

Politics

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reasons, said State Minister for Cultural Affairs Promod Mankin yesterday.
In the past, the government termed us as indigenous but they don't want to use the term "indigenous" nowadays, probably due to political reasons," he said while speaking at a workshop at Cirdap auditorium in the capital.

Bangladesh Indigenous Lawyers' Association, Manusher Jonno Foundation and Caritas Mymensingh Region Perlam-MJF jointly organised the workshop titled "Indigenous life struggle".

"We should be more involved in state power to secure our demands. If I step down from my position in protest of our demands not being fulfilled, then we'll be completely disconnected from the state power structure," Promod said.

The minister also said that there might be apprehension towards the government over pressing home the demands of the indigenous people, but the community would have to work at realising those demands.

"We will have to continue our movement and remain connected with the power structure to fulfil our demands," he added.

Secretary General of Bangladesh Christian Association (BCA) Nirmal Rozario stressed the need for establishing a separate ministry for the indigenous people.

Prof Mesbah Kamal, professor of history department of Dhaka University demanded to form a national commission for indigenous people to protect their rights.

The indigenous people are legally vulnerable and are subjected to various sorts of harassment ending up getting poorer by losing their land and property, said Assistant Attorney General Titus Hillol Rema while presenting a paper.

President of Bangladesh Indigenous Lawyers' Association Norendranath Tudu chaired the programme, while President of Bangladesh Christian Lawyers' Association John Gomes and Director (rights) of Manusher

Eid shopping

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But today [Saturday], the situation is quite different," said Palash.
"It has been a common scene every year during this time of Ramadan. More people throng the shopping malls at noon and long tailbacks become regular worries," said Alamgir Kabir, deputy commissioner (Traffic-South).

Shoppers park their vehicles in front of the markets, narrowing down the roads. They do not always obey the law, he noted. "We are helpless in this situation. We will have to face this situation everyday till the Eid."

Thousands of people crowd the capital ahead of the Eid for various reasons.
People mainly from the low-income group come here to earn extra income, while many villagers visit the city for Eid shopping, mentioned Alamgir.

A lot of shoppers could not return home in time to take iftar. Many were seen breaking their fast at markets and even in buses and autorickshaws.
Vehicles were forced to take detours to avoid traffic jams in front of the shopping centres and markets.

Arif Newaz, a motorcyclist from Paltan, said he had to change his route thrice to reach Farmgate from the Jatiya Press Club.
Despite the attempts, it took him almost an hour to reach his destination, which is a 10-minute trip.

Witnesses said the traffic jams were more severe in front of Mouchak Market, Bangabazar, New Market, Gausia, Bashundhara City Shopping Mall, Eastern Plaza, Rapa Plaza, Shimanto Square (formerly known as Rifles Square), Ramna Bhaban, Farmgate, Elephant Road, Karwan Bazar, Moghbazar and Gulistan.

Hundreds of cars were seen parked on both sides of the roads in front of the shopping malls and markets, causing further gridlocks on the nearby streets.
Passengers of taxi cabs and CNCRun auto-rickshaws had to count more than double the normal fares.

The cabbies and auto-rickshaw drivers, though, said they could not earn their

Syria clashes

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began" on July 20 but that loyalists had "not managed to advance."

Meanwhile, cash-strapped Syria has asked Russia for financial loans and supplies of oil products, CNN said in a report.

Syria's Deputy Prime Minister Qadri Jamil, who led a delegation consisting of Syrian Cabinet ministers in a visit to Russia, on Friday told reporters in Moscow that Russia had promised to provide financial assistance to Syria.

The delegation was in talks with the Russian officials and business leaders on ways to alleviate the consequences of Western sanctions against Syria.

In what is also a war of words, a senior government security figure said "the battle for Aleppo has not yet begun, and what is happening now is just the appetizer."

"The main cause will come later," he warned.
Earlier this week, a security official said troops were "testing the terrorists' defence systems before annihilating them by carrying out a surgical operation."

The security official yesterday said more reinforcements had arrived and that at least 20,000 troops were already on the ground.

"The other side are also sending reinforcements," the official added, referring to the rebels, who claim to have seized half the city since they poured in two weeks ago.

Echoing UN chief Ban Ki-moon's remarks on Thursday that violence was intensifying, a watchdog said July was the deadliest month since the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad's regime erupted in March 2011.

Rami Abdel Rahman who heads the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said 4,239 people, the vast majority civilians, died in July, bringing the overall toll since

March 2011 to more than 21,000.

"The death toll is escalating," Abdel Rahman said, noting June had been the second-deadliest month.

And with thousands more displaced, lacking basic needs and unable to get medical treatment, the Red Cross and this month's UN Security Council president, France, highlighted humanitarian concerns.

Loud explosions shook Aleppo as fighter jets and helicopter gunships overflew the city and rebels attempted early in the day to storm the state television building before being driven off by shelling, said the Britain-based Observatory.

The violence killed at least 60 people across Syria yesterday, including at least eight in Aleppo province, the Observatory said. The dead comprised 35 civilians, 18 soldiers and seven rebels.

On Friday, UN chief Ban warned world powers they must overcome their rivalries to put an end to a "proxy war" in Syria. And the UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to condemn the Security Council for its failure to act.

But Russian Ambassador Vitaly Churkin said the assembly gave "blatant" support to Syrian rebels and that its backers were the countries providing "mercenaries and arms" to the opposition.

And China's deputy ambassador, Wang Min, yesterday said pressuring only Damascus would "cause further escalation of the turmoil and let the crisis spill over to other countries in the region."

On Friday, a senior foreign ministry official Wang Kejian accused countries that oppose its position of pursuing their own geopolitical interests and "trying to hinder or even undermine the political settlement

'Small cabinet'

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"She has asked us to talk to leaders of all the parties [including BNP] about the small cabinet which will act as the interim government during the next parliamentary elections," one of the leaders who talked to the PM on the issue told The Daily Star.

Also, Awami League leader Mahbub-ul-Alam Hanif yesterday said the government would take an initiative for talks to settle the framework of the polls-time interim cabinet if the opposition responds positively to the prime minister's proposal.

"The door is open for discussion. You'll see progress in this regard soon," Hanif, acting general secretary of AL, told a meet-the-press programme organised by Dhaka Reporters Unity at its office.

Hanif urged the main opposition to place its proposal on the interim government and said any logical suggestion would be accepted for the sake of the country and democracy, reports UNB.

On Wednesday, Sheikh Hasina talked about the matter with AL ally Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad during an iftar at her official residence Gono Bhaban and sought his support to form the small cabinet ahead of the 10th parliamentary elections, a JP source told The Daily Star.

Ershad told the PM that his party would fully back up her proposal and it was against conducting of national polls by an unelected government, added the source.

A senior JP leader who talked to Ershad about the "small cabinet" said they would not accept the restoration of caretaker government.

AL sources said Sheikh Hasina would also discuss the issue with top leaders of allies in the 14-party coalition.

The Workers Party of Bangladesh and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal -- key components of the 14-party combine -- do not want to support right now the prime minister's "small cabinet" proposal.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon and JSD General Secretary Sharif Nurul Ambia have told The Daily Star that they want further discussions.

clear conception about interim government to avoid confusion and conflicts ahead of the polls, they said.

However, the ruling alliance components support the repeal of caretaker government provision.

The House on June 30 last year scrapped the provision, which required a non-party neutral administration to oversee the parliamentary polls, through the 15th constitutional amendment. The country's politics heated up following the move.

Ruling out the restoration of the caretaker government, Sheikh Hasina has suggested formation of a "small cabinet" comprised of elected representatives of all parties, including the opposition, ahead of the next parliamentary polls.

In an interview with the BBC Bangla Service on Tuesday, she said the opposition should come up with their suggestions in parliament.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia immediately rejected the proposal and reiterated her demands for restoration of the caretaker government system.

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Police (GRP) in Kamalapur.

The train hit her from behind, Nazrul added.

Locals rushed her to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared her dead.

Eyewitnesses said the woman used to collect vegetables from the land beside the rail lines.

Meanwhile, in Noakhali, another person was killed and three others were injured when a train rammed a CNG-run autorickshaw at Sonapur level crossing yesterday.

Eyewitnesses said the Samatal Express approaching from Laksham junction hit the auto-rickshaw at the unguarded level crossing near Adarsha High School around 8:00pm.

The four passengers of the auto-rickshaw were critically injured.

Abdul Khaleque, 50, died at Noakhali Medical College Hospital while Babul, 45, Selim, 35, and Bablu, 50, were undergoing treatment at the hospital.

The driver of the auto-rickshaw fled the scene.

Govt move

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reputed jurist and a constitution expert Dr Kamal Hossain, former advisers to the caretaker government -- Mirza Azizul Islam and Hossain Zillur Rahman -- termed the government's move damaging for the high reputation of Prof Muhammad Yunus which he had earned at home and across the globe.

On the government's move to investigate how much salaries and benefits Prof Yunus received during his tenure as the Bank's managing director past the retirement age, they said it was an example of persistent harassment.

In a statement, Dr Kamal called upon all senior citizens to demand from the government why it had chosen to damage the image and high reputation of Prof Yunus.

"We need to ask why such a sustained attack is being made on Grameen Bank institutionally and Professor Yunus personally? Why is it a priority for the government to damage Professor Yunus's reputation and to affect the proper, democratic functioning of the Grameen Bank by curtailing the rights of the shareholders and their elected directors?"

Dr Kamal mentioned: "We need these answers precisely because the government has given single-minded priority to target Prof Yunus and the Grameen Bank while major enquiries which have been demanded and which the government is obliged to initiate are going unanswered."

While expressing his grave concern, Mirza Aziz in his statement said the government's decision would politicise Grameen Bank which, in result, would bring no good for the "Bank of the Poor".

"First thing, I do not see any necessity for this [government] decision. The second thing is, it seems that the chairman is vested with the actual power to appoint the managing director," he pointed out.

On the move to investigate into Yunus's salaries and benefits, Mirza Aziz said Bangladesh Bank had raised an objection on this matter. But after getting clarification from Grameen Bank they did not pursue it.

Hossain Zillur said arbitrary oversight by the government, particularly where political partisanship is such a big problem, is not conducive to good institution building. "So it goes against the economic democracy as well as a bad precedence of good governance," he said.

Nagorik Oilkya, a newly formed civil society platform, yesterday at a meeting in the capital also denounced the government's plan to "politicise" Grameen Bank by amending its ordinance.
Convener of the platform Mahmudur Rahman Manna urged the government to refrain from harassing the Nobel laureate and let the bank function normally as usual.

The cabinet on August 2 approved a proposal for amending the Bank's ordinance to give more powers to its chairman to choose managing director of the microlender.

Garment jhut

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Hotel and Restaurant at East Shewrapara on a motorbike around 3:30pm for meals.

When they were leaving the hotel, three armed miscreants on a motorbike rushed in and sprayed bullets on Noor in front of the hotel, leaving him injured in the chest and abdomen.

Doctors pronounced him dead when he was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Nasima said her husband was earlier shot and injured in Chandpur Kachua three years ago.

An alleged extortionist named Obaidullah demanded Tk 2 lakh as toll for doing business from her husband and he had already paid Tk 1 lakh to the criminal, she said.

Nasima added that her husband had a dispute with other jhut traders over his business.

Abdul Latif, officer-in-charge of Kafrul Police Station, said he had heard about the incident and that Noor was accused in seven cases including those of murder, arms and extortion

The saga of a 'patriot'

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But to our Prime Minister, he is a "patriot" and she must be right.

It is well known that most of his cabinet colleagues and many of the top leaders of his own party had urged him, from the outset, to send in his papers so that the government could move on with this vital project.

Any other person with the minimum of feelings for his country, his party and his own leader (and also with a modicum of self respect) would have, when the controversy began, publicly resigned and challenged the government and the accusing world body to conduct an independent investigation to prove his guilt. This way he would have given the government, of which he was a part, significant manoeuvrability to take the project forward. But not our "patriot".

His desire to "serve" the country was so strong that he waited till the WB funding for the project was cancelled, the country disgraced and our people insulted. His resignation, by the way, has not yet been officially notified.

Our "patriot" was the very man who had to be thrown out from Sheikh Hasina's previous cabinet (1996-2001) for a passport-related incident. He is none other than the man described by former US ambassador to Bangladesh James F Moriarty as a man "less than honest" in one of his cables dated February 3, 2010, revealed by WikiLeaks on August 30, 2011. And yet our Prime Minister considers him a "patriot" and she must be right.

As for our "blood sucker", he was actively involved with our Liberation War activities in the US just as the present finance minister, AMA Muhith, former finance minister late SAMS Kibria, and hundreds of others living in the US at that time.

His story of how he began the micro-credit experiment and how it grew to become a global movement is too well known to necessitate a repetition here. What is worthy of note is that ever since he left his Chittagong University job, he devoted all his intellectual and physical energy to trying to find

ways to root out poverty. When the poor were essentially looked upon as a burden on the society, he thought of them as assets, with wondrous creativity to contribute to solving their own problems.

To set up a bank with women at the helm and targeted only for those who do not have any collateral, was a first in history. Nobody ever, anywhere else in the world, had thought of setting up such a bank targeting poor rural women. He not only conceived it, he brought it to fruition and operated successfully for more than two decades after which the Nobel Committee thought it worth awarding Nobel Prize to both the "blood sucker" and the blood-sucking institution he built.

Compared to individuals, there are not too many institutions that have been given Nobel Prize. Since 1910, only 22 institutions/organisations have been so awarded. Some of the more recent ones are Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IAEA, UN, UNHCR, UN Peacekeeping Force, Amnesty International, etc.

The important point to note here is that all the award winners are international bodies and run by international secretariats, comprising experts from various parts of the world. No national institution like Grameen Bank, run totally by nationals of one country, in this case Bangladeshis, has ever been given a Nobel Prize. If we leave aside the one person, and focus on the institution, we can very proudly say that led by its women board of directors, all the higher-level, mid-level and grassroots level managers and staff members contributed to making it a world class institution that was so unique, so successful, so exemplifying, so emulative, so wondrous and effective that the world took cognisance of that, bowed their heads, and gave it the highest honour -- Nobel prize. All this undeniably was the handiwork of none other than the "blood sucker".

In our government's shameful and incomprehensible attempt to harass

and denigrate one person, are we not denigrating and insulting the magnificent achievements of all the millions of poor borrowers and Bangladeshi management of Grameen Bank? Nothing exemplifies more the saying "cut off your nose to spite your face" than our government's attempt to damage the reputation of one person.

We urge Sheikh Hasina's government to stop inflicting insult on ourselves. The world is watching our shameful act of insulting the very man who has brought the maximum recognition to the creative potential of our people. He is one name that is recognised in most of the big cities of the world. He is one person referred to in most conferences on poverty held in recent times. He is one person whose work is the subject of most PhD theses on development and poverty alleviation.

He is one man who has proven more forcefully than others how creative, regenerative and resourceful our poor are and how, with little assistance in terms of resources and training, they can solve their own problems.

Maligning Prof Yunus is like "spitting in the air" that ultimately falls on our own face. The "blood sucker" is a hateful figment of a myopic imagination, which is defied by Bangladeshi Rasputins who are thriving on some deep-rooted misconception and suspicion of the Prime Minister. The faster it can be gotten rid of, the better we all will be.

The present steps the government leaders have taken will boomerang on themselves, as they are completely unaware of the status of our Nobel laureate in the minds and imagination of our young people. They find fresh ideas, inspiration, confidence and hope from him and not from the old politics of confrontation, violence, mutual bad-mouthing and deep mistrust. They want to build a future Bangladesh of dignity and respect.

When will our leaders learn that monopoly of wisdom has never been nor will it ever belong to just one party, one coterie or one leadership? When will they

27 big Destiny buys cancelled

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society must take prior approval from the DoC before making any investment above Tk 5 lakh.

"When we reviewed Destiny's audit report for fiscal 2010-11, we found it had already invested in 27 entities out of 34. But it [Destiny] sought permission a year after making the investments, which is a gross violation of the law," said Amiya.

These deals are now void, he said.
DoC documents show that the DMCSL applied to the cooperative authority in fiscal 2011-12 for permission to invest more than Tk 394 crore in 34 entities.

The proposals included purchase of Best Aviation and Alpina Chhayaচিত্র for Tk 132 crore.
Destiny Group also sold its sister concerns to its cooperative arm DMCSL, putting the money of its several lakh members at risk, as some of these concerns exist on paper only.

Of the DMCSL's purchases, more than Tk 80 crore was spent for buying 15 of Destiny Group's sister concerns, including its multilevel marketing wing Destiny-2000 Ltd, at more than Tk 16.78 crore, according to DoC document.

The DMCSL bought controversial Destiny Tree Plantation project for Tk 4.7 crore and also Destiny Transit System, Air Destiny, Destiny Security Force and D2K Express for Tk 7 crore each without DoC's permission.

The purchases include Destiny Developers, Destiny Saasco Properties, Destiny Environment and Savings Energy, and Destiny Nihaj Jute Spinners.
"We served a show cause notice on DMCSL for concealing information in its annual report for fiscal 2010-11. But it failed to respond to the notice," said Amiya.

He said the DoC gave approval to DMCSL's 34

purchase deals in good faith without examining its accounts thoroughly.

According to the cooperative law, the DMCSL management committee, headed by Rafiqul Amin, has to get back the money spent for making the purchases.

"All responsibilities now fall on the management committee. They have to get back the money spent for making these investments. Otherwise, the 12 members of the committee have to pay the money in equal shares," said Iqbal Hossain, another additional registrar of the DoC.

Rafiqul and other committee members violated the law by concealing information on the DMCSL's purchases made in fiscal 2010-11, said Iqbal.

"They have cheated DMCSL's general members and made the investments at will."

If they ultimately fail to pay the money, they would face criminal charges, said Iqbal.
DMCSL has seen an astronomical rise in its capital, shareholders profit and investment since 2009. Its paid-up capital went up to nearly Tk 300 crore in fiscal 2009-10 from Tk 5.53 crore a year ago. The figure jumped to nearly Tk 1,200 crore in fiscal 2010-11.

Loans and investments grew to Tk 569 crore in fiscal 2010-11 from less than Tk 23 crore in fiscal 2008-09. They rose more than 213 percent between fiscal 2009-10 and fiscal 2010-11.

DMCSL that got registered with the DoC in 2005 came under the spotlight after a Bangladesh Bank inquiry found proof of its involvement in illegal banking.

The central bank's report said illegal banking by the cooperative firms has been creating disorder in the country's financial sector.
Following the report, the DoC, National Board of Revenue and the Anti-

Corruption Commission initiated probe into Destiny Group's activities.

Rafiqul

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BBC, it seems to me that there will be a political understanding," he said.

The head of such a government should be neutral, Rafiqul said, citing that in the country there was an established practice that the dominating powers select the head of an interim government, and there was mistrust about it.

"First, we need to select a neutral head who will arrange the polls where people will cast their votes without fear and intimidation," he said, adding that both the ruling and opposition parties could continue their dialogues showing respect for each other.

Rafiqul said the BNP could put forward their suggestions on the proposal regarding who would be the head of the interim cabinet, with how many members it would be formed and how many members from each party would be included in it.

"It may be a non-party caretaker, coalition or interim government to arrange the next polls, but the main concern is who will head the government," he said.

The eminent lawyer suggested that talks could be held on TV or in public places where freedom fighters, political leaders and civil society members could participate and give their opinions.
He also said the MPs could discuss it in parliament too and help forge a system with a consensus.

President of Krishak Sramik Janata League Kader Siddiqui and Everest conqueror MA Mohit also spoke at the function.

Malaysian delegates to talk Padma funding today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Malaysian delegation will hold talks with the communications and finance ministers today on Kuala Lumpur's proposal for financing the Padma bridge project.

A six-member Malaysian delegation, headed by Dato Seri S Samy Vellu, Malaysian prime minister's special envoy to India and South Asia, will first meet Communications Minister Obaidul Quader at his Secretariat office around noon. An hour later, the delegation is expected to call on Finance Minister AMA Muhith at the latter's office.

Sources in the communications ministry said 21 officials and experts from Malaysia have arrived in Dhaka. Of them, the six-member delegation will hold talks with the ministers while the others will talk to the Bridges Division officials at Shetu Bhaban.

Communications Minister Quader told The Daily Star, "This is nothing new. This is part of our ongoing negotiations with Malaysia over their proposal to finance the Padma bridge project. Let's see what they say."

He also said the government did not say "no" to anybody in regards to financing the much-cherished project, adding, "Even though the government wants to build the bridge with its own money, it doesn't mean that the government will not take foreign or donors' funds."

"The government would accept a proposal only if it seemed realistic and went in favour of the country's interest. We'll evaluate and examine the Malaysian proposal before signing a deal," he noted.

On June 28, Malaysia gave Bangladesh government a draft proposal. According to the plan, the Malaysian government will invest around \$3 billion and complete the bridge's construction in three years. Malaysia will operate the bridge for 37 years and then hand it over to the Bangladesh government, official sources said.

Abul loves

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to pave the way for the Padma bridge construction.

"The Padma bridge project has been suspended due to corruption. The construction would not be possible during the tenure of this government," she said, addressing an iftar party the city BNP hosted at the LD Hall in the parliament complex.

"The prime minister branded a minister a patriot although the World Bank cancelled the loan because of that man's corruption."

"The minister only looted money when he was the communications minister. He did nothing to renovate roads and highways," Khaleda said, adding that all he loves is money.

Abul was removed from the communications ministry and given charge of the ICT ministry on December 5 last year after the WB brought graft allegations against him and suspended its loan.

He tendered his resignation to the prime minister on July 23.

Khaleda yesterday again rejected Hasina's proposal to form an interim government to oversee the next national elections. "Elections under a political government won't be allowed."
She said the Awami League government wants to hold the elections but the people will not accept. A provision for a non-party neutral government must be included in the constitution.

"An agitation programme will be declared after the Eid and it will gradually turn into an oust-governments movement," she said.

The former premier also said, "Bangladesh is known as a corrupt country to the world due to the corruption of the prime minister, her family members and ministers."

Bitterly criticising the government, Khaleda said, "The People are living in miseries. There is no alternative to ousting the government for the sake of the people and the country."