

AL's 14-party

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The polls should be held neither under a political government nor under a caretaker administration, they observed at a meeting on Thursday night.

The 14-party leaders opined that a 16-member interim government can be formed with five each from AL and BNP and five from other parties. The chief of the proposed government can be appointed on the basis of consensus among its members, meeting sources told The Daily Star.

As the country's politics is sharply divided, elections cannot be credible under a political government, the leaders reasoned. On the other hand, every defeated political party had questioned credibility of the elections held under the caretaker governments in the past.

The meeting was held at the central office of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) at the city's Bangabandhu Avenue.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon, JSD President Hasanul Haque Inu, JSD General Secretary Sharif Nurul Ambia, Gano Azadi League President Abdus Samad, Ganotantri Party General Secretary Nurur Rahman Selim, Bimal Biswas of Workers Party, and Mainuddin Khan Badal and Shirin Akhter of JSD, among others, were present at the meeting.

The combine leaders said public confidence in the government had eroded considerably because of the administration's inaction over stock market scam and failure to control price spiral of essentials and improve law and order.

Asked about the meeting, Bimal Biswas said they sat informally to discuss among themselves the latest political situation and that they would let AL know about the outcome of the meeting.

He said if public confidence was not restored soon, it would be tough for the government to complete the war crimes trial. "We have no alternative but to win against the anti-liberation forces through completing the trial."

The government has been going alone without discussing any issues seriously with its allies and for this, a number of crises have arisen, another leader told The Daily Star.

The leaders decided that from now on they would sit to discuss among themselves, as AL barely gives them a fair hearing.

Int'l trade fair

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In his speech, the commerce minister said, "The national economy is going in the right direction. The business community need not worry since the government is very conscious about the economy."

Quader said the government reached its export target of \$23 billion in the last fiscal year and it would achieve it this year as well. "Of the \$26 billion target this year, \$14 billion has already been achieved."

Citing the liquidity crisis in banks as a temporary problem, the minister said it is at its last stage. "The government is trying to solve it," he added.

MA Latif, Awami League lawmaker, AK Azad, FBCCI president, Murshed Murad Ibrahim, president of CCCI, Mahabubul Alam, CCCI senior vice-president, Jasim Uddin, FBCCI senior vice-president and Amir Humayun Mahmud Chowdhury, former CCCI president also spoke at the inaugural ceremony.

Quader said the fair would help local entrepreneurs evaluate the quality of their products in comparison with foreign products.

AK Azad said banks increased their interest rates without any declaration. It hampers the natural trading in the country as well as puts barrier to investment.

He demanded a quick and sharp initiative from the government in this regard.

India is participating for the first time in the fair where Thailand is the partner country. The other countries taking part in the fair are the USA, China, Pakistan, Iran and Japan.

The fair has 10 premier gold pavilions, four mini-mega pavilions, eight premier pavilions, 16 standards pavilions, 80 mega booths, 97 premier mega booths, 10 premier gold booths, 38 premier booths, 14 standard booths, three restaurants, 38 pavilions and 239 stalls, said Nurun Newaz Selim, CCCI vice-president and chairman of the fair committee.

The fair will remain open every day from 10:00am to 10:00pm, said the organisers.

'Friends of Syria'

FROM PAGE 1
"The Friends' Group called on the Syrian government immediately to cease all violence and to allow free and unimpeded access by the UN and humanitarian agencies," it said.

"It demanded that the Syrian regime immediately permit humanitarian agencies to deliver vital relief goods and services to civilians affected by the violence," it said.

It also vowed to "press the Syrian regime to stop all acts of violence" by enforcing current sanctions and introducing new ones, including with travel bans, asset freezes, ceasing oil purchases, reducing diplomatic ties and preventing the shipment of arms.

It also recognised the main opposition umbrella group, the Syrian National Council (SNC), as "a legitimate representative of Syrians seeking peaceful democratic change" but fell short of giving it exclusive recognition.

Earlier, in a bid to step up its efforts to deal with the crisis, the UN named its former leader Kofi Annan as a joint UN-Arab League envoy for Syria.

"I look forward to having the full cooperation of all relevant parties and stakeholders in support of this united and determined effort... to help bring an end to the violence and human rights abuses, and promote a peaceful solution to the Syrian crisis," Annan said after his appointment.

Meanwhile, Red Cross and Red Crescent ambulances finally entered the besieged Homs district of Baba Amr and evacuated seven Syrians wounded in bombardment by regime forces.

But the ambulances have not yet evacuated two wounded Western journalists and the bodies of two others, a spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross told AFP in Damascus.

Two injured journalists have made video appeals for help.

Frenchwoman Edith Bouvier needs surgery for a broken leg and is said to be in a potentially life-threatening condition. Briton Paul Conroy, who has less severe leg injuries, also asked for outside help to bring him to safety.

Hillary on Thursday described the SNC as a "credible representative" that would demonstrate that "there is an alternative" to Assad's regime.

French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe also endorsed the SNC as "the legitimate representative of the Syrian opposition."

Both were hurt in the attack which killed two other journalists: American Sunday Times reporter Marie Colvin and French photographer Remi Ochlik.

In Tunis, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said Assad would pay a "heavy cost" for ignoring the will of the international community after almost a year of brutal crackdowns on protesters.

At least 22 more civilians were killed in renewed violence yesterday.

Host nation Tunisia called for an Arab peacekeeping force to be sent in to help end to the killings, and for Assad to be granted immunity to persuade him to stand down.

Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani backed the call for peacekeepers.

More than 7,600 people have been killed since the uprising against Assad's rule erupted last March, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group.

The main opposition umbrella group the Syrian National Council has warned that military intervention might be the "only option" to end the crackdown.

Western and Arab nations have so far rejected the idea of a foreign mission like the operation that helped topple Muammar Gaddafi's regime in Libya.

However, a Syrian opposition source said yesterday foreign powers are turning a blind eye to weapons purchases by Syrian exiles who are already smuggling light arms, communications equipment and night vision goggles to rebels inside Syria.

Syrian opposition supporters were also trying to bring anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons to the Free Syrian Army rebels, and to get retired Syrian officers into the country to help coordinate military opposition to President Bashar al-Assad, he added.

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Biological clock

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high number of deaths.

Reporting in the journal Nature, researchers in the United States said they had uncovered the first molecular link between this risk and circadian rhythm, the term by which biological processes vary according to a 24-hour period.

The finger points at levels of a protein called Klf15, they said on Wednesday.

Previous research has found Klf15 to be a circadian controller -- and, startlingly, is also lacking among some patients with heart failure.

The team created mice that had been genetically engineered to either lack Klf15 or make the protein excessively.

In both cases, the rodents had a much higher risk of arrhythmias compared to normal counterparts.

"It is the first example of a molecular mechanism for the circadian change in susceptibility to cardiac arrhythmias," said Xander Wehrens of Baylor College School of Medicine in Houston, Texas.

"If there was too much Klf15 or none, the mice were at risk for developing the arrhythmia."

Klf15 is only one step in a complex molecular cascade, the researchers believe.

It controls another protein, KChIP2, which affects potassium-generated electrical current that flows through heart muscle cells called cardiomyocytes.

When levels of KChIP2 fluctuate, this causes electrical instability in the myocytes.

As a result, the heart muscle's action becomes impaired and it takes longer (or conversely, less time) to empty the ventricle -- the heart's pumping chamber. The heart loses the regularity of the beat and labours to pump blood efficiently.

Co-author Mukesh Jain of the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine in Cleveland, Ohio said that further work could well

uncover other circadian-related causes.

The discovery opens up intriguing paths of research, in pinpointing individuals at risk of nocturnal death and devising drugs to shield them, Jain added.

Sonia refuses

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citing personal freedom and security risk.

In her reply to the I-T department, she also said there was no public interest involved in disclosing such information.

Chennai-based RTI activist V Gopalakrishnan had sought details of her I-T returns from the year 2000-2001 to 2010-2011.

The assistant commissioner of income tax, New Delhi, who is also the chief public information officer (CPIO), wrote to the UPA chairperson on January 23 as per Section 11 of the RTI Act, 2005, seeking her response to the application.

In her reply, Sonia said disclosure of such private information to third parties in guise of transparency in public life would amount to unwarranted invasion of the individual's privacy.

The information submitted to the I-T department by an individual was confidential and private in nature and cannot be disclosed as per Section 138 of the Income Tax Act, 1961, she said.

This is the second time that the CPIO has rejected the petition. The application was first rejected without even seeking objection from Sonia.

After the appellate authority's intervention last month on Gopalakrishnan's plea, the CPIO sought a response from Sonia.

"By not calling for an objection, the CPIO has ignored the possibility of the third party expressing willingness for disclosure of personal I-T information," the authority had said.



Crowds gather by the ditch into which a bus plunged yesterday. The crash in Madaripur left 15 people killed and 50 others injured.

15 killed in bus plunge

FROM PAGE 1
Kalkini Upazila Health Complex.

The condition of six of the injured was stated to be grave. Injured Md Shaheen Mir, 50, of Sirajganj, said the driver lost control of the bus after one of its front wheels went into a deep pothole of the dilapidated diversion road. It plunged into the water and was half submerged.

Kamal Miah, another injured, said the bus going to Barisal from Khulna fell into the ditch at Pantapara around 11:00am from the diversion road, which was built for temporary use during the construction of a bridge on the Khulna-

Barisal highway.

He said the bus was packed with passengers and there were many on the roof as well. Many got on it to get to an urs (a religious gathering) of Charmonai Peer which was due to start today. Some have claimed that there were as many as 100 people in and on the roof of the bus.

Fourteen of the deceased were identified. They were: Abdul Gani Khan, 50, of Rajoil upazila of Madaripur, Shah Alam, 40, of Kalkini upazila in Madaripur, Sobahan Ghorami, 45, Haji Md Monzed Mia, 65, and Miraz Khandker, 55, of Madaripur Sadar, Manir

Hossain, 38, and Shafiqur Rahman Sardar, 18, of Shariatpur, Javed Matabbar, 55, Azgar Ali, 40, and Khalil Morol, 70, of Faridpur, Solaiman, 26, and Helal Shikder, 34, of Patuakhali, Idris Mollah, 22, of Gopalganj, and Jamal Morol, 55, of Khulna.

Passengers and different transport stakeholders blamed, overloading, delay in the construction of the bridge, poor maintenance of the diversion road, and indifference of Roads and Highways Department and the bridge contractor for the accident.

The Daily Star failed to

reach the Madaripur executive engineer of Roads and Highways Department or the bridge contractor for comments.

Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan, Madaripur Deputy Commissioner Nurul-Alam and district Superintendent of Police Nazrul Hossain visited the spot. They said the deceased's families would be provided with Tk 10,000 while every injured would receive Tk 5,000 on top of free treatment.

Police and fire brigade with the help of locals were trying to salvage the bus from the ditch.

PHOTO: STAR

More work to do for Teesta

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September last year following last minute objection from West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. She even pulled out of Manmohan Singh's entourage to Dhaka.

Shahara said she told Manmohan that "the people of Bangladesh want the Teesta issue to be resolved soon".

She said the Indian prime minister told her that the agreement on land boundary demarcation and exchange of enclaves, signed by the two countries during Manmohan's Dhaka visit, would be placed before the Indian parliament for ratification during its budget session scheduled for next month.

After her talks with Manmohan, Shahara had one-on-one talk with her Indian counterpart Palaniappan Chidambaram and then delegation-level talks. Shahara led a 12-member delegation to New Delhi.

During a joint media interaction with Chidambaram at the Taj Man Singh Hotel, Shahara said she raised the issues of border firing and killings by BSF during the talks and India assured that steps would be taken so that no killing or torture of Bangladeshis takes place in future.

"We have discussed how to avoid future border firings and killings of Bangladeshis," she said.

Chidambaram said, "We have reiterated that we do not intend to continue border firings and killings and both the sides identified 23

vulnerable border outposts where the two countries will strengthen the presence of border guards and resort to joint consultations.

"If we can do that, I'm sure there will be no more firing and the incidents of border firing and killing will be brought down to zero," he added.

The Indian home minister said "there has been a dramatic decline" in border firing incidents in the eight months, since his visit to Dhaka in July last year.

"Only three incidents have taken place -- one in November and two in December last year -- in which four people were killed who were cattle smugglers," he claimed.

Chidambaram said he had handed over a dossier to Shahara explaining the circumstances in which BSF had to resort to their guns.

"In each case, one of our jawans on the border was grievously injured and his colleagues fired to save him," he said, adding, "We regret these incidents but there are cases in our view in which there was no option other than firing."

"We don't want this to continue and in the last seven weeks, there has been no incident of firing."

Shahara said Bangladesh raised the issue of BSF Director General UK Bansal's remark during an interview with the BBC where he was quoted as saying that border killings would not stop completely. She said the Indian side gave her the transcript of the interview and said Bansal never said what he had been

quoted to have said. The Indian delegation claimed that the media interpreted his words that way.

Interestingly, UK Bansal reiterated to Press Trust of India Thursday that firing at the Bangladesh-India border cannot be stopped completely and BSF jawans can fire in self defence.

Shahara said she had also brought up the issue of handing over of two killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Capt Abdul Mazed and Risaldar Moslehuddin Khan. Bangladesh shared some information about them with the Indian side.

Chidambaram said the West Bengal government is trying to locate the two. He made it clear that finding a legal way to hand them over to Bangladesh, after they are found, would not be a problem even with the absence of an extradition treaty between the two countries.

"...but the main problem is tracing them," he said.

Shahara said the Bangladesh delegation discussed the issue of border management, including the deal on land boundary and exchange of enclaves and unresolved issues relating to this, and trafficking in women, children and drugs and 6.5 km of undemarcated border between the two countries.

Referring to the recent torture of a young Bangladeshi man by BSF personnel in Murshidabad of West Bengal, a video clip of which was shown on TV channels, Shahara said India has taken punitive action against eight BSF personnel

and "I thank the Indian government for that".

She said both sides deliberated on the impediments to the implementation of the 1974 Indira-Mujib agreement on land boundary and exchange of enclaves. The Bangladesh home minister said the Indian side told her that it would be possible to implement the agreement "at the earliest and we hope to take relevant steps towards that".

She said India had proposed Bangladesh imposing night-time curfews along the border to stop illegal movement of people.

Highly-placed Bangladeshi sources, however, said Dhaka would examine the proposal but curfew at night in border areas could create difficulties for the poor people living there.

Shahara hoped that the home minister-level talks between India and Bangladesh would become an annual event henceforth and "I invited Mr Chidambaram to visit next year".

She said India had brought up the issue of handing over United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) leader Anup Chetia, who has finished serving his sentence in a Bangladesh jail for intrusion without valid documents, and "we told them as the court case process against him is over, he will be handed over".

"You will see a solution in near future. We are committed to handing over these people to India and we have no intention to hold him back," added Shahara.

Haiti PM offers resignation

BBC ONLINE

The prime minister of Haiti, Garry Conille, yesterday offered to resign, government sources said. Officials said he had made the offer in a letter to President Michel Martelly.

He was the president's third nomination when appointed in October, ending a long political stalemate.

The two previous candidates failed to win enough support from parliament. The government is still rebuilding after the January 2010 earthquake which devastated the capital Port-au-Prince.

Many officials in Haiti and elsewhere in the Caribbean spend considerable time overseas.

Conille and President Martelly had been in conflict over a parliamentary commission investigating the nationality of government ministers.

The commission is investigating whether some senior administration officials have dual citizenship, which is prohibited under the constitution.

Conille originally trained as a doctor and was an aide to former US President Bill Clinton when he was a UN envoy to Haiti.

8 BSF jawans

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the court martial.

"The staff court of inquiry [into the incident] has been completed. Now, we are ordering a court martial where the record of evidence will be taken. That is the procedure under the BSF act. After that, the presiding officer will decide the level of punishment," the BSF director general said yesterday.

"Prima facie, they have been found guilty. Now, the extent of the guilt and what defence they [the eight jawans] have to put forward... all that is part of the court procedure and once we have that, we will further take action. The presiding officer will decide the punishment," he added.

Captured by a mobile phone, the footage was on aired Indian television channels last month, showing the BSF troopers stripping and kicking Abdul Sheikh, 32, of Abasia in Chapainawabganj.

He was allegedly smuggling cattle across the border when BSF troops had intercepted him.

The eight personnel belong to the 105th battalion of the border guarding force and the incident took place in its Charmurasi boundary outpost in Murshidabad.

Yunus for WB

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Matia told UNB over telephone yesterday.

Responding to BNP leader Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir's remark that the prime minister made "political mockery" through her proposal, Matia said she had never heard any positive word from the BNP about Awami League and Sheikh Hasina.

"Had the proposal been given by Begum Zia, those people would have jumped on to say 'Eureka! What a wonderful idea!'"

Matia, also an Awami League presidium member, said they are making negative remarks about the prime minister when the European Parliament delegation leader Jean Lambert, to whom the proposal was given, appreciated the proposal as positive and interesting.

She said Jean Lambert not only appreciated the PM's proposal but also spoke for reforms in the way the World Bank president is appointed at present.

Lambert had said it (post of the World Bank president) should not automatically rest with the largest contributor (America).

Matia said since Prof Yunus has acquired expertise in micro-financing, the world including Bangladesh will be benefited if he is appointed as the president of the World Bank.

She said: "It is only the BNP that raises 'storm over the cup of tea' about it. Let them speak whatever they like."