

Restriction ruins



SHAHDEEN MALIK

The ban would have a "great negative impact" on the possibility of dialogue, a compromise among the political parties and a peaceful resolution of the political stalemate, said eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik.

"The gravity of the prime minister's speech and her offer of an all-party poll-time government have been undermined through the ban imposed by DMP," he said.

The restriction put the BNP in a "tough spot" as it might be difficult for the party to participate in a dialogue when it could not organise any political programmes, he added.

Malik said although a senior BNP leader had made a "clear provocative speech", law enforcers should not have made their decision based on only one perspective. They should have considered the overall political situation of the country.

"One leader's statement should not be allowed to frustrate the possibilities of dialogue and compromise," he added.

SULTANA KAMAL

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government on the one hand calls for dialogue, while on the other imposes a ban on BNP's political activities," she said.

The main opposition might negatively react to the proposal on the excuse that the prime minister was not sincere about discussion, added the rights activist.

HAFIZUDDIN KHAN

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ahead [of the main opposition BNP's and ruling Awami League's scheduled programmes] was not correct; it might rather prove to be counterproductive," he observed.

Hafizuddin said although the announcement of a rally and a counter rally had created a tensed situation, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), which imposed the ban, could take measures three to four days later.

He stressed the need for reaching a consensus among the political parties to hold a dialogue to bring an end to the uncertainty looming over the next parliamentary elections.



M SAKHAWAT HOSSAIN

The police ban on rallies and processions had dimmed the prospect of discussion, said former election commissioner M Shakhawat Hossain.

He said a positive atmosphere, which was created through the prime minister's proposal, had perhaps been wasted by the announcement of the restriction.

The embargo might stand in the way to overcome the existing political crisis, he added.

IFTEKHARUZZAMAN

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However, the possibility of that solution could have been much greater had the PM proposed a discussion to select the head of the interim government and specified the number of members in that cabinet from the ruling and opposition alliances, he added.

"The ball is now in the opposition alliance's court. Solution to the political crisis now depends on how the opposition alliance reacts to the proposal," said Iftekharuzzaman.

On the ban on political activities in Dhaka metropolitan area, he said, "It has raised a question as to why the decision came hastily a day after the prime minister's proposal for discussion."

He said, "Holding rallies and processions is a democratic right. Police should resist those who seek to bring machetes and axes in rallies and procession instead of banning political activities."

RAFIQUE-UL HUQ

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missed," said the veteran lawyer.

He said the prime minister had come up with a "very good proposal" which was welcomed by many. But the government made the decision of banning political activities when BNP was yet to comment over the PM's speech.

"Now they [BNP] can say that the government is not sincere about resolving the ongoing political crisis, and what the prime minister had said [in her speech] was only a show-off," he said.

The ban on political activities violated the rights of a political party, he added.

US recalls PRAN turmeric powder

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[of it] can cause health problems, including delayed mental and physical development and learning deficiencies. Pregnant women, infants and young children especially should avoid exposure to lead," said the FDA.

The FDA advised consumers who already bought the product "not to consume it and return it to the place of purchase for a full refund."

Meanwhile, PRAN in a statement yesterday said it would appeal to the FDA for re-examination. The food processor and exporter said the lead found in its turmeric powder might be from particular batches or grown in particular areas where the soil contains too much lead.

"We are trying to collect the samples of the batches of those turmeric powder in which lead was found. We will test the samples in Bangladesh laboratories," said PRAN in the statement, signed by its Director (marketing) Kamruzzaman Kamal.

PRAN also said it already contacted a

Bangladesh Agricultural University teacher to audit its the entire supply chain management beginning from farming, to help identify the reason behind the presence of high level of lead.

Contacted, Kamruzzaman told The Daily Star last night that his company was not planning to recall the product from the local market. He added the authorities concerned could test it if they wanted to.

In the statement, PRAN claimed it tested the samples of turmeric powder at the BSTI and the Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) by collecting samples from the local markets.

"None of the test reports showed excessive level of lead in powdered turmeric," the statement added.

According to Kamruzzaman, PRAN conducts such tests regularly, the last one being in the last month.

Asked to comment on the government's response, Monoj Kumar

Roy, additional commerce secretary, said they would ask the BSTI and the Consumer Rights Protection authorities to look into the matter.

The recalls by the stores in the US began early this month after the New York State Health Department first detected high level of lead. Testing at a private laboratory also showed same results.

The test was initiated following a complaint of illness, according to the FDA.

OnTime Distribution Inc. of Brooklyn, New York, was the first to recall the product voluntarily, according to a FDA press release on October 3.

Later, New York's another store, Asia Cash & Carry Inc, and Best Value Inc. of Detroit recalled the product on the same grounds.

PRAN, one of the biggest food processors of the country, is not the only company to export spices and other processed food to the US to tap the markets of non-resident Bangladeshis and the South Asian living there.

Bangladeshi companies export nearly \$4 million worth of processed food and spices to the US, according to Bangladesh Agro-Processors Association.

According to Wais Kabir, executive chairman of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council, lead can enter the product at any stage of production -- from farming to processing.

"Without analysing the whole production and processing chain, it cannot be said from where the lead entered," he said.

Khorshed Alam, director of Soil Resource Development Institute (SRDI), said soil of some certain areas may be a reason, and recommended testing the soil to determine the level of lead in it.

He added the SRDI earlier collected samples from all districts to find out the extent of heavy metals, including lead, in local soil.

"Hopefully, it will be done in three to four months. We cannot say anything now," he said.

Maldives polls

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Elections Commission could not transport some ballot boxes to remote islands in the archipelago of 1,192 coral islands scattered across the equator.

Regional power India issued a strongly worded statement expressing deep disappointment over the cancellation of an election that had international support.

"India and the international community have been closely watching the developments in Maldives and are seriously concerned at the attempts to stall the democratic process," the Indian foreign ministry said in a statement.

New Delhi demanded that Maldivian authorities make sure a fresh election is held without delay to ensure a president is in office by the constitutionally mandated November 11 deadline.

A US diplomat also expressed concern over the latest obstacle to an election seen as vital to restore stability.

"The failure to hold elections this morning represents a real threat to democ-

racy in the Maldives," said the diplomat, asking to remain unnamed.

The outgoing president Mohamed Waheed called for the elections to be held next weekend, in a statement released late yesterday, adding he was "concerned about the delay in holding election as planned".

He urged the Elections Commission to hold discussions with all candidates to find a way to ensure the presidential election takes place next Saturday.

However, police spokesman Abdullah Nawaz told AFP they had considered illegal to stage the election this weekend in violation of a Supreme Court order requiring all candidates to approve electoral lists.

"Only one candidate had signed the voter register and therefore it would have been a violation of the Supreme Court guidelines for the election to go ahead," Nawaz said.

The court last week annulled the first round of voting on September 7, citing irregularities -- even though international observers said the polls were fair -- and ordered a re-run.



Madhabkunda waterfall, one of the most attractive tourist spots in Sylhet, is crowded with tourists on Friday.

PHOTO: STAR

SC to release

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of them were done, the full text would be released.

The additional attorney general said once the full verdict was out, the defence could file a review petition with the Appellate Division challenging the verdict under Article-105 of the constitution.

However, there was no scope to lodge a review petition with the SC as per the International Crimes (Tribunals) Act, 1973, he added.

Defence counsel Tajul Islam said the SC would decide through a judgment whether to accept Mollah's review petition. He said they would file the petition after the full text of the verdict was released.

On September 17, a five-member bench of the Appellate Division, headed by Chief Justice Md Muzammel Hossain, sentenced Mollah to death overruling the judgment of the International Crimes Tribunal that had awarded him a life term.

The four other judges of the bench are justices Surendra Kumar Sinha, Md Abdul Wahab Miah, Syed Mahmud Hossain and AHM Shamsuddin Choudhury Manik.

Opposition to defy rally ban

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the BNP sources.

Defending the decision to impose the ban, the DMP said several rival political parties made provocative public statements, posing security threats ahead of their announced meetings and rallies in the capital from October 20.

"Judging from the current situation, it is evident that activities and programmes such as rallies, meetings and processions might lead to subversive activities and confrontation,

which will adversely affect law and order in the capital," DMP Commissioner Benazir Ahmed said in a press release.

The ban came five days ahead of an announced rally by the BNP-led alliance that was planning to announce a series of agitation programmes from the rally to press the demand for a non-party election-time government.

In order to counter the opposition rally, Dhaka city unit of the ruling Awami League also announced holding a rally in the capital the same day.

The main opposition party slammed the DMP's ban and urged the government to withdraw the restriction immediately.

part of the government's conspiracy to hold the election without the BNP-led alliance," acting BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told reporters after the meeting of BNP standing committee.

It was a complete violation of the country's constitution and democratic norms, he said.

The BNP leader said like his party, the whole nation was surprised and agitated at the hasty decision by the DMP.

The law that allowed the DMP to slap the ban is not superior to the country's constitution, which guarantees the freedom of speech and assembly, he said.

Earlier, speaking at a discussion at the Jatiya Press Club, Fakhrul alleged that the government used the police to slap the ban and took away people's democratic rights by imposing the restriction.

"Take lessons from history. We will give a befitting reply to the restrictions through our movement," said Fakhrul.

Opposition leaders, civil society members and even some AL leaders expressed surprise and annoyance at the ban that was imposed a day after the prime minister proposed

forming an all-party poll-time government.

They said the ban might further worsen the current political stalemate.

Interestingly, the ban coincided with a BNP delegation's visit to the DMP headquarters to enquire about the fate of its application for permission to hold the October 25 rally either at Nayapaltan, or Paltan Maidan or Suhrawardy Uddan.

"This is a clear violation of all democratic norms," Opposition Chief Whip Zainul Abdin Faroque told The Daily Star over the phone.

The DMP officials told the BNP delegation that they would convey their decision after consulting with high officials.

"As we left the DMP office, we learnt that the DMP had banned all sorts of demonstrations," said Faroque.

DMP Deputy Commissioner Masudur Rahman told The Daily Star that whoever defies the ban would face lawsuits.

"We will step up security measures, depending on the situation," he said.

The ban indicates that the government has finally toughened its stance.

said they might launch a crackdown on opposition leaders and activists if they try to stage anti-government agitation defying the ban.

A similar ban may be imposed in other divisional headquarters to prevent opposition parties from staging anti-government demonstrations, said the sources.

In Chittagong city, local BNP leaders have threatened to stage anti-government demonstrations on October 25.

On the other hand, local AL leaders and activists plan to hold rallies and bring out processions to counter them, reports our Chittagong correspondent.

Chittagong Metropolitan Police Commissioner Shafiqul Islam said they would take necessary steps in due course.

Meanwhile, SM Rokon Uddin, additional commissioner of Sylhet Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star that they had been closely monitoring the political situation, as both AL and BNP were preparing to take to the streets.

The police would take steps when necessary, he told our Sylhet Correspondent.

MIXED REACTION IN AL
The DMP has gener-

ated mixed reaction in the ruling AL.

Talking to The Daily Star, some ministers, lawmakers and AL leaders said they support the ban on political meetings and rallies following the BNP's threat to take to the streets.

A few others, however, said the ban could have been imposed one or two days later.

It was not right to impose the ban just a day after the prime minister's address to the nation offered a ray of hope, said an AL leader, preferring anonymity.

But Civil Aviation Minister Faruk Khan defended the ban and said it is the responsibility of the government and the police to protect the life and property of people.

The minister said the government took Sadeque Hossain Khoka's threat seriously, as he is a top BNP leader.

"In the past, we saw how the opposition had caused deterioration in law and order, and loss of life and property," said Faruk, hinting at Hefajat-e Islam's May 5 programme in the capital.

AL lawmaker Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury also supported the ban.

'Electronic blood'

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uses only 20 watts of energy - an efficiency IBM is keen to match.

Its new "redox flow" system pumps an electrolyte "blood" through a computer, carrying power in and taking heat out.

A very basic model was demonstrated this week at the technology giant's Zurich lab by Dr Patrick Ruch and Dr Bruno Michel.

Their vision is that by 2060, a one petaflop computer that would fill half a football field today, will fit on your desktop.

"We want to fit a super-computer inside a sugarcube. To do that, we need a paradigm shift in electronics - we need to be motivated by our brain," says Michel.

"The human brain is 10,000 times more dense and efficient than any computer today.

"That's possible because it uses only one - extremely efficient - network of capillaries and blood vessels to transport heat and energy - all at the same time."

IBM's brainiest computer to date is Watson, which famously trounced two champions of the US TV quiz show Jeopardy.

The victory was hailed as a landmark for cognitive computing - machine had surpassed man.

unfair, says Michel. The brains of Ken Jennings and Brad Rutter ran on only 20 watts of energy, whereas Watson needed 85,000 watts.

Energy efficiency - not raw computing power - is the guiding principle for the next generation of computer chips, IBM believes.

Our current 2D silicon chips, which for half a century have doubled in power through Moore's Law, are approaching a physical limit where they cannot shrink further without overheating.

BIONIC VISION
"The computer industry uses \$30bn of energy and throws it out of the window. We're creating hot air for \$30bn," says Michel.

"Ninety-nine percent of a computer's volume is devoted to cooling and powering. Only 1% is used to process information. And we think we've built a good computer?"

"The brain uses 40% of its volume for functional performance - and only 10% for energy and cooling."

Michel's vision is for a new "bionic" computing architecture, inspired by one of the laws of nature - allometric scaling - where an animal's metabolic power increases with its body size.

An elephant, for example, weighs as much as a million mice. But it con-

sumes 30 times less energy, and can perform a task even a million mice cannot accomplish.

The same principle holds true in computing, says Michel, whose bionic vision has three core design features.

The first is 3D architecture, with chips stacked high, and memory storage units interwoven with processors.

"It's the difference between a low-rise building, where everything is spread out flat, and a high rise building. You shorten the connection distances," says Matthias Kaiserswerth, director of IBM Zurich.

But there is a very good reason today's chips are gridiron pancakes - exposure to the air is critical to dissipate the intense heat generated by ever-smaller transistors.

Piling chips on top of one another locks this heat inside - a major roadblock to 3D computing.

IBM's solution is integrated liquid cooling - where chips are interlayered with tiny water pipes.

The art of liquid cooling has been demonstrated by Aquasar and put to work inside the German super-computer SuperMUC which - perversely - harnesses warm water to cool its circuits.