present.

Poll results

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in the official gazette -- are Bancharampur of Brahmanbaria, Araihaaj of Narayanganj, Teknaf of Cox's Bazar, Kaliganj of Gazipur, Merhendiganj of Barisal, Muradnagar of Comilla, and Raipura of Narsinghdi.

Sakhawat said after examining the complaints, relevant documents, newspaper reports, video footages, and photographs they are convinced that massive poll irregularities took place in the seven upazilas.

The commission will write to the law ministry seeking the judicial inquiry and urging the ministry to forward the request to the registrar of the Supreme Court, he added.

The upazilas where polling were suspended during the January 22 elections are Brahmanbaria Sadar, Ramganj of Laxmipur, Barura of Comilla, and Belkuchi of Sirajganj, while polling in Dighinala of Khagrachhari, and Ukhaia of Cox's Bazaar had been put off before the election day.

"The commission has identified 6 upazilas and 48 other centres where voting will be held again," yesterday's EC meeting sources said.

But, Sakhawat said re-polling will be allowed only in those disputed centres where the total numbers of suspended votes have chances of offsetting the current aggregate results.

When the reporters asked Sakhawat what action the EC will take against ministers and lawmakers who will be proven guilty of influencing the elections, he told them to look up the relevant law.

SAKHAWAT REBUTS TAJ'S CLAIM
As the election commissioner's attention was drawn to State Minister for Home Affairs Tanjim Ahmed Sohel Taj's remark that the EC has command over law enforcing agencies till 15 days after the elections, Sakhawat said the

statement is wrong.

"I think he didn't look up the law. It is good to look up the laws before making comments from the home ministry, otherwise, public doubts might be sparked," Sakhawat quipped.

HC rules

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have been asked to reply to the rule within six weeks.

The petitioners stated that Jamaat-e-Islami is a religion-based political party and does not believe in the independence and sovereignty of Bangladesh which is against the Constitution of Bangladesh and the spirit of the Representation of People Order (RPO) Ordinance 2008.

The constitution of this party contain provisions that do not allow any non-Muslim or any woman to hold the position of ameer in the party which is also against the provisions of the RPO since the RPO clearly states that all political parties will have to involve at least 33 percent women in its main committee by the year 2020, the petitioner said.

They also said that as per the rules of the Constitution of Bangladesh, political parties cannot have a party office outside the country but Jamaat-e-Islami was floated in India and also has party offices in foreign countries.

Considering some incidents involving the Jamaat workers and supporters at Baitul Mukarram Mosque, it seems that they are engaged in various communal activities, which the constitution of the republic clearly forbids, the petition said.

Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami was granted registration as a political party by the EC on November 4 last year.

The petitioners filed the writ petition with the HC on January 25 this year challenging the legality of EC's action.

Barrister Tania Amir appeared for the petitioners.

Administration

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yesterday promoted 72 joint secretaries to the rank of additional secretaries and attached them with the establishment ministry.

Fourteen officials who were deputed to the Bangladesh missions abroad have been attached to the establishment ministry. The government also gave contractual appointments to the post of director general (DG) and deputy director general of BTW. More such appointments are likely in the administration, sources said.

"The bureaucrats don't like two things-- one is making appointment, bypassing the serving officers. Unfortunately, the present government is doing both," a senior officer told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We expected that the AL government would break the tradition without interfering in bureaucracy as the party in its manifesto for the December 29 polls had pledged to keep bureaucracy free from political interference," he said.

He said a sense of apprehension has been prevailing in the entire administration since the reshuffling began.

In her first meeting with top bureaucrats, the prime minister asked the government officials to perform their duties neutrally and confidently for the welfare of the country.

Meanwhile, a good number officials emerged as the loyalists to the new government are trying to achieve better positions and postings after taking the opportunity of the transitional period.

But officials enjoyed perks and positions during the previous BNP-Jamaat regime seem to be in deep trouble.

"The AL government should not consider the opportunists while giving promotion and posting. It should be done based on merits not on political consideration," said another official at the secretariat.

The superior selection board (SSB) held a meeting Thursday with Cabinet Secretary Md Abdus Aziz in the chair to take decisions regarding the promotion.

It will hold several other meetings to give promotion to joint secretary, additional secretary and secretary ranks.

Sources at the establishment ministry said reshuffle in the field level administration would start soon.

Janatar Mancha

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In the letter Deputy Secretary (Law) of the Home Ministry, Mohammad Sujayet Ullah, said the government has decided not to proceed with the case.

Dhaka Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Ehsanul Haq Samaji on receipt of the letter informed the home ministry that the High Court (HC) had earlier stayed the proceedings of the case following separate writ petitions filed by Dr Alamgir and others.

Further steps will now be taken after disposal of the writ petitions, Samaji said.

The seven others who were charged with sedition in the case are former home secretary and Election Commissioner Shafiqur Rahman, former students relationship officer of education ministry Abu Alam Shahid Khan, former joint secretary in the women's affairs ministry Sirajuddin Ahmed, former assistant secretary of establishment ministry Rabiul Alam Mohammad Obaidul Muktadir Chowdhury, former director of narcotics control department Syed Bazul Karim, former deputy inspector general of police Prokri Ranjan Chanda and former president of the Secretariat Karmachari Sanjukta Parishad Syed Mohiuddin.

Seven accused including Dr Alamgir were granted bail from different courts while Prokri Ranjan Chanda has been absconding.

Mohammad Saifur Rahman, the then officer-in-charge (OC) of Ramna Police Station filed the sedition case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka on April 8, 2002 accusing Dr Alamgir and six others.

The Criminal Investigation Department (CID) on December 26, 2002 pressed charges against Dr Alamgir and seven others and included 15 people as witnesses for the prosecution.

PR Chanda's name was not included in the FIR (First Information Report), the investigation officer included it in the charge sheet citing the findings of the probe.

It was alleged in the case that the accused had set up Janatar Mancha (people's dais) in front of the National Press Club in March 1996 and instigated government officials and employees to join the agitation to dislodge the then BNP government.

US not your enemy

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He agreed with his interviewer that the tone of recent videos seemed "nervous."

"What that tells me is that their ideas are bankrupt," he said. Meanwhile, Obama on Monday said that the United States would offer arch-foe Iran an extended hand of diplomacy if the Islamic Republic's leaders "unclenched their fist."

Obama said he would in the next few months lay out a general framework of policy towards Tehran in an interview with Dubai-based Al-Arabiya satellite television network, a week after his historic swearing-in as president.

"As I said in my inauguration speech, if countries like Iran are willing to unclench their fist, they will find an extended hand from us."

"It is very important for us to make sure that we are using all the tools of US power, including diplomacy, in our relationship with Iran," Obama said.

Earlier, Susan Rice, the new US ambassador to the United Nations made her debut and pledged vigorous and "direct" nuclear diplomacy with Iran but warned of increased pressure if Tehran refuses to halt uranium enrichment.

"We will look at what is necessary and appropriate with respect to maintaining pressure toward that goal of ending Iran's nuclear program," she added.

"Dialogue and diplomacy must go hand in hand with a very firm message from the United States and the international community that Iran

BADC dealers

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sure that no one (excepting farmers) can buy fertiliser.

The present government scrapped the rule, Agriculture Secretary Enayet Ullah said, adding that the government, however, will not tolerate any mismanagement and has already strengthened monitoring system.

"In any case, if there are any mistakes or any trader does not cooperate by chance, the BADC seed dealers will work as alternative so that Boro rice production does not suffer," Enayet Ullah said.

Another official at the agriculture ministry said dealers registered with the Department of Agriculture Extension sell fertilisers and the BADC seed dealers might also be allowed to sell fertilisers during this boro season without registration as an interim arrangement.

Enayet Ullah said the government does not have any other plan to make changes in the existing fertiliser distribution system, but monitors it closely.

"Let us see how it works at least during the present Boro season," the secretary said.

Asked about the government's decision to include BADC seed dealers in fertiliser supply system, Bangladesh Fertiliser Association chairman Kafil Uddin Ahmed said if it is an interim arrangement in any emergency, then the government can go ahead with it.

"But inclusion of the seed dealers in the fertiliser supply system permanently can never be accepted," he told The Daily Star.

Global meltdown

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reduced in the current budget. But as the world economy experienced recession in the last three to four months and the commodity price fell in the world markets, the realisation of import duty and tax started falling suddenly.

Besides, there is an apprehension that VAT and income tax realisation will also face negative impact due to the recession, it said adding the overall target in the fiscal will also face the same challenge.

In the first six months (July to December) of the current fiscal, overall revenue collection was Tk 22,363 crore against the target of Tk 54,500 crore.

Of the collected revenue, at import level in last December, revenue collection was Tk 198 crore, which is less than the realisation of December '07. However, revenue collection growth at import level in the six months is 11.94 per cent while at local level it is 13.14. Income tax growth is the only exception during the