

Prisoner escapes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A prisoner, who was undergoing treatment at National Institute of Chest Diseases and Hospital at Mohakhali, escaped early yesterday by deceiving guards and police.

The convict Hasan Ali, 45, was admitted to the hospital with pain in his chest and tuberculosis on November 19.

He was under trial in a case under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, jail officials said. Jail authorities suspended two prison guards on duty.

Youth killed in city road crash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A motorcyclist was killed and another injured as a truck hit them on Dhaka-Aricha Highway at Hizla near Aminbazar in the city yesterday evening.

The deceased was identified as Noor Mohammad Babu, 28, a trader, resident of East Monipur of city's Mirpur. Injured Raihan Sarder, 27, was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in critical condition.

Locals rushed them to DMCH where doctor declared Noor dead.



The Farmgate bus station draws crowds of people, as gridlocks, *inset*, hold back free flow of traffic on the city streets yesterday. The photos were taken at around 7:00pm.

Govt hailed for making railway ministry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Environment, governance and civil rights-based organisations at a rally in the city yesterday hailed the government's decision to make railway a separate ministry.

Representatives from 14 organisations urged the government to make long-term plans and allocate adequate budget for the development of the railways.

The organisations are Nirapad Development Foundation (NDF), Green Voice, Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa), Citizen Rights Movement, Greenbelt Trust, Save The Environment Movement and WBB Trust.

They said in the past some railway stations were modernised in the name of developing the railways. The rail tracks, locomotives, bogies and manpower in the department had received little attention.

With a separate ministry, they hoped the path towards the development of railway would be widened.

Save The Environment Movement Chairman Abu Naser Khan, NDF Chairman Ibnul Sayeed Rana and WBBB Trust programme convener Aminul Islam Sujan spoke at the programme.

AL, BNP ruled like Ershad

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HM Ershad has been destroyed by greed for power and money by the country's political parties.

Looking back at the fall of Ershad, which set the nation dreaming of a conflict-free democratic society, Dr Kamal in an interview with The Daily Star said that other than getting governments through elections and an expansion of the media there has been no basic difference between the autocratic rule of Ershad and government by the two leading parties since 1991.

The eminent jurist, who served as law minister and then as foreign minister in Bangabandhu's government between January 1972 and August 1975, said the ouster of autocracy in 1990, the scope of a return to parliamentary democracy and Justice Shahabuddin's taking power from the autocrat --- all of these were the achievements of fair, people-oriented politics. But since that moment of triumph, sick politics has been destroying the nation's achievements, headed.

The Awami League-led 15 party, BNP-led seven-party

and left-leaning five-party alliances signed a historic framework on November 19, 1990 to force Ershad to resign and introduce true democracy and a democratic system in the country.

"There are 300 MPs in parliament but they can't say anything out of fear they might not become ministers or get nominations at the next election," he said, adding it would be difficult to bring any real change unless the election was held under a caretaker government.

He said the political parties had become a syndicate where fear and money dominate. "A landlord system is seen among the politicians, with the political parties somehow winning the election in order to become landlords."

A few people today can remember the outline of three political alliances, those who belonged to the alliances, regretted Hossain. He added both the then BNP government and Awami League were reminded of the outline after the 1991 election, but no one paid any heed.

Criticising the politicians

of the two major parties for repeatedly breaking their promises, Hossain said people did not trust them as they said one thing but did something else. "Greed for power and money is on one side while the country, patriotism and people's rights were on the other. Unfortunately, greed for power and money gets priority."

He said for twenty years the country had been witnessing the sick politics that had emerged due to the failure of some people to rein in their unlimited greed. However, he said the people of the country had not lost hope as there were still politicians like Selina Hayat Ivy. "Her speeches have proved that patriotism and ideology are there in a practice of fair politics."

The neutral application of rules has gone fugitive due to the sick nature of politics, said Kamal Hossain. The entire administration has been politicized and interference in the working of the police has been institutionalized.

Asked to what extent the parties are accountable to parliament, Dr Hossain said there has been no rational or

logical debate or discussion on issues of national importance in the last twenty years. "What we observe in parliament is that everything approached from a party point of view. What the ruling party says is good, while the opposition pounces on the ruling party, terming its acts as being very bad. This practice is contrary to the spirit of democracy."

Explaining the pre- and post-90 situation, he said Ershad had wanted to import the Indonesian pattern of political governance in Bangladesh. He sent his army officials regularly to that country to see how parties, the army and the state could be brought under control. "Ershad wanted this so that there could be no checks and balance and accountability, leaving parliament a rubber stamp," said the internationally renowned lawyer.

About establishing democracy and democratic governance system on the basis of the spirit of liberation and independence, Dr Hossain said, "We have already lost the achievements of the liberation war; political

parties have become landlords somehow by winning the elections."

He said Ershad had committed murdered and had plundered wealth but he was now moving around as a free man. Although all the alliances promised not to give him any space, yet the two major parties had been wooing Ershad and his identified loyalists to cling to or grab power.

There was a proposal to form a national government by AL and BNP through holding the first election after Ershad's fall, he said, adding, Khaleda Zia was almost agreeable but not Sheikh Hasina, who was confident that her party would win the 1991 election. "Qualitative changes in politics could come had there been a national government."

Instead of repealing black laws, a major point of the 1990 outline, he said both the parties had enacted new black laws. He said not only Nur Hossain, but also the heroes of the liberation war are being neglected.

Hossain said the nation had overcome three major

crises in 1971, 1975 and in 1990 and hoped that the countrymen will again overcome another crisis. "We would not have faced this kind of crisis again had the outline been followed."

Sheikh Hasina simply abolished the caretaker government system. He said the election would not be held without a caretaker government. "No real change will come unless the election is held under a caretaker system."

He said there will be no guaranty of fair elections under a politically elected government. "You need a check and balance."

Referring to the division of the Dhaka City Corporation, he said now everything is done on the basis of what Sheikh Hasina says or does. Obviously, he implied that nothing else matters.

Ershad split the High Court into six parts while our elected democratic government is dividing the city into parts with little or no justification. "This is not democracy or rule of law. This is total autocracy."

AL broke '90

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joint declaration of the three alliances made during the anti-autocratic movement of 1990.

He categorically blamed the Awami League for breaching its commitment by establishing ties with HM Ershad soon after the 1991 general elections to oust the BNP from power. Shah was speaking to The Daily Star.

He was an active leader during the 1990 mass upsurge. In recognition of his contribution, party chief and then Prime Minister Khaleda Zia appointed him jute minister after the 1991 elections.

The BNP leader accused the AL of creating obstructions before the BNP government, which, he said, in turn pushed democracy into a state of uncertainty though the party had come to power through a free and fair election after Ershad's fall.

As agreed upon by the three political alliances, all political parties accepted the people's verdict given

through an acceptable election in 1991, but the AL rejected the polls results, leading the country to confrontational politics, Hannan Shah said.

"We all promised not to obstruct an elected government but the Awami League established links with Ershad to oust the democratically elected BNP government," he said.

The AL had always welcomed "unconstitutional governments", including the Fakhruddin Ahmed-led military-backed regime, Hannan Shah alleged, saying that the attitude went against the spirit of democracy.

On a point of the joint declaration that no associate of Ershad would be allowed to join their parties, the BNP leader said Ershad himself is now with the AL-led alliance.

He, however, did not make any comment regarding those BNP leaders who were close associates of Ershad when he was in power from 1982 to 1990.

AL, BNP didn't keep

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Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon has said.

"An autocratic mindset persists among the politicians even though we got rid of the autocratic ruler Ershad," Menon, also a lawmaker, told The Daily Star yesterday ahead of the 21st anniversary of the downfall of the country's last military dictator in a mass upsurge on December 6, 1990.

Menon said both BNP and the Awami League, which ruled the country after Ershad's downfall, failed to keep most of the promises made in the joint declaration of the three alliances that outlined the anti-Ershad movement and how the country would be administered after his departure.

Menon, who played a significant role in formulating the joint declaration, said political confrontation has grown, dashing hopes of the creation of a culture of decent politics.

Deadlock, especially between the two main political parties, has led to violence. Such stand-off brought in a military-backed caretaker government that ruled for two years, he said at his parliament office.

"Our new journey to establish democracy after 1990 has faced serious obstacles as fair politics has been driven away by bad politics. Fair politics is far away now due to its criminalization. Politics more or less has become a sector of investment," he said, adding that people were suffering from frustration due to the failure of political leaders.

used to walk on the road of democracy through upholding the spirit of our Liberation War. But we had to face many obstacles as communalism, militancy and religious fundamentalism have grown instead of democracy flourishing in our country."

He said there was no doubt that the fall of HM Ershad's autocratic regime in 1990 played a significant role in the new journey towards democracy. "But the BNP and AL governments, which have alternately ruled the country since 1991, did not keep their promises regarding the issues mentioned in the joint declaration of the three alliances."

Neither the AL nor BNP government granted autonomy to BTV and Bangladesh Betar. Neither did they scrap the Special Powers Act. Both the issues were mentioned in the joint declaration, Menon said.

He said it was a shame that AL and BNP are now vying to get Ershad on their side even though they waged the movement to topple him.

"We could not establish an independent parliament which would be the centre of all debate on national issues. Boycotting parliament has rather become the culture in our politics."

About the system of government, Menon believes it is unfortunate that everything in and about the government is centred around the prime minister. "S/he enjoys absolute and sole authority of the government. There is no system of checks and balances in our government system."

MISBEHAVIOUR WITH JUDGE HC summons Biman MD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday summoned the managing director of Biman Bangladesh Airlines and a captain in connection with a writ petition filed on charge of damaging the dignity of Supreme Court by misbehaving with a judge.

Riaz Uddin Khan, a lawyer of the Supreme Court, moved the petition following reports recently published in some newspapers including the daily Ittefaq and the daily Janakantha on the indecent behaviour with a High Court judge in the flight at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on October 28.

The HC directed Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Biman Bangladesh Airlines Air Commodore (Retd) Mohammad Zakiul Islam and Captain Enamul Haque to appear before on December 11 in this connection.

Death Anniversary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the second death anniversary of MA Jalil, noted educationist and a former municipality commissioner of Dhaka.

On the occasion, a doa mahfil will be held at 'Jalil Bhaban', 3/2 Nabab Katara in Nimtoli in the city after Asr prayers.

He was also the founder chairman of the managing committee of Nabab Katara Government Primary School.

They followed Ershad

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economic policy as that of autocrat HM Ershad.

Mujahidul Islam Selim, general secretary of Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), made the comment while referring to the framework signed by the Awami League-led 15 parties, BNP-led seven parties and Left-led five parties in the late 1980s.

"The country was supposed to be run according to the framework. Unfortunately, it didn't happen, and, as a result, democracy couldn't be made strong and sustainable," Selim, who was involved in drafting the framework, told The Daily Star in an interview on Friday.

"If we had implemented the framework, we could have made much progress in the last 21 years," he said.

Pointing the finger at AL and BNP -- the two major parties -- he said both of them failed because their first priority had all along been looting, with the people of the country being the second priority.

"They sought to increase their personal wealth first," he alleged.

He identified two reasons for democracy not yet flourishing fully in the country. "The first is maintaining the economic system of looting operated on the basis of a free market economy. You can't have democratic flowers blossom on the foundations of an autocratic economic system."

The second reason is the establishment of a bipartisan system where two major parties alternately come to

power while all other parties are being increasingly cornered.

The main competition between the two major parties is in looting and sharing, Selim added.

"For this reason no government could fulfill the promises of the framework," he said, adding that both Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina were now in a competition to draw Ershad and his loyalists into their parties to help them win polls and grab power.

By doing this, Ershad the autocrat, who was toppled by an alliance of AL, BNP and Left parties, has been given a new lease of life, Selim said, looking frustrated.

According to him, the main opposition BNP never nurtured the spirit of the country's liberation, which is reflected in its actions, as in changing the fundamental principles of the 1972 constitution through the Fifth Amendment.

"The Awami League remained silent about it in its first term [1996-2001]. This time, it passed the Fifteenth Amendment to the constitution thanks to the High Court verdict and public pressure. But Awami League has compromised with the spirit of the Liberation War by keeping Bismillah, which was incorporated by Ziaur Rahman and Islam as state religion, which was introduced in the constitution by Ershad," he regretted.

People's right to vote freely has been affected by money, muscle power and manipulating the administration, he added.

Time ticks away for thorny

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are innocent victims of the climate change episode without contributing to anything to its causes," the minister said.

Of the average global carbon emission of 2 tonnes per person, Bangladesh emits only 0.3 tonnes. China is now the top polluter followed by the US.

China is more agreeable to a legally binding emission cut as the proposed second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol suggests. But it has tagged a condition Sunday that it would sign only if there is a renewal of carbon-cutting pledges by rich nations under the Kyoto Protocol, along with hundreds of billions of dollars in short- and long-term climate financing for poorer countries.

Kyoto protocol signed in 1997 is the first such legally binding emission control agreement which is set to expire in 2012. As the US which did not sign the protocol has again not agreed to sign the second commitment period, which has triggered a row of complexities. Canada has already pulled out of the agreement.

"To make Durban a success story, we have to work seriously with a sense of urgency since we are running out of time to attain a credible deal," Mahmud said.

Bangladesh wants urgent resolution to the adaptation discussion to start ground-work.

In some countries, yields from rain-fed agriculture could reduce by up to 50 percent, affecting food security. Together with sea-level rise, the havoc to be unleashed on the poor countries could mean adaptation cost of 5-10 percent of their GDPs.

This is why quick resolution of the adaptation talks and going for action are so important for Bangladesh.

Meantime, Bangladesh has once again demanded that half the allocation of the "fast start fund," a \$30 billion finance line now operational and set to end in 2012, be set aside for adaptation. Available information shows only 19 percent of the fund has gone to adaptation, which is vital for poor countries while the rest has gone to mitigation, meaning reducing carbon emission, which is not a concern of the non-polluting poor countries.

On the green climate fund, environment minister Mahmud said Bangladesh wants the rich countries to accept the framework of the fund. The developed countries should provide additional resources on an incremental basis every year from 2013 to reach \$100 billion a year by 2020.

"As one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, Bangladesh attaches enormous importance to a legally binding outcome in Durban," the minister said. "We would like to see that Durban will, at least, secure

the mandate to initiate dedicated discussion on a comprehensive legally binding instrument with robust compliance regime as soon as possible as agreed by parties."

Meantime, an alliance of civil society organisations in Bangladesh has expressed deep concern at the non-committal approach of the developed countries to cut emission through a legally binding agreement.

"We are horrified to notice that the global leaders have taken a tactic to delay the process towards a less damaging settlement by asking for a prolonged negotiation process that would delay any significant progress until 2020," the alliance said.

"Agreeing to any delay means, according to present scientific assessments, more deaths and destructions across the globe," it said.

The alliance is represented by Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon, Bangladesh Indigenous People's Network on Climate and Biodiversity, Climate Change Development Forum, Campaign for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods, Equity and Justice Working Group Bangladesh, and Network on Climate Change.

"We must understand that people are dying. We must also realise we cannot allow such mass killings to continue," it said in the briefing.