

Religion-based

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After the bloody changeover in August, 1975, the military rulers omitted the proviso of Article-38 of the constitution, allowing religion-based political parties to resume their activities.

Since then Islamic political parties and organisations have grown like mushrooms in the country.

The intelligence agencies' records show existence and activities of about 100 Islamic political parties and organisations since the repeal of the ban and many of them emerged as militant outfits. Only around 11 Islamic political parties were active between 1964 and 1971.

Following recent cancellation of the constitution's fifth amendment act that ratified and validated all changes brought to the constitution by the military regime, political parties and other organisations using religion as their guidelines are now facing the stringent restriction.

The government, however, refrains from enforcing the ban as it thinks the enforcement will draw uproar and make the political situation volatile. The political situation has become more complicated and critical in the 35 years since 1975.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on several occasions has stated that her government would not ban any political party based on religion.

Suranjit, also chief of the parliamentary standing committee on the law ministry, said following the cancellation of the fifth amendment the Islamic parties are facing restrictions.

Referring to yesterday's discussion of the members, he said the committee will work on how to relax the stringent restrictions so any political party can continue functioning without abusing religion or behaving in communal and discriminatory way.

Suranjit indicated that restriction might also be imposed on political parties preventing them from engaging in militancy directly or indirectly.

The committee will hold a series of meetings on March 23, 24, 25, 29, 30 and 31.

Coming home

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towel) tied around his head shouted back, "For me, awaits home nothing but misery. I have lost everything."

Yesterday, I arrived at Choucha camp around 6.30am from Zarzis -- a coastal town about 100 kilometres from the camp - where I have access to internet for dispatching report every day.

With yesterday's repatriation of more than 4,000 Bangladeshis, a sense of confidence returned to many of the remaining 7000.

Saiful Islam, a Civil Engineer who had been working in Libya for over a year, arrived at the camp on March 7.

Islam said he had a saving of \$ 3,000 when he set out for the Tunisian border. On the way, Gaddafi's man stopped their microbus.

"They stripped me and found my money hidden in the back of the jacket," said Islam, adding, "Then I spoke out in English and they told me it was forbidden to carry foreign currency in the country. I was penniless when I arrived here."

In front of the IOM field office where young Tunisian young volunteers worked day and night sorting travel documents for Bangladeshis, a group of about 200 Bangladeshi men were waiting impatiently.

Of them was Nahid Hasan Sumon, about 25 and a self-taught IT expert from Kutubpur of Meherpur who had been working in Libya for two years. He said he was eager to go home but the authorities [IOM] had lost his passport.

"On the way to Tunisia I was robbed of my laptop, adaptors, a pair of WiMAX and all my savings," Sumon said and continued, "Although I arrived here in the first week of March, they could not find my passport and now they are asking me to return to Bangladesh on the travel document issued by the IOM."

All the Bangladeshi men standing there had the same problem. I asked the

colonel of the Tunisian National Guard who was in-charge of the passports of the migrant workers.

"There is a problem regarding Bangladeshi passports," said the aging colonel, "but please tell those people to wait. I promise to sort out all the documents by today," the colonel said unwilling to give his name. He denied the allegation of any passports being misplaced in his custody.

Civil Engineer Saiful Islam had the same problem. He said he should have been home by now. "I came here on March 7, but complications arose with some people while depositing passports with the authorities on their arrival," he said.

"Those who had no passport got on to the plane without problem," Islam added.

Hundreds of stranded African workers yesterday chanted slogans on the main road demanding repatriation. Host of foreign journalists followed them eagerly with fingers on their camera shutters.

The ever expanding camp stretching over thousands of acres of desert land yesterday looked much more organised than any other day since my arrival on March 13. Over the last two days the situation improved dramatically with the arrival of at least 80 national and international bodies with huge quantity of foods, bottled water, packed milk and biscuits. I saw Samaritans from Lebanon set up a kitchen to deliver hot meals, tea and biscuits to the hungry refugees here.

The enterprising Africans set up small stalls by the main road, at the fringe of the crowded camp, selling anything from smuggled cigarettes to shampoos. Others sold sweetened black tea in tiny glasses to their compatriots, who sat on the road and kept murmuring to one another for hours, totally indifferent to the protest rallies by their other compatriots.

Repatriation of 7,200 to complete by Saturday

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The government and international agencies expect that repatriation of the remaining 7,200 Bangladeshis will be completed by Saturday as the influx of fleeing people from Libya has gone down.

Foreign Secretary Mijarul Quayes, who is now in Tunisia, also informed his Tunisian counterpart Radhouane Nouicer that early repatriation of Bangladeshis from Tunisia is a priority of his government.

At the current pace, the repatriation process could end in 4-5 days, he said.

Foreign ministry sources said Secretary Quayes arrived in Tunisia on March 13 after seeing off the first Bangladesh Biman flight carrying 300 Bangladeshis from Alexandria, Egypt.

He visited Bangladeshis, who were staying in camps in the Libyan-Tunisian border, and saw off three batches of Bangladeshis repatriated by three flights from Djerba in Tunisia yesterday.

The foreign secretary was briefed by camp commanders and heads of international humanitarian agencies working there as well as assisting in the repatriation process.

According to a foreign ministry press release, the foreign secretary was briefed that there was adequate food stock and supply of water in the transit camp along with medical care facilities.

Tunisian army and police personnel are looking after the overall security in the camp and at the airport, the press release added.

Quayes talked with a group of Bangladeshis in the camp awaiting repatriation and listened to their account of events inside Libya.

He also informed them of the priority the government attached to their safety and early repatriation.

During the meeting with Tunisian secretary of state, the foreign secretary conveyed sincere thanks and appreciation to the Tunisian government for their support and assistance extended to the Bangladeshis entering Tunisia from Libya.

A total of 23,701 Bangladeshi nationals, who fled Libya following the unrest, were repatriated from Tunisia and Egypt till 8:00pm yesterday, foreign ministry sources said.

West Pakistan

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Bangalee leader and had spared no effort, by and large, to denigrate him as an individual.

On the day, Mujib called on General Yahya Khan at the President's House and reiterated his demand for power to be transferred to the National Assembly and for martial law to be withdrawn. Yahya Khan went back to his earlier assertion that a fulfillment of such demands would lead to a legal and constitutional vacuum in the country. He also made it known to the Awami League that he had summoned his constitutional adviser, Justice AR Cornelius, for consultations on the issue. In the evening, an Awami League team comprising Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed and Kamal Hossain met the president's advisers, among whom were General Peerzada, Justice Cornelius and Col Hasan, judge advocate general of the army.

Yahya's advisers, according to Kamal Hossain, informed the AL team that in light of the earlier Mujib-Yahya meeting, a proclamation would be issued by the president. They noted that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had proposed that initially the elected representatives from the two wings of Pakistan sit separately to formulate their draft constitutions, after which there would be a combined session of all National Assembly members to frame a constitution for the entire country. For their part, the members of the Awami League team suggested that a proclamation that could serve as a link between a withdrawal of martial law and a framing of a constitution be issued by the president.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Tait	8	1	34	2
Lee	8.4	0	46	4
Johnson	10	0	43	1
Watson	6	0	22	1
Krejza	10	0	44	2
Smith	3	0	18	0

AUSTRALIA				
Watson c Osinde				
b Baidwan			94	
Haddin c Bagai b Watson			88	
Ponting c Davison b Osinde			7	
Clarke not out			16	
White not out			4	
Extras: (lb-1, w-2)			3	
Total: (For 3 wkts in 34.5 overs)			212	

**Did not bat:** Hussey, Smith, Johnson, Lee, Krejza, Tait.  
**Fall of wickets:** 1-183, 2-185, 3-207.

Bowler	O	M	R	W
Osinde	9.5	0	53	1
Baidwan	10	1	41	1
Rao	7	0	46	0
Cheema	3	0	23	0
Davison	4	0	29	1
Patel	1	0	19	0

**Result:** Australia won by seven wickets.  
**Man-of-the-match:** Shane Watson.

Philippine air force to fly Filipinos out of Japan

AFP, Manila

The Philippines said yesterday an air force plane would help some Filipinos escape the nuclear and quake crisis in Japan, but that there was no mass evacuation plan for all 300,000 Filipinos there.

The C-130 plane would fly basic supplies such as water and instant noodles to Filipinos stranded in Japan, then take out some who wanted to flee, President Benigno Aquino's spokesman said.

"For those who would want to leave Japan but have no means, the C-130 could be used to bring them home," spokesman Edward Lacierda told reporters.

Survival now their main challenge

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they can see total uncertainty ahead. Their only hope is if the government does something for the wage earners who send home \$11 billion a year.

Ismail Hossain, 45, of Raipur in Lakshimpur is one of them. On arrival at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport from the Tunisian border, he was looking all around with tears in his eyes. He tried but failed to hide the tears when this correspondent approached him for an interview.

His campmate Dan Mia was trying to console him. He said Ismail went to Libya only eight months ago spending Tk 2.5 lakh and remitted only Tk 50,000. He sold 16 decimals of land and borrowed Tk 1 lakh, a year before he left, to go to Libya. With interests, the loan now stands at around Tk 2 lakh.

"My broker said I would be employed in a Korean company and get monthly Tk 20,000-25,000, but he lied," said Ismail Hossain, father of

four daughters and one son.

When he reached Libya, he was kept confined in an underground room for a month and then employed in a Pakistani construction company in a city near Tripoli.

Ismail, who worked as a mason, got salary for only four months. Pays for three months were in arrears. He had to borrow from others to escape to Tunisia.

"I was crying, thinking how I will repay the loans. I had planned repairing the house. That is also not possible," he said, posing a question how he would run his family and continue his children's education.

Almost similar is the case of Dan Mia of Narsingdi though he worked there for over two years. Mia said he could actually earn for a little more than a year as the hiring company in Benghazi paid nothing for the first three months.

He then went to Tripoli where he worked with a Turkish company that paid

monthly salary equivalent to Tk 30,000-Tk 35,000. However, his seven months' salary was pending, said Dan Mia who has skills in rod fixing and painting.

"The building we were working for was almost complete. In March the company would hand it over and pay all the arrears," he said, adding that the company finally did not pay and left Libya amid the unrest.

He had to take Tk 10,000 from home for his travel to Tunisia from Tripoli. In total, he sent home Tk 2.5 lakh, just the amount he had spent to go to Libya.

"Still I have a loan of Tk 10,000. Will the government do anything for us?" Mia posed a question. More or less similar is the question of all those returning from Libya. Until yesterday, around 20,000 have arrived home.

Apart from the Libyan crisis, the major problem is the Bangladeshi brokers in Libya who supply workers to the employers at lesser sala-

ries but charge money from both workers and employers, he said.

Around fifty percent of 60,000 Bangladeshis went to Libya since 2008, but malpractices in the labour market began in a few months. Since mid-2010, Libya almost stopped recruiting workers from Bangladesh to discipline the sector, said an official at Bangladesh embassy in Tripoli.

Now that the workers are returning empty-handed with many of them losing everything to the Libyan looters, migrants' rights activists suggest that the government should immediately help them with some cash and jobs.

"The government can issue a circular that the lenders should not create any pressure on the returnees having debts," said Anisur Rahman Khan, coordinator of International Migrants' Alliance Research Foundation in Dhaka.

Nuke crisis worsens

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The official number of dead and missing after a devastating earthquake and tsunami that flattened Japan's northeast coast has neared 13,000, police said, but reports hinted at a much higher toll.

The number of confirmed dead from the twin disasters stood at 4,314, while the official number of missing hit 8,606. A total of 2,282 people were injured in the disaster.

In a sign of desperation, the police will try to cool spent nuclear fuel at one of the facility's reactors with water cannon, which is normally used to quell riots.

Early in the day another fire broke out at the earthquake-crippled facility, which has sent low levels of radiation wafting into Tokyo in the past 24 hours, triggering fear in the capital and international alarm.

Japan's government said radiation levels outside the plant's gates were stable but appealed to private companies to help deliver supplies to tens of thousands of people evacuated from around the complex.

"People would not be in immediate danger if they went outside with these levels. I want people to understand this," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yukio Edano told a televised news conference, referring to people living outside a 30 km (18 miles) exclusion zone. Some 140,000 people inside the zone have been told to stay indoors.

Workers were trying to clear debris to build a road so fire trucks could reach reactor No. 4 at the Daiichi complex in Fukushima, 240 km (150 miles) north of Tokyo. Flames were no longer visible at the building housing the reactor.

High radiation levels pre-

vented a helicopter from flying to the site to drop water into the No. 3 reactor -- whose roof was damaged by an earlier explosion and where steam was seen rising earlier in the day -- to try to cool its fuel rods.

The plant operator described No. 3 as the "priority." No more information was available, but that reactor is the only one at Daiichi which uses plutonium in its fuel mix.

According to U.S. government research, plutonium is very toxic to humans and once absorbed in the bloodstream can linger for years in bone marrow or liver and can lead to cancer.

The situation at No. 4 reactor, where the fire broke out, was "not so good," the plant operator added, while water was being poured into reactors No. 5 and 6, indicating the entire six-reactor facility was now at risk of overheating.

Nuclear experts said the solutions being proposed to quell radiation leaks at the complex were last-ditch efforts to stem what could well be remembered as one of the world's worst industrial disasters.

"This is a slow-moving nightmare," said Dr Thomas Neff, a physicist and uranium-industry analyst at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Scores of flights to Japan have been halted or rerouted and air travellers are avoiding Tokyo for fear of radiation. Yesterday, both France and Australia urged their nationals in Japan to leave the country.

The plight of hundreds of thousands left homeless by the earthquake and tsunami worsened overnight following a cold snap that brought snow to some of the worst-affected areas.

Bangladeshis

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that he has never seen a catastrophe of such magnitude in his 23-year stay in Japan.

He said besides the aftermath of the earthquake and radiation panic, they have been faced with serious food crisis, breakdown of transport system and power cuts.

The Japanese government has announced three hours' power outage in each area every day. The power crisis has forced 80 percent of the country's trains to keep from operating.

Emdadul, employee of a global database service provider for airlines and hotels, said he spent half the day in office Monday while the rest collecting food from stores. He lives in Suitama, a city about 50 kilometres from Tokyo.

According to expatriates, around 15,000 Bangladeshis live in Japan.

Emdadul said almost 80 percent Bangladeshis there are part-timers. They hold several part-time jobs to survive and remit money home. Now that most of the industries and factories are closed the part-timers are out of work and are contemplating to return to Bangladesh.

Two Bangladeshis, Ahsan Rajib and Murad Chowdhury,

Japanese officials said they were talking to the U.S. military about possible help at the plant.

RADIATION IN TOKYO NOT THREATENING

In the first hint of international frustration at the pace of updates from Japan, Yukiya Amano, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, said he wanted more timely and detailed information.

"We do not have all the details of the information so what we can do is limited," Amano told a news conference in Vienna. "I am trying to further improve the communication."

The Japanese have so far rated the accident a four on a one-to-seven scale, but that rating was issued on Saturday and since then the situation has worsened dramatically.

Officials in Tokyo said radiation in the capital was 10 times normal at one point but not a threat to human health in the sprawling high-tech city of 13 million people.

EMPEROR AKIHITO 'DEEPLY WORRIED'

In an extremely rare appearance, the emperor went on live TV to make his first public comments on the disaster, and urged an all-out rescue effort.

TV stations interrupted programming yesterday to show the emperor describing the crisis facing the nation as "unprecedented in scale".

The 77-year-old - deeply respected by many Japanese - said: "I hope from the bottom of my heart that the people will, hand in hand, treat each other with compassion and overcome these difficult times."

Japan's titular head of state said he prayed that every victim would be saved.

Ireland pledges €1 million aid for Japan

AFP, Dublin

Ireland pledged one million euros (\$1.4 million) in emergency aid yesterday for the Red Cross relief operation in Japan, Foreign Minister Eamon Gilmore said.

He said the funding was approved in response to an appeal Tuesday by the Japanese government for EU assistance following the earthquake and tsunami.

"Japan's disaster response capability has been stretched to the limit by the sheer scale of the emergency," said Gilmore.

Delwar passes

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Sheikh Hasina, Opposition Leader Khaleda Zia, Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad, Awami League General Secretary Syed Ashraful Islam and other political leaders expressed deep shock over the death of the veteran politician.

The ailing BNP leader was admitted to the Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore on March 4.

The body of Khandaker Delwar will be flown back to Bangladesh today, Kamrul said.

His namaz-e-janaza will be held at the south plaza of Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban at 11:00am tomorrow.

Earlier, he was admitted to the city's Modern Hospital on February 22 with old-age problems.

Delwar was later transferred to the Square Hospital on March 3 when his condition worsened due to breathing complications. He was given life support at the Intensive Care Unit of the hospital.

Delwar left behind his wife, four sons and two daughters.

BNP's Senior Joint Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir will now act as the secretary general of the party.

Born in Manikganj in 1933, Delwar obtained his law degree from Dhaka University in 1955.

He started his political career through the Language Movement of 1952 and also contested the 1954 elections from the Jukta Front.

Delwar started active politics at the national level in 1957 by joining National Awami Party (NAP). He played an important role in the mass uprising in 1969 and also contested the 1970 election with the ticket of NAP.

Delwar joined General Zia's political platform in 1976 from NAP and became a member of the national standing committee of BNP in 1985.

A man of illustrious political career, he was returned five times as member of parliament from Manikganj's Ghior-Doulatpur constituency.

Controversy, however, trailed him for his reported abuse of office for personal financial benefits after his party came to power in 2001.

The Anti Corruption Commission had filed six separate cases against him on charges of unauthorised use of government vehicles and misappropriation of public funds and property during the BNP-led four-party alliance rule.

9 picked

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Sheikh Hasina will give away the award at a function at Osmany Memorial Auditorium in the city at 11:00am on March 24, said a notification of the cabinet division.

The recipients of the Independence Award-2011 are: Gaus Khan (posthumous), Sangharaj Jyotipal Mohathero (posthumous), Dr Nilima Ibrahim (posthumous), Shaheed Nutan Chandra Singh (posthumous), AKM Shamsuzzoha (posthumous), Air Vice Marshal (Retd) Abdul Karim Khandakar and Bangladesh Police in the category of independence and liberation war; Dhaka University in education and M Abul Hashem Khan in culture.