

Dissolution of CG system to create fresh complication

Speakers tell roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former caretaker government advisers, civil society members and eminent citizens yesterday said if the existing provision of caretaker government system is dissolved without a national consensus a fresh complication will crop up centring the election result.

Before the system is dissolved, changes in the political culture and mindset of parties are a must, they said, adding that the decision of scrapping the interim government system must come into effect after the next general election.

The election commission must be strong enough and independent and professionalism and neutrality must be ensured in bureaucracy before cancelling the system.

Otherwise, they cautioned, new problems will surface plunging the democracy into a deeper crisis.

The speakers were addressing a roundtable discussion organised by Sunjan, a non-government organisation (NGO), at the National Press Club.

Prof Muzaffer Ahmad chaired the meeting titled "Fresh debate over caretaker government system and citizens' views". Dr Badiul Alam Majumder presented the keynote paper at the discussion moderated by ASM Shahjahan.

M Hafizuddin Khan, Sardar Amjad Hossain, Amir-ul-Islam, Inam Ahmed Chowdhury, Syed Abul Maksud, Haidar Akbar Khan Rono, AKM Mozammel Haque MP, Monowar Hossain Chowdhury MP, Rasheda Begum Hira MP, Sanzida Khanam MP, among others, took part in the discussion.

Muzaffer Ahmad said parliament should pass a policy to ensure proper promotion system in the administration, as people want a neutral administration.

"Political parties need to work out a

way to remove crisis of trust. There should be a change in the Electoral College. Elected representatives of union parishad and upazila parishad should also have their say in electing president."

M Hafizuddin Khan said if caretaker government system is changed without any massive change in bureaucracy and judiciary, nothing good will come out of it. ASM Shahjahan said institutional reforms should be done first and national consensus is a must to bring about any change in the caretaker government system.

Lawmaker Sanzida Khanam said politicisation of administration and lack of neutrality in the election commission had given birth to a crisis of trust.

Inam Ahmed Chowdhury said the caretaker government system couldn't be scrapped before the administration is made a neutral entity.



Bhutanese Minister for Economic Affairs Lyonpo Khandu Wangchuk calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

Ensure Azim's security

Speaker asks home minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speaker Abdul Hamid Advocate yesterday asked Home Minister Sahara Khatun to take necessary measures for an enquiry into the incident of an attack on independent lawmaker Fazlul Azim and ensure his security.

Taking floor on a point of order, the independent lawmaker said he could not visit his constituency in Noakhali during the last Eid as local criminals of Hatia led by a godfather attacked his vehicle, forcing him to return to the capital.

"Before my planned visit to my constituency, I met the home minister and sought security. She assured me of providing security. But the district police administration did not ensure my safety," Azim alleged.

The lawmaker said it is the responsibility of the state to

ensure security of each lawmaker, adding: "I urge the prime minister to interfere in the matter."

He did not specify anyone's name responsible for the attack. But according to the media reports, the local leaders and workers of the ruling Awami League carried out the attack.

In response, the speaker said he also noticed the issue through newspapers. "I hope the home minister will take necessary measures and such incident will not occur in future," he headed.

Meanwhile, Chief Whip Abdus Shahid initiated an unscheduled discussion on the prime minister's recent address to the UN General Assembly (UNGA) to give her thanks.

The speaker, however, suggested the whip to submit a thanksgiving motion so that the House can hold a discussion on it and can pass a resolution

giving thanks to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her address to the UNGA in Bangla language.

The chief whip agreed with the speaker's proposal and said he would submit a thanksgiving motion.

However, the House is yet to decide whether it would hold a discussion on the draft of the amended second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), although the planning minister on September 15 placed it in the parliament for discussion.

Taking floor on a point of order, AL lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta drew the speaker's attention to the matter and demanded that the House hold a discussion on the strategic document.

In response, the speaker said a discussion should be held on it. But the mode of the discussion could be finalised at the Business Advisory Committee meeting.

Number of swine flu patients rises to 646

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of swine flu patients in the country has risen to 646 since the first case was detected on June 18, the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) confirmed yesterday.

The flu has so far spread to 21 districts across the country, whereas three died till date, said IEDCR Director Prof Mahmudur Rahman at a press briefing at IEDCR auditorium.

The cases were detected under the government's surveillance programme.

Of the total swine flu cases, 52.2 percent were reported in the capital and 47.8 percent in the other parts of the country.

US pledges more aid to combat climate change

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Ambassador James F. Moriarty yesterday said the US would provide Bangladesh with more assistance to face the impacts of climate change and global warming.

Moriarty said this when he met State Minister for Environment and Forests Hasan Mahmud at the latter's office.

The US is now working for development of the areas affected by climate change under the project Integrated Protected Area Cooperation Management with the assistance of USAID in Bangladesh.

Moriarty assured the state minister that the US assistance would be increased in this regard. The state minister informed the ambassador that Bangladesh needs \$500 million on an emergency basis for reconstruction and rehabilitation in the areas affected by the climate change.

Hasan Mahmud said Bangladesh would demand \$5 billion as compensation to meet the need in the Copenhagen Conference.

He thinks money should be allocated to the countries on proportional basis of risk and population from Multi Donor Trust Fund in the Copenhagen Conference.

The developed countries should play a positive role to ensure universality and easy availability of technology so that technology does not go to the developed countries in the name of patent rights.

Following the meeting, Hasan Mahmud told newsmen that the present government is determined to ensure development of the country maintaining ecological balance.

Besides allocating Tk 700 crore in the last budget for environment sector, the government has made a special allocation of Tk 200 crore through Bangladesh Bank, he said.



Prof Muzaffer Ahmad speaks at a roundtable at the National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right is Syed Abul Maksud and on his left is ASM Shahjahan.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Mohius Sunnah Chowdhury commonly known as Sunnat Chowdhury, a tea planter and philanthropist in greater Sylhet region, passed away due to prolonged illness at a private hospital in Sylhet city yesterday at the age of 89.

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

He was buried at his family graveyard yesterday at Fulbari village in Golapganj after namaz-e-janaza on the premises of shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA).

He established several educational, social and religious institutions in the greater Sylhet region.

Ayesha Aktar Khanam

BSS, Dhaka

Ayesha Aktar Khanam, former vice-president of Bangladesh Mahila Awami League and head mistress of Hazratibagh Saleha High School and College, passed away at Bangladesh Medical College Hospital in the city yesterday after prolonged illness at the age of 72.

She left behind her one son, one daughter and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn her death.

She was mother-in-law of Shahna Begum, senior reporter of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS). She was buried at Azimpur graveyard after namaz-e-janaza at Kalabagan Mosque after Zohr prayers.

Prime Minister and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina expressed deep shock at her death.

In a message of condolence, she said the nation will remember forever the role of Ayesha Aktar in the War of Liberation and democratic movements. She prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed sympathy to members of the bereaved family.

Earlier, Prime Minister's Assistant Personal Secretary Saifuzzaman Shekhar placed wreaths on the coffin of Ayesha Aktar on behalf of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Awami League leaders, including presidium member and Home Minister Sahara Khatun, Relief and Social Welfare Secretary Faridunnahar Laili, MP, Women Affairs Secretary Fazilatunnesa Indira, Mahila Awami League President Ashrafunnesa Mosharraf, MP, and Vice-President Safia Khatun, MP paid their last respect to the late leader.

MA Jalil

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

MA Jalil, a freedom fighter of Ragna sub-sector under Sector-4 in the Liberation War, passed away due to a cardiac arrest at a private hospital in Sylhet yesterday at the age of 75.

He left behind his wife, son, daughter and a host of relatives to mourn his death.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held at 12 noon today at Kaminiganj Bazar Baro Masjid Eidgah premises.

Chief whip in the parliament Abdus Shahid and Dewan Farid Gazi, MP consoled the death.

Death anniversary

METRO DESK



Today is the 21st death anniversary of MA Rashid, former secretary of the government, says a press release.

His family members requested all to pray for eternal peace of the departed soul.

On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held at his son's residence in Gulshan in the city.

38 bundles of Rajshahi Rly tender documents seized

Chief engineer's peon caught

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Railway Security Forces (RSF) yesterday seized 38 bundles of tender documents while being stealthily shifted from the chief engineer's office in Rajshahi Rail Bhaban to elsewhere.

The documents were seized while Abul Kashem, a peon of the chief engineer's office, was taking the documents out of Rajshahi Rail

Bhaban in two rickshaw-vans.

Kashem claimed he was taking those out to store at the godown near the office of the Inspector of Works, but he failed to show any legal documents for shifting the documents, said Inspector Mofakkarul Islam Mamun of RSE.

A three-member inquiry committee headed by chief personnel officer MA Awal has been formed to look into the matter, said Mushfikur Rahman, general manager of

Bangladesh Railway's West region.

"Departmental case will be filed if anyone is found to be responsible for illegally shifting the tender documents," said the GM adding the documents were very old.

He added that some unknown persons scuffled with members of the security forces while they were seizing the documents.

The chief engineer was not available for comments.

Militants attack Afghan outposts, kill 8 US troops

AP, Kabul

Militant fighters streaming from a village and a mosque attacked a pair of remote outposts near the Pakistan border, killing eight American soldiers and as many as seven Afghan forces in one of the fiercest gunbattles of the troubled eight-year war.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for the deadliest attack for coalition forces since a similar raid in July 2008 killed nine American soldiers in the same mountainous region known as a haven for al-Qaeda militants. The US has already said it plans to leave the remote area to focus on Afghan population centres.

Fighting began around dawn Saturday and lasted several hours, said Jamaludin Badar, governor of Nuristan province. Badar said the two outposts were on a hill one near the top and one at the foot of the slope flanked by the village on one side and the mosque on the other.

Nearly 300 militant fighters flooded the lower, Afghan outpost then swept around it to reach the American station on higher ground from both directions, said Mohammad Qasim Jangulbagh, the provincial police chief. The US military statement said the Americans and Afghans repelled the attack by tribal fighters and inflicted heavy enemy casualties.

Jangulbagh said that the gunbattle was punctuated by US airstrikes and that 15 Afghan police were captured by the Taliban, including the local police chief and his deputy. Afghan forces were sent as reinforcements, but Jangulbagh said all communications to the district, Kamdesh, were severed and

he had no way of knowing how they were faring Sunday.

"This was a complex attack in a difficult area," Col Randy George, the area commander, said in the US statement. "Both the US and Afghan soldiers fought bravely together."

Nuristan, bordering Pakistan, was where a militant raid on another outpost in July 2008 claimed the lives of nine American soldiers and led to allegations of negligence by their senior commanders. Army Gen. David Petraeus last week ordered a new investigation into that firefight, in which some 200 militants armed with machine guns, rocket-propelled grenades and mortars pushed their way into the base, which is no longer operating.

Badar said he had sought more security forces for Kamdesh district, and said Taliban fighters had fled to Nuristan and neighbouring Kunar province after Pakistani forces drove many extremists from the Swat Valley earlier this year.

"When there are few security forces, this is what happens," he said.

He also complained about a lack of coordination between international forces and Afghans.

A Taliban spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid, claimed responsibility and said a council would decide the fates of the captured police.

The US statement said the attack would not change previously announced plans to leave the area.

Afghanistan's northeastern Nuristan and Kunar provinces are home to al-Qaeda bases as well as those of wanted terrorist Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, whose military

chief Kashmir Khan has been unsuccessfully targeted by US missiles over the past eight years. Kamdesh district has no regular cell phone or landline contact and few roads, dirt or paved. Local security forces communicate by handheld radio.

The region was key for Arab militants who battled alongside Afghan warriors during the 1980s US-backed war against invading Russians because it is a rare place in south Asia where the Wahabi sect of Islam is practiced the same sect followed by Osama bin Laden and most Saudis.

Death threat to Prof Mesbah condemned

DU CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Adivasi Odhikar Andolan yesterday strongly condemned the death threat to Prof Mesbah Kamal, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Odhikar Andolan.

The threat came to Prof Mesbah, also a teacher of history department of Dhaka University, through a SMS (short message service) from a cellphone (No. 01675-147746) at 7:49pm on Saturday.

The SMS read -- "Ready funeral cloth, nobody will be able to save you. Get ready with family members, you all will be flying with bomb."

Adivasi Odhikar Andolan President Dr HKS Arefin and Organising Secretary Rakhi Mrong in a press release strongly condemned the threat and demanded proper investigation into the incident and finding out the SMS sender.

They also called upon all progressive-minded people to take stand against the threat.

EXTORTION CASE WITHDRAWN

Hasina's appeal still pending with SC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite the withdrawal of the extortion case filed by businessman Azam J Chowdhury against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina from the trial court, an appeal against the High Court (HC) order for granting a bail to her in this case is still pending with the Supreme Court (SC) as the attorney general's office did not inform the SC about its withdrawal.

The SC yesterday adjourned for a month the hearing on the leave-to-appeal petition filed by the then military-backed caretaker government against the HC order upon a prayer moved by Attorney General Mahbubey Alam.

The attorney general told The Daily Star that the extortion case against Hasina was withdrawn earlier from the trial court but he moved the time prayer mistaking it for Mig-29 warplane purchase scam case which was not withdrawn.

He said his office would file

an application with the SC to throw away the leave-to-appeal petition against the HC order.

The HC in September last year granted bail to Hasina in this case and also stayed its proceedings.

The past caretaker government had filed a leave-to-appeal petition with the SC against the HC order.

The petition came up before the SC yesterday for hearing, although the case has already been withdrawn.

The attorney general yes-

terday placed submission before the SC during the hearing of this case.

He placed submission considering the case as Mig-29 warplane purchasing corruption case.

Advocate Anisul Huq, a lawyer for the anti-corruption commission (ACC) who prayed to the court for adjourning the hearing, told reporters that he did not know for which case he placed his submission before the Appellate Division yesterday.

BURGLARY AT CITY JEWELLER'S 7 held in Bagerhat

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detective Branch (DB) of police yesterday arrested seven people, including a woman, from Bagerhat in connection with a burglary at a jeweller's at Gulshan in the city and seized around 140 tolas of gold and Tk 2.5 lakh from their possession.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Mainul Hasan of DB-North told The Daily Star that they arrested the criminals from Sharankhola upazila and recovered the gold ornaments and cash money.

The arrest and recovery were made following the

burglary at Nur Jeweller's at Gulshan-2 on September 23, he added.

Asked, the DC-DB said some of the gold ornaments were recovered from a jeweller's at Sharankhola where those were sold and some others from a separate place.

"All the arrestees, including the mother of one of the criminals, were taken to Dhaka for interrogation," he said, declining to disclose the names of the arrestees.

Quoting Nur Jeweller's owner Najir Ahmed Bhuiyan, DB officials said around 1500 tolas of gold were looted from the shop.



No change in temperature

UNB, Dhaka

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely to occur at many places over Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong divisions and at a few places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions with moderately heavy falls at places in next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said.

The sun sets in the capital at 6:42pm today and rises at 6:52am tomorrow.

Country's highest temperature 34.4 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Comilla and lowest 23.4 degrees Celsius at Rangpur.

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	32.9	26.4	70	89
Chittagong	30.7	24.6	76	97
Rajshahi	31.3	25.4	90	97
Khulna	32.5	26.0	73	97
Barisal	32.3	25.5	83	92
Sylhet	34.0	26.6	88	63

Minister's comments on crossfire condemned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) in a statement yesterday condemned the remarks of Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan at BBC Sanglap where he had said that criminals should be killed in crossfire and it is not possible to try them as per the existing laws.

The ASK statement argued that a responsible minister should not make such comments at a public forum like this.

So far the government had always said that incidents of crossfire take place accidentally when the law enforcers open fire to save themselves.

The government should establish the rule of law and keep away from extrajudicial killing, read the statement.

The current government in its election manifesto pledged to take a strong position against such killings, said the statement, adding that such comments of shipping minister contradicts the government policy.

The ASK also asked the government to clarify its position regarding the issue.

DHAKA TODAY

Launching ceremony

The launching ceremony of UNDP's Global Human Development Report 2009 will be held. Venue: Hotel Sheraton. Time: 11:00am.

Seminar

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) in collaboration with Diakonia Bangladesh will organise 'Asia Regional Seminar on Gender and Human Rights' beginning today. Venue: Brac Centre Inn. Time: 8:30am.

Award giving ceremony

BSB Foundation will give away BSB Foundation Award 2009. Venue: Bangabandhu International Conference Centre. Time: 10:00am.

Discussion

Kendriya Kachi Kanchar Mela will hold a discussion to mark its 53rd founding anniversary. Venue: Kachi Kancha auditorium. Time: 6:30pm.

Award giving ceremony

University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh will hold the 4th UGC Award Ceremony for 2006-2007. Venue: UGC auditorium. Time: 3:00pm.