

SAVING LIVES OF BURN VICTIMS

Burn unit needs better facilities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The burn unit of Dhaka Medical College Hospital needs immediate reinforcement to save the increasing number of arson victims, doctors said at a press conference yesterday.

More nurses and better medical facilities should be made available to prevent patients from developing deadly infections, said veteran burn expert Shamanto Lal Sen.

So far 22 people, who fell prey to the recent political violence, have died at DMCH.

Exposure to infections was a major reason behind so many deaths, said Partha Shankar Paul, resident surgeon of the hospital.

"The high inflow of patients is making it impossible for us to keep them isolated and they are at high risk of developing infections," Partha added. The maintenance of the Intensive Care Unit is falling apart because of the pressure.

Optimally there should be at least one nurse for each patient in the ICU, said Shah

Alam Bhuiyan, ICU in-charge, but in real it has only one nurse and one ward boy for all 10 patients undergoing treatment there.

Amid a shortage of nurses, the authorities are forced to allow family attendants in crowding the wards and raising the chances of infection, Shamanto said, adding steps should be taken to prevent intrusion into the ICU and the High Dependency Unit.

The hospital yet operates as a project as, he explained, it has no class four employees responsible for keeping the place sterile.

Arson victim Geeta Sen, who suffered burns when a bus was set ablaze in the capital's Shahbagh on November 28, also said the hospital needed more nurses.

"Nevertheless the hospital has helped me get my life back."

A lack of doctors and surgeons also compromised the quality of service, speakers said at the press conference organised at the hospital.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 3



Abu Miah, who was injured in a petrol bomb explosion in Chittagong on November 24, and Geeta Sen, a victim of the November 28 Shahbagh bus arson, describe their ordeal at a press conference at DMCH burn unit's conference hall yesterday. Both of them underwent treatment at the unit.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

No opposition!

FROM PAGE 1
ministers on Sunday afternoon.

The AL has won a three-fourths majority (230 seats so far) in the House.

Hasina, also the incumbent PM, is likely to induct some senior leaders of the JP, JSD and Workers Party into her cabinet to make it a government of "national consensus", said sources in the AL.

Of the six other parties in the new parliament, the JP's position is most peculiar. Some of its leaders said they would play a double role.

"We will be the opposition party in parliament, but we will also join the cabinet. The new government will be formed on the basis of a national consensus," JP Presidium Member Kazi Firoz Rashid told reporters after taking the oath of office.

Party leader Mujiburul Haque Chunnur, who was in Hasina's polls-time administration, echoed his view while talking to this newspaper.

The JP bagged 33 seats in the election.

Raushan Ershad, who was elected the

leader of the JP Parliamentary Party, said her party would play its due role as the opposition.

On the JP's position in the new government, prime minister's ex-adviser HT Imam told BBC Bangla that the party must clarify what it wanted. "Whether the Jatiya Party would be in the opposition, it is a matter of discussion."

Meanwhile, Anwar Hossain Manju, the lone MP of his party, looks all set to be included in the cabinet, sources in the AL said.

But when asked, Manju said: "It depends on the prime minister whether she will induct me into her cabinet."

Abul Kalam Azad, the lone MP of Bangladesh Nationalist Front (BNF), said, "I wanted to become the opposition leader. But it is not possible, as my party has only one MP."

He said he was not interested in sitting on the opposition benches under the leadership of Rawshan Ershad.

He added some JP MPs would join the

cabinet while some others would be in the opposition. "This is a peculiar situation.... If the prime minister asks me to join her cabinet, I will consider it."

JSD chief Hasanul Haque Inu spoke in favour of a national government: "If we want to overcome the present situation, parties that are not in the 14-party alliance should also be in the cabinet."

His party, an ally of the AL-led alliance, won five seats.

Nazibul Bashar Maizbhandari of Tarikat Federation won by using the AL's symbol, boat. "If the prime minister wants to form a government of national consensus, it is probable that I will be inducted into the cabinet."

Workers Party chief Rashed Khan Menon, also post and telecommunications minister, also wants to be in the government. His party has six seats.

Replying to a query about a parliament without an opposition, he said: "The opposition party didn't join parliament; didn't the House run?"

The party's politburo, the highest policymaking body, however, is divided. In a meeting on Wednesday, while most leaders spoke in favour of joining the cabinet, several others opposed it.

In December, two central leaders -- Mozammel Haque Tara and Ragib Ahsan Munna -- resigned from their posts in protest at the party's participation in the polls-time cabinet and also in the one-sided election.

In the same month, two politburo members -- Nurul Hasan and Iqbal Kabir Zahid -- filed objections to the party general secretary over the party's joining the polls race, sources said.

Meanwhile, the BNP, which boycotted the polls along with its 17 allies, yesterday said the Speaker had violated the constitution by administering oath to the newly elected MPs.

"If President Abdul Hamid invites the parliament leader to form the government, he, too, will violate the constitution," party acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam said in a statement.

Enact law

FROM PAGE 20
succumbed to his wounds at Dhaka Medical College Hospital two days later.

Houses of judges and prosecutors also came under attack in last two months.

Following the incidents, the government provided police security to all the witnesses.

Since the beginning of the long-awaited trial of war criminals over three years ago, different quarters have been demanding the government enact a law to protect the witnesses and other people involved in the trial, but to no avail.

Witnesses yesterday also urged the authorities concerned to take special care of the family members of Mostafa Hawlader and arrange for them an interview with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

On February 28 last year, the International Crimes Tribunal-1 found Jamaat Naye-e-Ameer Sayeeda guilty of committing crimes against humanity during the Liberation War in 1971 and sentenced him to death.

Following the verdict, the Jamaat-Shibir men unleashed terror across the country which claimed dozens of lives.

The case is now pending with the Supreme Court as both prosecution and defence lodged

Violence revisits

FROM PAGE 1
Jessore, Satkhira, Dinaipur, Thakurgaon, Bogra, Chittagong and Rangpur which dislodged hundreds of Hindu people.

Since the submission of the commission's report on April 24, 2011, the only step the government had taken so far was lodging 140 cases against some top BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami leaders, including Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Salauddin Quader Chowdhury, Joyal Abedin also known as VP Joyal, Nadim Mostafa and Matir Rahman Nizami, said a top official of the home ministry.

However, the perpetrators of 2001 post-polls violence in remote areas remained at large, said several home ministry officials.

A top official of the ministry, wishing anonymity, said if the government had brought to book all the culprits of the 2001 post-polls violence, such brutality would not have happened.

According to the judicial commission's report submitted to then home minister Shahara Khatun in the presence of her deputy Shamsul Haque Tuku, the district investigation committees should be composed of additional district magistrate, additional superintendent of police and an executive magistrate.

These committees should be tasked with reviving the cases dropped by the BNP-led

four-party alliance government that came to power through the 2001 polls and carrying out thorough investigation to identify the culprits.

As per the commission's report, during the tenure of the four-party alliance, 409 cases had been filed in connection with the post-polls violence, out of which police submitted final reports in 145 cases.

Mohammad Shahabuddin told The Daily Star that his commission had identified around 22,000 persons involved in the violence. He, however, said the findings had not been incorporated in the report.

Several home officials said though the commission had identified almost all the criminals, the government mysteriously did not proceed with the findings.

Asked why, Senior Home Secretary CQK Mustaq Ahmed told The Daily Star that the report had been submitted long before his joining the office; so he did not know the situation in this connection.

State Minister for Home Shamsul Haque Tuku declined to make any comment when asked about this matter.

After a 16-month investigation that began in December 2009, the Shahabuddin commission revealed that more than 3,625 offences, including killing, rape, arson and looting had been committed by the then ruling BNP-Jamaat alliance.

The historic homecoming

FROM PAGE 1
Tejgaon, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman seemed tired after all those months in solitary confinement in Pakistan. More than that, he was clearly overwhelmed by the ecstatic manner in which his people, the newly freed Bangladeshis of his Bangladesh, were welcoming him home.

It could have been a scene out of an epic tale. It could have been an image shaped by the imagination. It was neither of those. It was truly happening before us. We had watched history being made in Bangladesh in the nine agonising months of Pakistani repression. And here, right before us, stood the man whose inspirational leadership had finally thrown open the doors of freedom for us.

It was a million-strong crowd that welcomed the Father of the Nation back home that winter afternoon. He spoke of the millions who had been murdered by Pakistan, of the homes and villages and towns ravaged during the war. He bade farewell to Pakistan and wished Zulfikar Ali Bhutto well. He quoted Tagore. And he wept.

For the first time in his public career,

before the world, Bangabandhu shed tears in remembrance of the terrible ravages Bangladesh had gone through in the preceding nine months. And we in the crowd and across the country remembered, at that instant, how seventy five million Bangladeshis had worried about his safety, how they had prayed for his life and for him to return home. For nine months, we had no way of knowing where he was or whether he was alive or dead.

It was only Pakistan's defeat in Bangladesh and the surrender of its 93,000 soldiers in December 1971 that perhaps saved him. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, having played a diabolical role throughout the war, nevertheless recognised the folly of keeping the leader of a now free nation imprisoned in alien land.

In the early hours of January 8, 1972, Bhutto bade goodbye to Bangabandhu at Rawalpindi's Chaklala airport. As the aircraft took to the skies, Pakistan's new leader told no one in particular, "The nightingale has flown." Hours later, on a cold dawn in London, Bangladesh's president, for that was what Bangabandhu had been since April 1971, descended at Heathrow. For the first time since

the beginning of the war for Bangladesh's liberation, the world knew that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was alive. The Bangalee leader cheerfully told a crowded news conference at Claridge's later in the day, "As you can see, gentlemen, I am alive and well." And then he went on to offer a near lyrical account of his sentiments on being a free soul once more:

"Gentlemen of the world press, I am happy to share in the unbounded joy of freedom brought about by an epic liberation struggle waged by the people of Bangladesh. No people have had to shed so much blood for freedom as my people have..."

Here at home, in the coldness of a January evening, we laughed and then we wept. Bangabandhu was coming back home. As we leapt and skipped and ran, in that order, all the way home in the twilight glow of January 10, 1972, we knew we now inhabited a land "where the mind is without fear and the head is held high, where knowledge is free... where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection..."

It felt good to belong, with Bangabandhu, in the sovereign republic of Bangladesh.

No tolerance

FROM PAGE 1
Parliamentary Party (ALPP) of the 10th Parliament at the Sangsad Bhavan yesterday.

The AL chief asked her party lawmakers to visit their own constituencies and work with people to help maintain law and order.

The party would form the government on Sunday by taking oath at Bangabhaban.

"Tough action will be taken against the opposition if they go for further violence..." a party lawmaker who attended the meeting quoted Hasina as saying.

BNP leaders Selima Rahman, Khandaker Mahabub and Hafiz Uddin Ahmed were arrested immediately after they announced agitation programmes of the BNP-led 18-party alliance.

Sheikh Hasina said BNP had made a mistake by not contesting the national polls, according to the meeting sources. "We had showed our patience. But we will spare no one for taking an anti-people stand," she said.

The AL president asked the party lawmakers to maintain strong ties with their own constituencies and make the party grassroots strong. "MPs are accountable to their constituencies, and so they all have to maintain good relationships with their own constituencies and evaluate party activists."

Hasina asked the MPs of the areas where minorities are being attacked to reach out and provide shelter to the victims.

The meeting sources said Hasina was unanimously elected leader of the ALPP. AL General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam proposed her name as the leader, which was seconded by Chief Whip Abdus Shahid. All the other lawmakers then clapped and supported Shahid.

"I have been in charge of this several times," Hasina cheerfully said. "Please choose a new face. Why should I be chosen repeatedly?"

She urged all her party lawmakers to take up full responsibility since the country is going through a critical moment, and the party is going to run the state under these circumstances.

Before the meeting, members of the AL advisory council and two former advisors to the prime minister HT Imam and Mashiur Rahman had entered the room where the AL lawmakers were taking oath, the sources said. The AL president said those who were not elected should leave. Chief Whip

Dubious distinction

FROM PAGE 1
parliamentary democracy, New Zealand, Australia and Canada go to general elections through dissolving their parliaments. So, the question of constituting one parliament keeping the existing one in existence does not arise in those countries.

India is only exceptional. Over the past 60 years, it has held 15 general elections. Of them, parliament, popularly known as Lok Sabha, existed during the general election on eight occasions. Sometimes parliament was dissolved after the election process had begun.

But none of the previous parliaments was constituted keeping the existing one in force. The rest of the time parliament was dissolved much earlier than its tenure ended due to political instability within the House and general elections were held after their dissolution.

India's first parliament was constituted on April 17, 1952 following a general election held in the same year. That parliament existed when the general election to the second parliament was held in 1957. But the first parliament was dissolved on April 4, 1957, paving the way for new MPs to take the oath to constitute the second parliament next day.

India never deviated from this as the 14th Lok Sabha was dissolved by the president on the recommendation of the union cabinet on May 18, 2009, paving the way for the constitution of the newly elected 15th Lok Sabha which still exists. And election to the 16th Lok Sabha is set to begin in mid April this year.

Many policymakers of the ruling Awami League and the government had earlier cited the Indian instances in defence of holding the general election without dissolution of the current parliament. But the abnormal record they created yesterday by having the new MPs-elect take the oath of office does not conform to the tradition set through the Indian practice.

In making the record of constituting the 10th parliament and yet keeping the ninth in force, the government has clearly ignored the constitution which in Article 123 emphatically prevents MPs elected in the just concluded election from taking the oath of office.

In the opinion of some ruling AL leaders, the constitution does not impose any restriction on them regarding the swearing in of new lawmakers, but they will not assume office until the tenure of the current ninth parliament expires on January 25. But this explanation falls flat as Article 148 clearly says a person required to take the oath of office before he enters upon office shall be deemed to have entered upon the office immediately after he takes the oath. So, the MPs who took the oath yesterday have assumed office.

The formation of the 10th parliament has been mired in legal controversy. As such, the legality of the new cabinet to be formed on Sunday will also invite constitutional controversy since the government will be a product of the new parliament.

And no action of the government and the new parliament will be free from scrutiny on legal grounds.

Shun violence

FROM PAGE 1
elections and particularly attacks against the most vulnerable populations, including women and children as well as religious and ethnic minorities.

She regrets the loss of life and extends her condolences to the families of the victims.

"As part of our bilateral relations, the EU has consistently engaged with Bangladesh to support the consolidation of democracy. In this context, the EU has repeatedly called on all parties to create favourable conditions for transparent, inclusive and credible elections," she said.

She, therefore, regrets the fact that such conditions did not materialise and that "the people of Bangladesh were not given an opportunity to express fully their democratic choice".

The EU also urges the political parties to engage in a genuine dialogue to agree on a mutually acceptable way forward to hold transparent, inclusive and credible elections, putting the interests of the people of Bangladesh first, Catherine Ashton said in her statement.

CHINA, KOREA DEPLORE VIOLENCE

China and Korea have expressed deep concern over the widespread violence centring on the January 5 parliamentary polls, and called for an inclusive political process, and the restoration of peace and stability.

According to a report of Beijing-based news agency Xinhua: "China said yesterday (Thursday) it hopes that parties in Bangladesh can realise political stability

through talks and negotiation after its parliamentary election."

Voting took place on Sunday but was plagued by widespread violence and an opposition boycott over Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's refusal to listen to demands to step down and appoint a neutral caretaker government to oversee the election, the report said.

The report quoted a Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying, who yesterday told a press briefing: "We noted that Bangladesh's parliamentary election had been completed on Jan 5. As a friendly neighbour of Bangladesh, China is concerned about the country's national situation."

China hopes political forces in Bangladesh can give priority to national long-term and fundamental interests, and hold talks and consultation in efforts to realise political and social stability, as well as economic development, the report adds.

Meanwhile, South Korean Ambassador in Dhaka Lee Yun-young yesterday in a statement on the 10th parliamentary election of Bangladesh said: "We are deeply concerned over the violence which has happened surrounding the election held on January 5."

"As a long-standing friend of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, we hope that through an inclusive political process where the will and aspirations of the Bangladeshi people can be duly reflected, Bangladesh will overcome the current situation and restore the peace and stability as early as