

All-party polls must be held

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He said the Election Commission should have postponed the elections respecting the people's right to vote for parliament members, which is stipulated in the constitution, rather than holding an uncontested farcical election to demonstrate compliance with legal compulsion.

This parliament, which has 153 members who won uncontested, does not reflect the will of the people, democracy and the country's constitution, he said.

Such an election was also a deviation from the spirit of the country's Liberation War, he said.

Serajul said the BNP seemed to be amenable to a political dialogue but it was the government's duty to resolve the legitimacy question.

Mainul Hossain, a former adviser to caretaker government, said the government was a product of an election devoid of voters and therefore it was not accountable to the people. "When people lose, we all lose," he said.

The way the Awami League distributed parliamentary seats among its allies in the election was tantamount to destroying democracy, he claimed.

The 15th amendment to the constitution remains the major roadblock to holding a free and multiparty election under a non-

partisan government.

"The Supreme Court judgment on the kind of election-time government created the present crisis and as a lawyer I am ashamed of such a judgment." The crisis that brewed over holding a free and participatory election under a non-partisan government could have been avoided, he said.

Mainul said holding all-inclusive multiparty general elections, political reforms to ensure a functional democracy, constitutional amendment to bar anyone from holding the office of the prime minister more than twice, and ending politicisation of the judiciary and other democratic institutions were imperative to prevent such crises.

He said indifference of the civil society and the political division have paved the way for corruption to intrude into politics and the heyday for incompetent politicians.

Hossain Zillur Rahman, another former adviser to a caretaker government, said holding an election without the participation of major political parties on the plea of constitutional compulsion and then hanging on to power have aggravated the crisis.

A participatory election must be held within the shortest possible time, he said, adding that political and constitutional reforms should then follow to help economic growth.

Former cabinet secretary Ali Imam Majumder echoed the same.

Former ambassador Muhammad Zamir said the government did not prevent people from voting but it was the then opposition men who assaulted voters who went to exercise their franchise.

Political scientist Dilara Choudhury said a government without public mandate has to depend on foreign powers that may not be able to represent the public interest and in such a case people become subjects.

Mizanur Rahman Shelly, a noted social scientist, said the present political situation was a blend of craft, cunningness and coercion.

Brig Gen (ret'd) Shahedul Anam Khan, editor of the Strategic Affairs page of The Daily Star, said everything legal was not necessarily moral.

Mahbub Jamil, another former adviser to a caretaker government, said the political parties were not practicing democracy within the parties and undemocratic political parties could not provide people with democratic governance.

"There is no difference between what the then Rakkhi Bahini had done and what Rab is doing today," he said.

Mahfuz Ullah, a senior journalist and columnist, said it was a clash between democracy and autocracy, not a political clash between the Awami League and BNP.

Salehuddin Ahmed moderated the discussion.

Child killed

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the flames.

Shathi, seven-year-old sister of Sabuj, was with her brother when the disaster struck.

"Seeing the fire, Shathi went out of his room and cried for saving her brother, but nobody dared to rescue the infant," said the victim's aunt Moina, a next door resident of the siblings.

Sabuj's father Hasmat went to his village home in Haluaghat of Mymensingh two days ago, while his mother Modina, a domestic help, was at her workplace when the fire broke out.

Fire fighters recovered the charred body of Sabuj from the wreckage of the shanties, said Ramna police.

The casualty was not big as most of the tenants of the shanties, mostly

garment workers, rickshaw pullers, domestic helps and CNG-run auto-rickshaw drivers, were away from home.

Sabina Yasmin, a first-aid service provider, said they provided treatment to at least 25 people, but none of them were burnt. Later the injured were sent to a local community clinic in Moghbazar.

CNG-run auto rickshaw driver Ziaur Rahman said he was sleeping in his room when the fire broke out in the area. Hearing screams from people, he woke in bed and rushed outside of the room. He could not return there until 12:00 noon as fire fighters and volunteers restricted people from entering their houses.

"When I returned to my room, I only found the cooking pots. All the other belongings were burnt to ashes,"

he mentioned.

Built with corrugated tin sheets, the shanties were two-storied. Each family lived there in a single room not bigger than 96 square feet.

The shanties were build on several plots of land owned by several people, said local residents.

Local authorities have made a nearby school into a temporary shelter for the victims.

Disaster Management and Relief Minister Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya and Dhaka Deputy Commissioner Shaikh Yusuf Harun visited the area around 1:00pm and announced primary help for the victims.

The family of the deceased child will receive Tk20,000, while other families Tk3,000, 20-kilogram rice and a blanket each.



A view of fire-ravaged slum area at Jhilpar in the capital's Madhubagh yesterday. Inset, a garment worker weeps as the blaze destroyed her house.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Wounded tigress

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half feet wide.

Using a goat as bait, the officials managed to cage her on Friday afternoon. She was brought to the park on a truck and kept in an iron cage.

Pashuri is now extremely weak and underweight, only 70kg, as the wounded leg had prevented her from hunting for days.

The strenuous journey from Khulna and the changes in her surroundings only served to worsen her mood.

Yesterday, she tried to attack anyone attempting to come close to her, especially those wearing colourful clothes.

Before Poshuri, another Bengal tigress, called Sundori, was captured from the Sundarbans and brought to the safari park.

Sundori has been residing in an enclosure of her own as other ten tigers at the safari park refused to accept her. She spends her days lurking out of sight, only coming out for a stroll before daybreak and after sundown.

Tapan Kumar Dey, forest conservator at wildlife and nature conservation circle under Bangladesh Forest Department, said the ten others were born and bred in captivity.

Since Pashuri was born in the wild, it is likely that she will need her own private space like Sundori. Both are females and they will possibly not fight over territory.

"We will try to breed from them in the future if it is possible," said Tapan.

'3 musketeers'

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proposal fashioned by the Big Three in the ICC meeting in Dubai on January 28. The original draft proposal advocated a two-tier system for Test cricket that would see Bangladesh and Zimbabwe playing only each other and Associate Members in the Intercontinental Cup, with an outside chance at promotion after eight years.

According to an ICC press release the tweaked proposal, now approved, will have the winner of the Intercontinental Cup take on the 10th-ranked Full Member team (currently Bangladesh) in a playoff, winning which the Associate Member will be granted Test status. An inside source confirmed that this playoff will be played on a home and away basis.

BCB media committee chairman Jalal Yunus yesterday did his part to calm fears. "I can confirm that Bangladesh will not play in the Intercontinental Cup."

The pertinent aspects of this shake-up of the governing body mostly concern the concentration of power in the three richest boards of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) and Cricket Australia. With the proposal being approved, BCCI president N Srinivasan will become chairman of the ICC board from July this year, while CA chairman Wally Edwards would head a newly-formed

Executive Committee, which will report to the ICC Board. The ECB chairman Giles Clarke will continue to be the head of the Finance and Commercial Affairs (F&CA) Committee. These have become the three most important positions in the ICC and the ICC release stated that "These roles will be for an initial two-year transitional period to 2016 only."

The report further stated that at the end of this "transitional period... the Chair of the ICC Board will be elected from within the ICC Board with all Full Member Directors entitled to stand for election. BCCI, CA and ECB will be represented on both sub-committees, along with two representatives of the other Full Members (who will be elected by the Board)."

While these do not immediately concern Bangladesh, there is still work to do for Papon as the current Future Tours Programme, under which Bangladesh had gotten much of its bilateral engagements, will be scrapped and replaced with future schedules being dependent on "contractually binding" negotiations between boards.

"There was also confirmation that all Full Members will enter into a series of contractually binding bilateral agreements as a matter of urgency so that they can confirm a comprehensive schedule of matches in a Future Tours Programme that will now be extended

to 2023," read the press release. This means that the BCB will have to renegotiate whatever tours that were on the docket prior to yesterday's meeting in order to ensure consistent participation in the Test arena.

Other consequences of the shake-up include a revamped revenue distribution structure. "Full Members will gain greater financial recognition based on the contribution they have made to the game, particularly in terms of finance, their ICC history and their on-field performances in the three formats," the release stated, and adding that "none of the Full Members will be worse off than they are at present and - if forecasts of revenue generation prove to be correct - all will be significantly better off."

There will also be a Test cricket fund which will benefit all the Full Members outside the Big Three, and the proposed Test Championship will be scrapped.

Govt illegal

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government would be ousted very soon as well, Fakhru added.

The government would be "forced to hold an election under a non-party caretaker government," added the BNP leader, whose party boycotted the 10th parliamentary polls and ended up having no representation in parliament for the first time since 1991.

Doors still shut for local touts

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The minister hoped that the three ME countries would soon lift the restrictions on recruitment of workers from Bangladesh.

Ali Haider Chowdhury, general secretary of the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies Association, admitted that a few recruiting agencies were involved in irregularities.

The government should not have blamed all the agencies for those few, he added.

"We always urge the ministry to cancel licence of those agencies and take punitive action against them," he said, adding that some government officials might have been involved in the anomalies as well.

The three ME countries are the largest destination of Bangladeshi workers. But manpower export to the countries has seen a significant fall due to the existing restrictions.

A total of 14,241 Bangladeshi workers migrated to the UAE last year, while Saudi Arabia recruited 12,654 and Kuwait only 60 workers, according to statistics of the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and

Training.

In 2012, the UAE hired more than 2.21 lakh Bangladeshis, Saudi Arabia over 25,000 and Kuwait around 300, the BMET said.

Muhammad Imran, Bangladesh ambassador to the UAE, said they believed the UAE government would lift the restriction.

"I am positive about the progress of our bilateral talks to remove the existing restrictions on hiring our people. But there is no specific information," he told The Daily Star.

At the beginning of last year, Bangladesh's expatriates' welfare ministry ran good publicity that it would be able to send workers to Saudi Arabia at the end of the year. And a Saudi team visited Dhaka in April that year.

But that possibility has shrunk as the Saudi authorities have apparently started showing apathy to hire workers from Bangladesh by signing two agreements with India and Sri Lanka.

The Kingdom signed the agreements in January to hire domestic workers. It also plans to sign similar agreements with several other coun-

tries like Indonesia, Nepal, Vietnam and Cambodia in the near future.

"We are discussing with the Saudi government the challenges and possibilities of the sector," said Bangladesh Ambassador in Riyadh Shahidul Islam over the phone.

Maj Gen Mohammad Ashab Uddin, Bangladesh ambassador to Kuwait, said it was difficult to say when the authorities would open its market for Bangladeshis.

"There is very limited employment opportunity for foreigners here as the total number of expatriates has already crossed that of the Kuwaitis," he added.

These three countries, however, have continued to recruit manpower from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

According to the RMMRU, a research organisation on manpower export, these ME countries didn't impose any restriction on the other three South Asian nations as they strictly regulate the recruitment process.

Besides, the migration costs in these countries are almost half that in Bangladesh, it said.

Khaleda queen of destruction

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BNP's coming to power means "return of terrorism and militancy" in the country. The party had caused a reign of terror when it was in power from 2001 to 2006, complained Hasina.

"They had created dreadful Bangla Bhai and fomented widespread militancy during that period," she added.

Before the January 5 parliamentary polls, said the PM, the BNP had announced that it would not allow holding the elections, knowing well that people are the owners of their rights of franchise. "The party was out to resist the polls through enforcing hartals and blockades. But the people didn't respond to their movement," she noted.

She accused the BNP of taking a "bestial revenge" on people by burning them to death as they did not respond to its movement. The party killed 135 people by enforcing blockades for 34 days, mentioned the PM.

Also the president of Awami League, Hasina referred to a recent survey by the US-based Democracy International. It showed that the AL would have won the January 5 polls by at least a 5.8 percent margin even if the BNP-Jamaat had contested the elections.

"This proves that the BNP would have suffered a sure defeat. Knowing well about its bad luck, this party didn't join the polls race," she said.

Instead, Khaleda Zia opted for hartal,

blockade and terrorist acts including burning people to death, removing railway fishplates and felling trees on roads, noted the AL chief.

Pointing at the attacks on people of all faiths by the BNP-Jamaat-Shibir terrorists before and after the parliamentary polls, she said neither the Muslims nor the Hindus could escape from the wrath of the BNP-Jamaat.

The PM said she had extended her hands of cooperation to Khaleda Zia by offering her (BNP chief) to sit for a dialogue to solve the problems. "Instead of coming up with a rational response, Begum Zia turned down my offer and chose the path of violence and anarchy."

People have given a befitting reply to Khaleda Zia through the January 5 polls, said the PM, adding that more than 40 percent people have cast their votes in the polls braving hartal and blockade.

Calling upon the BNP chief to refrain from foul talks and falsehood, Hasina said the Election Commission and international reports have mentioned that 40 percent people have cast their votes.

On contesting the upcoming upazila parishad polls by the BNP and Jamaat, the PM said they have boarded a train after missing the January 5 polls train.

She highlighted successes of her government in the key sectors, including power, education, agriculture and

health, and providing government jobs to about one crore youths, expanding social safety net, and spreading ICT facilities across the country.

"Our aim is to serve the people and bring smile on their faces. We always work for the socio-economic development of the people," she said.

The PM mentioned that her government has taken initiatives to set up a fire station and a modern mosque in each upazila.

On various demands of local people, she said massive development activities were carried out in the district during the last five years of her immediate past government.

Capital dredging has already been launched in the Padma to save local people from erosion, she added.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam, former food minister Abdur Razaque, former state minister and AL Joint General Secretary Jahangir Kabir Nanak, former state minister Omar Faruq Chowdhury and former Rajshahi city mayor Kahiruzzaman Liton, among others, addressed the rally, organised by the local AL unit.

Earlier, the PM arrived here in the morning to attend the passing-out parade of the BCS 31st batch of probationary assistant superintendent of police (ASPs). She also laid the foundation stones of 11 development projects.

Cash, not crest!

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bouquets to his political office in Bauphal during his stay. Nobody reportedly gave him cash.

Contacted, the chief whip said, "I actually sought the cash for my party, not for myself."

"In the programme, there were hundreds of people who had brought bouquets and crests for me. But I had no time to receive all of these. That is why I urged them to give me money instead of crests. I did this to discour-

age them from giving me crests," he told The Daily Star over the phone last night.

Feroz also claimed his remark was "a joke, nothing serious".

"Do you think I am such a foolish politician that I will seek money in public?" he said. "You, the journalists, should cooperate with good politicians like me. You should show mercy to me. Otherwise, politics will fall into the wrong hands."

People, however, could not take it as

a joke.

"Everybody has been shocked at his remarks," Ahmed Mia, convener of Bauphal Municipality Citizens' Committee, told The Daily Star last night.

To welcome Feroz, hundreds of arches were set up on about 15km road from Boga to Bauphal upazila town. This was his first visit to his constituency after being appointed the chief whip.

Local cable operators telecast the reception.

American moved from N Korea hospital to labor camp: US

AFP, Washington

North Korea has moved imprisoned US citizen Kenneth Bae from hospital and back to a labor camp, a US official said Friday, which could further complicate efforts to win his release.

Bae, a tour operator described by a North Korean court as a militant Christian evangelist, was arrested in November 2012 and later sentenced to 15 years' hard labor on charges of seeking to topple the government.

His family say that the 45-year-old is seriously ill.

"The Department of State has learned that the DPRK (North Korea) transferred Mr. Bae from a hospital to a

labor camp, a development with which we are deeply concerned," said spokeswoman Jen Psaki.

She said Washington was "gravely concerned" about the health of the Korean American, who has been in detention for more than 15 months.

It was not immediately clear when Bae was moved to the labor camp, but Psaki said Swedish embassy officials visited him there on Friday.

"We continue to urge DPRK authorities to grant Mr. Bae special amnesty and immediate release on humanitarian grounds," she added.

Bae, who is also known as Pae Jun-Ho, was detained as he entered North Korea's northeastern port city of Rason.

He began serving his jail sentence in a prison camp in May 2013. But in August he was admitted to hospital after he lost more than 50 pounds (23 kilos) and began having kidney and liver problems.

3 injured

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Police Station.

On information, police went to the spot and brought the situation under control around 9:30 pm.

Arif Ahmed Khan, upazila nirbahi officer of Banshkali, confirmed the incident.

No case was filed in this connection until last night.