

Non-political

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avoid a political crisis.

But the BNP wants a non-political person in the position, party leaders said.

The government scrapped the caretaker system in June last year following a Supreme Court verdict, which declared the system illegal but observed it could be in place for another two terms. The court also asked parliament to amend the constitution so that any former chief justices or other SC judges cannot be made head of such governments.

BNP insiders say they are taking this part of the verdict into consideration, and will therefore propose to pick for the job someone acceptable to the major political parties through a consensus.

A time frame for the interim administration and also holding the elections will also be in the proposal, they added.

The party plans to unveil a model for the system at its March 12 rally at Nayapaltn in the capital and issue a 30-day or 90-day ultimatum for the government to restore it.

Some top BNP leaders are now preparing the proposal. "At the rally, party Chairperson Khaleda Zia will offer some important features about the formation of the interim administration and its characteristics," a senior leader said, wishing anonymity.

"Elections cannot be free and fair under the Awami League or any of its leaders. That is why we launched a movement for a non-party caretaker government," Rafiqul Islam Mia, a standing committee member, told The Daily Star.

Asked about top AL leaders heading the interim administration, standing committee member Lt Gen (ret) Mahbubur Rahman said, "The question does not arise at all of accepting any Awami League leader as the chief of the interim government."

On February 13, Khaleda at a Chandpur rally said, "It will not be acceptable that the prime minister, ministers and lawmakers hold their positions even during the polls."

Meanwhile, campaigns and last-minute preparations are underway to make the March 12 rally a success. In addition to organising leaders and supporters across the country, the party is readying itself for "instant resistance" against any attempts by any quarters to foil the programme.

Party acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir has already warned that the government will not be able to control the situation if BNP supporters are obstructed from joining the rally.

Titled "Dhaka Cholo" (Let's March to Dhaka), the BNP predicts this to be one of the biggest ever gatherings of the leaders and activists of the four-party alliance, which includes the Jamaat-e-Islami.

The BNP's city unit leaders said party workers would be at different entrances of the capital to receive party supporters coming from across the country to join the rally. There will be at least 18 such teams, each having more than 50 members.

"We'll be all prepared to resist any obstruction at any entrance to the capital," said a senior leader of the city unit.

COALITION EXPANSION
The BNP chief will announce an expansion of the four-party alliance from the March 12 rally.

The decision came at a meeting of the alliance leaders at Khaleda Zia's Gulshan office in the capital yesterday.

Following the meeting, Jamaat leader Abdus Sobhan told reporters that Khaleda would announce the new coalition.

Andaleev Rahman Partha, chairman of Bangladesh Jatiya Party, said the alliance leaders discussed different issues, including the expansion of the alliance.

Govt staff join

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High Court Division around 2:30pm and joined the rally in processions. Likewise, employees of different state-owned banks and other government offices showed up at the rally venue with their own banners.

Meanwhile, offices literally became dysfunctional from the afternoon. Of the employees who left early, many joined the rally while others took the opportunity to go home, said employees' union sources.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith termed such action by the employees "a sign of overall indiscipline in the government".

He was speaking with journalists at his secretariat office in the afternoon. Asked if it was right for bank employees to join the rally during working hours, he replied with a question.

The minister said, "There are different organisations in the state-owned banks, like Zia Parishad, Bangladesh Parishad...etc. Do we control these bodies?"

The ruling Awami League organised yesterday's rally to mark the anniversary of the historic speech of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on March 7, 1971.

Asked about their participation, Mohammad Rulul Amin, secretary general of

Bangladesh Secretariat Officials and Employees' Association, said, "There is nothing wrong in it as Bangabandhu delivered his historic speech on this day in 1971. If he did not give the speech the country would not be liberated."

On violating rules, he said, "We did not break any rule as we just went to the programme and returned to our offices after it."

The rally ended at 6:30pm while the office hours are from 9:00am to 5:00pm.

The Government Servants (Conduct) Rules 1979 clearly prohibit public servants to take part in politics and elections, propagate sectarian creeds, indulge in parochialism, favouritism and victimisation and wilful abuse of office.

Violation of any of the rules is considered as misconduct. For such violations, an employee should be accused of breaching discipline and subjected to punishment under the Government Servants (Discipline and Appeal) Rules 1985.

Even though government employees have been seen joining political programmes for decades, no action has ever been taken against them, except for some of those who belonged to or supported the political opposition.

Khaleda rapped

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country [interest] by taking money from those defeated forces in 1971. The people of Bangladesh won't forgive you. Why did you take money from the defeated forces? People want to know. One day you have to answer to the people."

The prime minister was addressing a huge rally before the city's Suhrawardy Udyan to commemorate the historic March 7. It was the first public meeting of Hasina in the capital after she became prime minister in 2009.

Leaders, workers and supporters of the Awami League, its different associated bodies, pro-ruling party organisations, freedom fighters, and different professionals' organisations joined the rally. The ruling party men crowded the area from the Jatiya Press Club to Science Laboratory intersection and New Market to Kakrail.

This was the largest campaign to show off its public support by the ruling party since it assumed power in 2009. Lawmakers of Dhaka and its adjacent districts along with their supporters brought out a procession after the rally from Institution of Engineers' Bangladesh. The procession ended at Bangabandhu Bhaban in Dhanmondi.

Hasina during her speech alleged that the leader of the opposition wanted to protect war criminals. "But I want to say that you [Khaleda] won't be able to protect them...I want to say firmly that the trial of the war criminals will be held on this soil, Inshallah."

She urged all to be aware of those trying to protect the war criminals and sought help from all for completing the trial of war criminals.

Awami League General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam at the rally accused the opposition BNP chief Khaleda Zia of being a paid agent and broker of Inter Services Intelligence (ISI). "She has adoration for Pakistan and for this she took 5 crore rupee from the ISI ahead of the 1991 general elections. And for this reason she has been giving utmost importance to Pakistan's interests, putting aside the interests of Bangladesh..."

Ashraf, also LGRD and Cooperatives minister, urged the opposition leader to place the BNP's proposal on the process of holding the next parliamentary elections and give up its "chaotic anti-government programmes".

"Join parliament, place your proposal and sit for discussion on the process of holding the next polls. The Awami League is ready to sit with you," Ashraf made the call.

Thousands of Awami League men started gathering in front of Suhrawardy Udyan around noon with banners, festoons, placards and portraits of the father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Within three hours the entire road

from Shahbagh to Jatiya Press Club turned into a human sea. Bangabandhu's historic March 7 speech was being played on loud speakers as well.

Band parties with drum beaters led processions of different units of the Awami League and its wing organisations to the rally. Some people were seen with painted faces and bodies. A symbolic gallops on a van was taken there where symbolic war criminals were showcased to be hanged. Musicians were singing patriotic songs on trucks decorated like stages. Some party men brought elephants and horses decorated with colourful banners on them that drew the attention of the gathering.

The prime minister arrived around 4:45pm amidst huge applause from the audience. Foolproof security measures were taken centring on the rally.

Hasina said the BNP chairperson had been staging a movement for the restoration of the caretaker government system. "Did she forget that the last caretaker government put her in jail and forced her two sons to flee the country?"

"What is the guarantee that a caretaker government will bring her to power? If a caretaker government comes, it will bring back her [Khaleda] two sons from abroad and put them in jail."

She said the last military-backed caretaker government had resorted to torture of professionals, politicians, businessmen, teachers, government officials and students.

She said her party took to the streets for the caretaker government after the BNP resorted to vote rigging during the BNP's first term between 1991 and 1996. "But around 5,200 elections have been held under the present government and all the elections have been free and fair and nobody raised any questions about a single election," she said.

She said if the BNP comes to power again, it would repeat its past misdeeds.

She said people would not accept the BNP's programmes aimed at making the war criminals happy in a month that is so significant to the independence of the country.

Dhaka city Awami League General Secretary Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya said his party would remain at all entrances to the capital and on all streets, lanes and by-lanes on March 12 to resist any anarchy created by the opposition party.

Awami League leaders Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjit Sengupta, Matia Chowdhury, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Latif Siddiqui, Mahbubul Alam Hanif, MA Aziz and Quamrul Islam also spoke at the rally, chaired by party presidium member Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury.

BSF FIRING
2 Bangladeshis wounded

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Satkhira

Two Bangladeshi cattle traders were critically injured early yesterday when Indian Border Security Force (BSF) opened fire on them on Satkhira border.

One of the injured, Shariful Islam, 25, of Hawalkhali village, managed to enter Bangladesh territory and is now undergoing treatment secretly at a private clinic in Satkhira to avoid arrest.

The other injured, Ruhul Quddus, 35, of the same village, was arrested by BSF personnel, sources said.

The BSF men of Khalisha camp opened fire on the duo when they were returning home around 5:00am yesterday.

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) sent a letter to BSF authorities protesting the incident and requesting them to return Quddus.

In response to the letter, a battalion level flag meeting between BGB and BSF was held at zero point near Kuskhali border yesterday afternoon.

Commanding Officer Lt Col Abu Basit of BGB 38 Rifles Battalion at Satkhira confirmed the incident.

Bangladeshi found dead in S'pore

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Bangladeshi worker and a Filipino woman were found dead in a hotel in Singapore Sunday night.

Sumon, 22, was found dead along with Rezzilyn Lodia Vinegas, 33, a maid, in a second-floor room of Summer Hotel in Geylang. They had stab wounds in their necks, arms and legs, Singapore's daily The Straits Times reported yesterday.

The first secretary (labour) to the Bangladesh Embassy in Singapore said the body was sent to Bangladesh on a Bangladesh Biman flight on Tuesday.

Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training Director (welfare) Mohsin Chowdhury said Sumon was the son of Nafisuddin, hailing from Bahadurkail in Thakurgaon.

According to The Straits Times, Singapore police have classified the deaths as unnatural and are investigating the deaths.

Still a long

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recognise the outstanding work of women in various sectors. Which is commendable, of course. After all, since when do these unsung heroes ever get any attention anyway? The media feel obligated to have special stories, mostly positive ones, to tell everyone: look, despite all the odds, women are excelling in so many fields. Then there are the activists and NGOs promoting women's rights; they too make great efforts to commemorate the day.

All this is fine, in terms of giving hope to women all over the country that the status quo can be challenged, changed even, given the required determination and dedication.

But what these endeavours often do not accomplish is obligate society in general, especially its men, to make a pledge to sincerely try to bring about real change. Will this celebration make (at least) most men look upon women as equal partners in bringing about a just, equitable society? Will women be paid equally as men for the same work? Will all men refrain from being bullies to their spouses just because they can? Will women walk without fear of being molested every time they walk the streets? Will women be given equal rights to property (now there's a prickly one)?

These are uncomfortable, inconvenient questions that we would rather not answer because the answers will not be positive any time soon.

While we can use this historic day to celebrate all the women who have had the courage to defy patriarchy to follow their dreams, establish their rights and sometimes those of other women, we must acknowledge the truth that we still have a long way to go. Opportunities, tolerance, justice, acknowledgement - these are things all women must be given without restraint. Only then can this day be a true celebration.

Innocent pays the price

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and illegal transplant, said Zahidur, an agriculturalist in the city's Tejturi Bazar area.

By then, though, he had already spent around Tk 2 lakh on medical tests and pre-surgery procedures.

Five months on, he still awaits the transplant as only one per cent of his kidneys are functioning now.

He has been surviving on dialysis -- a method of treating kidney failure by using a machine.

Going on dialysis twice a week, he has already spent over Tk 4 lakh. For this, he had to sell his business and take financial support from his relatives and friends.

Zahidur is only one among dozens of critically ill patients waiting for kidney transplants as the surgeons continue to shy away from surgeries following uproar in national dailies in September last year over illegal organ trade and transplants.

The media had reported about illegal kidney transplants linked to illegal organ trade in the country. Those surgeries were performed without following proper procedures including confirmation of kinship between the donors and the recipients, revealed the reports.

This has ultimately led to immense sufferings for many critical patients as they have to wait for a longer period for the surgery despite having legitimate donors.

Faced with this reality, the country is observing World Kidney Day 2012 today with the theme "Donate -- Kidneys for life -- receive."

According to organ transplantation legislation in Bangladesh, only close and blood relatives, including spouse, siblings and off-

spring can donate organs voluntarily.

It, however, does not give any directive on how the kinship will be confirmed.

Physicians admitted that some patients forge documents for non-family donors out of sheer desperation.

Over two crore people -- a staggering 16 per cent of the country's population -- have been suffering from various kidney diseases, and around 40,000 die every year from kidney failure, according to statistics of Kidney Awareness, Monitoring and Prevention Society.

The Kidney Foundation in the city currently has at least 12 transplant patients with valid donors, said Prof Harun-ur-Rashid, president of the foundation.

"But we have not been able to convince the surgeons to perform the surgeries," he noted adding, the physicians do not want take the risk of being a part [of illegal transplants and donors] and dent their professional image.

Surgeons argued that it is not their duty to confirm the relationship between the donor and the recipient.

"We have proposed forming a national body to certify the relationship prior to organ transplant," ATM Mowladad Chowdhury, a surgeon at BIRDEM Hospital, told The Daily Star.

He also insisted that the organ transplant legislation should incorporate altruistic donations.

Around 1,000 kidney transplants have been performed in the country since 1982, of which about 50 had questionable donors, mentioned Prof Harun.

Following the uproar, the Directorate of Health

Services had formed a six-member committee to make tougher legislations to check organ trade.

The health ministry has already drafted a new law based on the recommendations made by the committee, said ministry sources.

The draft has proposed forming a national body to certify the relationship between the donor and the recipient.

It, however, has been gathering dust at the ministry since November last year.

Launch hits

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master of the cargo ship.

The injured, Miraj, 35, Ayaz, 26, and Momen Dhali, 31, were rushed to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital.

Witnesses said MV Sundarban-7, a triple-decker launch bound for Barisal, crushed the master's cabin of the cargo vessel MV Nashek-2 around 4:00am.

The cargo vessel came from Kolkata port on March 4 with 603 tonnes of fly ash and was on its way to Holcim-Heidelberg cement factory at Kanchpur in Narayanganj, said MA Karim, manager (operation) of FN Shipping Line and owner of the vessel.

It anchored at Barisal port on Tuesday afternoon and resumed its journey for Narayanganj around 3:00am, an hour before the collision took place, he added.

Mohammad Akij, owner of MV Sundarban-7, said the launch had hit the cargo vessel while crossing a narrow turn along the river.

Officials of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority and Barisal port visited the spot.

Arab leaders condemn

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embassy in Dhaka and leaders of the Arab countries in their statements mentioned Khalaf as a diplomat.

Meanwhile, the Saudi authorities demanded quick investigation into the killing, and requested the Bangladesh government to ensure adequate protection for all the staff working at its embassy in Dhaka, reported Arab News yesterday.

According to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Tuesday sent a cable of condolences to King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia, over the murder of Khalaf.

"Sheikh Sabah expressed deepest condolences for King Abdullah and family of the deceased. He strongly condemned these terrorist acts which aimed at terrifying and killing of innocent people," KUNA reported.

The Crown Prince of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar separate messages of condolence to the Saudi King.

A report titled "Assassinated Saudi diplomat scheduled to move to Jordan" quoting Sheikh Khalid Bin Ahmad Al-Khalifa, the foreign minister of Bahrain, said that the assassination of the Saudi diplomat was part of an open war.

"Evil and criminal hands have assassinated Saudi Arabian diplomat Khalaf Al Ali in Bangladesh," Shaikh Khalid wrote on his Twitter account. "It is an open war and the criminal is known," he wrote, without further explanation.

Petra News Agency from Amman reported that Jordan on Tuesday denounced as "heinous and justified terrorist crime" the assassination of a Saudi embassy diplomat in Dhaka.

Minister of State for Media Affairs and Communications and Government spokesman, Rakan al-Majali, stressed Jordan's strong condemnation of the assassination, rendering it as "heinous and justified terrorist crime."

The Gulfnews.com further said the UAE on Tuesday condemned Al Ali's

assassination, with Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar

Mohammad Gargash expressing the UAE's "denouncement of the terrorist crime which led to the demise" of the diplomat.

Khalaf's brother Khalid, told Saudi news site Sabq that the Saudi diplomat had worked in the Saudi Embassy in Dhaka for two years after being posted in Azerbaijan for seven years.

"He was scheduled to be moved to Jordan within months," Khalid said.

Meanwhile, Bangladeshis living in Saudi Arabia expressed their fear of repercussions following the death of the Saudi official.

"Only the Allah knows what is going to happen to us next amid this tightened situation," Fakhrul Basher told The Daily Star over phone.

Recruitment of Bangladeshi workers by Saudi Arabia declined in the last three years, as the Kingdom has not been allowing job transfer and renewal of work permits of the Bangladeshis.

Snoring

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conditions such as hyperactivity more likely later on, researchers said.

The study, published in the US journal Pediatrics, looked at data on 11,000 children living in the UK.

Lead researcher Dr Karen Bonuck said the sleep problems could be harming the developing brain.

One estimate suggests one in 10 children regularly snores and 2 percent to 4 percent suffer from sleep apnoea, which means the breathing is obstructed and interrupted during sleep.

Often enlarged tonsils or adenoids are to blame for the conditions.

In adults, the result can be severe day-time tiredness, and some studies have hinted that behavioural problems such as attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder might be linked to the condition in children.

The latest study is sufficiently large to offer a clearer view of this.

Parents were asked to fill in a questionnaire in which both the level of snoring and apnoea were recorded in the first six or seven years of life, and contrasted with their own assessment of the child's behaviour.

Dr Bonuck, from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine at Yeshiva University in New York, said that children with breathing issues during sleep were between 40 percent and 100 percent more likely to develop "neurobehavioural problems" by the age of seven.

She believes that the sleep breathing issues could cause behavioural problems in a number of ways -- by reducing the supply of oxygen to the brain, interrupting the "restorative processes" of sleep or disrupting the balance of brain chemicals.

She said: "Until now, we really didn't have strong evidence that sleep disordered breathing actually preceded problematic behaviour such as hyperactivity."

"But this study shows clearly that symptoms do precede behavioural problems and strongly suggests that they are causing these problems," she added.

Cops clueless

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Dhaka Metropolitan Police (Gulshan division), said the CCTV camera was seized hoping that it might contain footage showing the white car by which the killers fled the spot. But it proved to be of no help as the camera was being operated irregularly and improperly, he said, when contacted last night.

The embassy official, who used to reside on Road 120, was shot around 35 yards away from his residence.

Lutful Kabir also said police were yet to ascertain how many persons took part in the killing as well as where and how Al Ali had spent over two hours since leaving his residence at 11:00pm till returning near it at 1:15am.

Meanwhile, around 40 hours after the incident, Sub-inspector Mosharraf Hossain of Gulshan Police Station, who had rushed bullet-hit Al Ali to United Hospital, filed a case around 4:30pm yesterday without accusing anybody.

DMP Additional Deputy Commissioner Nizamul Haque Mollah said the Saudi embassy had first asked the foreign ministry for taking legal action and later asked police to file the case.

Mosharraf told this correspondent, "I rescued bullet-hit Al Ali from the spot around 1:20am (on Tuesday) in an unconscious state and rushed him to United Hospital where the doctors declared him dead."

Contacted, Dr Abu Sayeed MM Rahman, a director of United Hospital, said the doctors declared Al Ali dead at 5:15am on Tuesday although his pulse and blood pressure could not be felt since the time he was brought to the hospital.

Lutful Kabir said security measures have been beefed up in the diplomatic zone in Gulshan with deployment of additional forces and intensified surveillance.

Romney rules

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committed to backing him at the national Republican convention in August. A candidate needs 1,144 delegates to win the party's nomination and go on to challenge Barack Obama in November's election.

But Super Tuesday did not deliver a sufficiently convincing victory to end the race and convince Romney's rivals to pull out.

After a 10-state voting marathon, Romney defended his position as the front-runner for the party's nomination to take on Obama.

"I'm going to get this nomination," he told supporters in Boston.

He easily won Massachusetts, where he was governor, as well as liberal-leaning Vermont and Idaho, where his fellow Mormons make up a chunk of the electorate.

Romney also cruised to victory in Virginia, where Santorum and Gingrich failed to qualify for the ballot.

US senator from Pennsylvania, said his victories in Tennessee, Oklahoma and North Dakota proved he was the bona fide conservative alternative Romney.

"This was a big night tonight," Santorum told supporters in Steubenville, Ohio. "We have won in the West, the Midwest and the South, and we're ready to win across this country."

Ohio was important because no Republican nominee has taken the White House without winning the Midwestern bellwether state in the general election.

Santorum began the race there with a big lead in the opinion polls, but Romney's well-funded political machine overcame him in part by virtually saturating the airwaves with attack adverts.

Santorum's opposition to gay marriage and abortion has attracted the support of religious conservatives.

But correspondents say his outspoken remarks on birth control and the role of

religion may have turned off moderate-leaning voters.

Exit polls showed Ohio voters thought Romney stood the best chance of beating Obama, however, Santorum appealed more to blue-collar voters.

Gingrich, the former House speaker, failed to reboot his campaign and did not achieve the sweep of Southern states he hoped for.

But he vowed to stay in the race after his Georgia win.

"There are lots of bunny rabbits to run through, I am the tortoise. I just take one step at a time," Gingrich said.

The drawn-out nomination fight, which has been waged in large part through negative television adverts, has taken a toll on the Republican party, polling suggests.

A Washington Post/ABC News poll showed only 35% of Americans looked upon Romney favourably, compared to 32% for Paul, 23% for Gingrich, and 32% for Santorum.