



PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

An overcrowded shuttle train of Chittagong University.

CU BCL activities in trains banned

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The Chittagong University (CU) authorities have banned all group-based activities of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) in all shuttle trains to avoid clashes occurred for establishing supremacy over the bogies.

The campus sources said there are around 20 boggy-based groups led by BCL men with different names such as Choose Friends with Care (CFC), Varsity X-press (VX) Cockpit, Ulka, Always, Fatafati, 69, Fire, Khaista Kha, Blackhole, and Orion.

The CU authorities at an emergency syndicate meeting on May 1 suspended classes and examinations for 11 days and banned the boggy-based activities following clashes among the BCL factions on April 29 and 30.

On May 8, the CU authorities decided to erase all names of boggy-based groups from the compartments.

CU acting proctor Akter Hossain said additional police will be deployed in each compartment to stop the grouping.

The university authorities launched the train service for students in cooperation with Bangladesh Railway in 1980.

Seven trains shuttle between the university and the port city everyday to carry the students.

But the control of every compartment of shuttle trains has gone to the hands CU unit BCL men as they established boggy-based politics. As a result, many sub-groups among CU BCL men emerged.

Scuffles and altercations over trifling matters in the trains have become almost every day's common scenario.

The journey by the trains has become unsafe for students due to frequent clashes of BCL men.

Salah Uddin, a student of CU Communication and Journalism department, said due to the clashes, he avoids shuttle trains and goes to the campus by 'Tari' (human hauler).

CU acting VC Prof Alauddin said necessary measures have been taken to avoid further clashes.

Campus sources said five incidents of attack and counter attack took place in the last three months that left at least 21 people injured.

At least 25 incidents of clashes took place injuring about 60 activists of BCL in last two and a half years.

Verdict triggers mixed reactions

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for upholding the constitution and keeping democracy stable, headed.

Dr M Zahir said the SC observed that the parliament may amend the law regarding caretaker governments, and it is now the matter of the parliament whether it will accept the observation.

Barrister Rokanuddin Mahmud said if the parliament does not amend the related constitutional provisions, the next two elections will be held under the existing caretaker government system.

The parliament is not bound to implement the SC observations, he said.

Barrister Rafique-ul Huq, and President of the Supreme Court Bar Association Khandker Mahub Hossain, termed the SC verdict self-contradictory as it declared the 13th Amendment Act illegal, but suggested holding the next two general elections under this law.

Rafique-ul Huq, however, said Chief Justice ABM Khairul Haque and other Appellate Division judges showed their broadmindedness in the verdict, by saying that judges

should not be involved in caretaker governments.

Khandker Mahub Hossain apprehended that the country's political arena will become unstable due to the SC verdict, as the verdict did not give any specific guideline for holding general elections.

Barrister MI Farooqui, the lawyer for Abdul Mannan Khan whose appeal against the 13th amendment resulted in yesterday's SC verdict, expressed satisfaction over the judgment, saying the system of caretaker government is like a form of martial law which suspends some provisions of the constitution.

Attorney General Mahubey Alam said if the next two general elections are not held under caretaker governments, chaos and unrest will envelope the country, and the credibility of those elections will be questioned.

The concern for keeping the chief justice and the judiciary impartial is reflected in the verdict, he said.

The parliament can amend the constitution at any time incorporating provisions for excluding judges from caretaker governments, he added.

Former adviser to a caretaker government M Hafiz Uddin Khan told The Daily Star that although the caretaker government system contradicts the democratic system, the situation that necessitated the system has yet to be changed.

"In fact the situation has worsened in the political arena, and there is no sign that it will improve in the next ten years, unless the mindset of the political parties change drastically."

The politics of the country might see more conflicts in future, if the parties fail to reach a consensus on how general elections will be held, he apprehended.

Former Dhaka University vice-chancellor Prof Emajuddin Ahmed said there is no alternative to the caretaker government system until a sense of mutual confidence grows between the main two parties of the country.

Unless there is a positive change in the political culture of the country the interim government system should not go, he said.

Another former adviser to a caretaker government Dr Akbar Ali Khan said although the judg-

ment did not eliminate the caretaker government system for at least the next two general elections, it did create an uncertainty about the role of the system.

The uncertainty will not fade away unless the constitution is amended, he said adding that the provision of caretaker governments in the constitution should be amended in light of the judgment.

The political parties should engage in discussions to find out a formula for holding general elections, he said.

Dhaka University Prof Asif Nazrul said the Supreme Court has jurisdiction to declare the caretaker government system illegal and unconstitutional, but it does not have any authority to direct that the next two elections will be held under such illegal and unconstitutional governments.

In future, the legality of elected governments will be questioned based on this judgment. Its advice to change the formation of caretaker governments will lead to further controversy, if based on the judgment, the ruling party unilaterally introduces a new form of caretaker government, he said.

Help LDCs attain

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The PM also warned that "time is running out for uplifting the living conditions in the LDCs while new challenges are emerging with globalisation and climate change."

"If we wish the Istanbul Conference to be our last attempt to correct the situation, we must give up rhetoric and honour the commitments we make here," the premier told the conference.

Hasina said commitments must be accompanied by country-specific development strategies as well as system-wide development programme and overall recasting of cooperation mechanism and aid criteria.

"LDCs achieved good progress in areas such as trade and investment and social development. It looks that some of them will attain the MDGs," she said.

Moreover, she said, the failure of development partners in meeting their commitments for enhancing support also impeded LDCs growth prospects.

LDCs affected by climate change must receive additional funds on top of ODA, the PM said.

She said per capita income of LDCs fell from 18% of the global average in 1971 to 15% in 2008. Though poverty reduction shows some progress, people living on less than \$2 a day remains almost unchanged at 75%.

In attaining the MDGs, LDCs have been falling behind other developing countries, the PM said.

Hasina said Bangladesh made good progress in net enrolment in primary educa-

tion, gender parity, infant and child mortality, immunisation coverage, supply of drinking water, and sanitation.

"We intend to maintain sustained and stable economic growth so that we can graduate from our present economic status to a prosperous and happier level and transform our country into a Digital Bangladesh by 2021," she added.

The premier recalled that Dhaka last year hosted the Asia-Pacific Regional Review of the Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA). "We discovered gaps and lapses, and deviation from the seven commitments inscribed on the framework of partnership," she said.

"Sadly, the very important seventh commitment to mobilise financial resources through meeting the target of 0.15% or 0.20% of GNI has virtually been ignored thereby largely frustrating the BPoA," Hasina said.

This conference would, therefore, need to craft a balanced, ambitious and comprehensive Istanbul agreement, she said.

She suggested the summit to prioritise human resource development at the top of its list emphasising quality education and vocational training, universal health service and population management.

"I would not like to submit a long menu of priorities but food security, social safety net, trade advantages and protection of environment must feature in any programme," Hasina said.

The international support architecture would have to be reconstructed,

she said adding it should reflect the spirit of a renewed and enhanced partnership to ensure graduation of a significant number, possibly half of the LDCs, out of their poverty level.

"The assistance of the development partners would, therefore, need to be enhanced to at least 0.2% of their GNI. Vulnerability of LDCs to external economic shocks as well as natural disasters also demands additional support at the time of crises," she said.

She also mentioned some specific areas that merit special focus in the Istanbul outcome documents. The areas include duty and quota free market entry for all products of all LDCs to all markets, and accept flexible rules of origin to ensure a meaningful market access.

Hasina mentioned that the Istanbul Programme of Action should pave the way for LDCs to receive affordable technology from all sources.

She said global progress will only be complete when 880 million-plus people, engulfed by poverty and underdevelopment, achieve decent and dignified lives.

This is only possible with unity and determination of all nations to reverse the process of marginalisation of the LDCs, the PM said.

"Istanbul gives us the opportunity to try out the option. Let us all seize this defining moment, and pronounce our collective determination and will. Let us agree on an enhanced, ambitious and do-able global framework for helping LDCs to graduate out of their poverty and misery," Hasina said.

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