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Stay alert against repeat of last 2yrs

Speaker also urges all MPs to act responsibly as BNP rejoins House after 17 workdays

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speaker Abdul Hamid yesterday urged both the treasury and opposition bench lawmakers to act in such a way that "none can assume power in an undemocratic way in future".

He also urged them to remain alert against a return to the 'unwarranted situation' that prevailed for the last two years.

The speaker made the call in response to the opposition chief whip's speech in which he defended their House boycott for 17 workdays over seating arrangement row, and made some allegations against

the government and also the chair.

"Two years have lapsed in our political history. All of us have been victimised more or less. So, we will have to think afresh and move forward," Hamid said referring to the nearly two-year tenure of the caretaker government led by Fakhruddin Ahmed.

The speaker welcomed the BNP-led opposition lawmakers' return to parliament yesterday and assured them of running it fairly.

The treasury bench lawmakers also welcomed the opposition legislators to the House, which witnessed a lively atmosphere yesterday. Witty comments of the

speaker contributed to this atmosphere.

Taking the floor, Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abidin Faroque explained the reasons for their absence from the House so long.

He assured the speaker of extending their cooperation to make the House effective.

In his over 10-minute speech, Faroque blamed the government for shortage of power, unrest at universities, withdrawal of special security for Leader of the Opposition Khaleda Zia and restriction on visitors to her residence.

The opposition chief whip described

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ATM Fazlul Karim

Information secy forced to retire

Poem on Bangabandhu, family allegedly costs his job

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday sent into forced retirement, Information Secretary ATM Fazlul Karim whose pen name is Abu Karim.

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Power pole nexus back into action

Use of concrete poles to push up electricity network cost by 40pc

SHARIER KHAN

A nexus of concrete pole manufacturers, which broke down in early 2007 due to political changeover, is now re-emerging in the Rural Electrification Board (REB) with some new faces leading the show.

The new nexus, through tender manipulation, is now compelling REB to buy concrete poles at double or even triple their own rate offered in 2007, when there was no scope for tender manipulation.

"Consequently, the per kilometre (km) cost of setting up power distribution lines, based on concrete poles, has gone up by at least 40 percent than that based on wooden poles," says a high official of REB.

The country's rural electrification system was originally designed in the late 70s using

only wooden poles.

Against a supply of around 750 megawatts (MW) of power, the REB serves 7.3 million consumers with an actual demand of 1,300MW. Such enormous base compels REB to purchase costly poles just to replace old lines or improve the existing system.

Even though wooden poles are cheap to install, easy to transport and install and strong, the REB can no longer rely on wooden poles alone because of its large client base, sources said.

Selling of poles became a silent but lucrative business in the mid-90s when the country's power distribution network started to expand rapidly. At that time, a retired army officer entered the pole business but with concrete poles for the first time.

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PHOTO: SHAFIQU ALAM

After The Daily Star ran a report on February 8 that garment workers of Tex Tech Company Ltd in Banani were not allowed to wear sandals during their lunch break, the factory started allowing them to wear sandals. A Tex Tech worker is seen wearing shoes on the right but her friends who work in other factories nearby are without any footwear.

Leave local govt alone

Upazila chairmen, vice-chairmen ask govt after oath; say MP meddling to weaken local govt system

WASIM BIN HABIB

Newly elected upazila chairmen and vice-chairmen yesterday asked the government to make laws in line with Local Government (Upazila Parishad) Ordinance 2008 for better functioning of the local bodies.

They also blasted the plans to have lawmakers as advisers to the upazila councils, and said the parishads would weaken if compelled to follow 'dictates from the MPs'.

If the government lets the ordinance promulgated by the immediate past caretaker government lose effect, and revives Upazila Parishad Act 1998 with a few amendments, it would serve a severe blow to the nation's aspiration for a strong local government system, they noted.

They were talking to The Daily Star after taking oath at the city's LGED auditorium at around 11:15am.

In a late development, the cabinet last night okayed a bill to amend Upazila

Parishad Act 1998. If the bill is passed, members of parliament will return as advisers to the upazila councils.

Earlier in the day, several chairmen and vice-chairmen of upazilas under Dhaka division said allowing anyone to meddle in the activities of the parishads would amount to stripping the local government representatives of the mandate to ensure development at the grassroots level.

Gouripur upazila Chairman Ali Ahmed Khan Pathan Shelvi said, "We

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Fate of 38 out of 54 ordinances uncertain

SHAKHAWAT LITON and RASHIDUL HASAN

Thirty-eight out of 54 ordinances recommended by a special committee for ratification may cease to be in effect tomorrow if not placed in the parliament today.

The 122 ordinances promulgated before and during the tenure of the last caretaker government were placed before the House on January 25 and according to the constitution they will cease to be in effect if they are not placed in the parliament within 30

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Cabinet clears 20 ordinances

RTI among those

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet yesterday okayed 20 ordinances including the proposed Right to Information Act 2009 for transformation into bills.

It also approved the Upazila Parishad Act 1998 with a few amendments keeping the provision of making lawmakers' adviser to the Upazila Parishad(s) of their respective constituency.

The cabinet however sent back the proposed Grameen Bank (Amendment) Ordinance 2009 and the Criminal Law Amendment (Amendment) Ordinance 2009 to the ministries concerned for further scrutiny.

The other 18 bills are Bangladesh Shilpa Bank (Amendment), The President's (Remuneration and Privileges) (Amendment), Islamic University (Amendment), Supreme Court Judges

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Public interest ignored in picking CG's ordinances

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

The government has decided not to ratify a good number of necessary ordinances considering the fact that those were promulgated during the caretaker rule.

As many as 122 ordinances were promulgated during or immediate before the last caretaker government's tenure. But a special committee of parliament on February 15 made its final recommendation for ratifying 54 ordinances.

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Polls to 45 JS reserved seats on March 29

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election to 45 reserved seats for women in parliament will be held on March 29, the Election Commission (EC) declared yesterday.

The election schedule announced by Election Commissioner M Sakhawat Hossain fixed March 5 for submitting nomination papers and March 8 for scrutinising the nomination papers.

According to the electoral laws, the 45 seats have been proportionately allocated to the parties representing the current parliament -- 36 seats to ruling Awami League (AL), five to BNP and four to Jatiya Party.

Contacted over telephone, Salaudin Quader Chowdhury, a BNP lawmaker,

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2.3 crore Asians to lose job this year

Another 14 crore plunge into poverty, says ILO study on impact of global recession

AFP, Manila

More than 140 (14 crore) million people could be plunged into poverty and 23 (2.3 crore) million lose their jobs in Asia this year as the global financial crisis batters the region, according to an International Labour Organisation (ILO) study.

The crisis could also slow rural-to-urban migration, with many facing the prospect of returning to low-paid agricultural jobs as factories and firms lay off workers, the ILO report released Wednesday said.

And as unemployment rises, it is imperative for countries in the region to use fiscal stimulus packages for safety nets to prevent widespread social unrest from erupting, officials said.

"A dramatic increase in working poverty of more than 140 million people by 2009 is pro-

jected under this scenario, representing regression of the Asia and Pacific region to a working poverty rate of 2004," the study said.

"These projections are not just numbers, they carry with them a real risk that children may be forced to withdraw from school in order to work and support their families," it said.

It said the region's robust growth in the past was not matched by "broad-based gains in real wages," leading to sharp inequalities in many countries.

"The substantial growth slowdown taking place is likely to lead to stagnant or falling real wages, with the potential for increased incidences of wage related disputes," the study said.

ILO regional director Sachiko Yamamoto noted the situation was quickly evolving "into an employment and social crisis."

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