

Jamaat files petition with SC to reinstate caretaker govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday filed a review petition with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, seeking to overturn its 2011 verdict that scrapped the non-party caretaker government system.

The party's Secretary General Miah Golam Parwar submitted the petition through its lawyer Mohammad Shishir Manir for necessary directives to reinstate the system.

The Appellate Division is scheduled to hold the hearings today on two other similar review petitions challenging the verdict that scrapped the election-time caretaker system.

On October 20, Chamber Judge Justice Md Rezaul Haque of the Appellate Division sent the previous two petitions to the full bench for their hearings.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir filed one of the first two review petitions on October 16, seeking restoration of the 13th constitutional amendment
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Students and Anti-Discrimination Student Movement coordinators celebrate the ban on Chhatra League at Raju Bhaskarja of Dhaka University last night.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

CLASH IN ASHULIA 3 workers shot, one assaulted Police deny using firearms

OUR CORRESPONDENT, SAVAR

Three women garment workers got shot and another was assaulted in a clash between police and workers in Dhaka's Ashulia yesterday morning.

Halima Khatun, Babita Akhtar, and Morsheda Khatun were shot and Champa Khatun was assaulted, said HM Asaf Uddaula Rizvi, assistant manager of Ashulia Women and Children Hospital where they were admitted.

However, Sarwar Alam, superintendent of Ashulia Industrial Police-1, told The Daily Star that law enforcers had only used stun grenades and teargas when the demonstrating workers of some factories threw chunks of bricks at them.

No firearm was used during the clash at Narsinghpur, he added.

Police said the workers have been demonstrating for the past few days demanding three-month arrears and allowances. They gathered at Sinsin Mor and started throwing brick chips at nearby factories.

Police tried to stop them, but the workers hurled brickbats at them, the officer said.

Delhi seeks stable ties with Dhaka

Says Pranay Verma

UNB, Dhaka

Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma has said his country will continue to seek a "stable, positive and constructive" relationship with Bangladesh.

Verma said India also wanted this relationship built upon the two countries' interdependencies, in which people of both nations remain the main stakeholders.

The Indian envoy made the remarks while addressing the 2024 NDC course participants at National Defence College, Bangladesh in the capital's Mirpur on Tuesday.

He spoke about India's foreign policy and development strategy, highlighting the country's growing engagement with the world to promote rules-based international order.

Verma also discussed reforms of global governance and interests of the Global South, as well as India's quest for inclusive, sustainable, and rapid national development.

The envoy elucidated the long-term vision of Bangladesh-India relations under India's "Neighbourhood First" foreign policy, "Act East Policy", the SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) doctrine, and India's Indo-Pacific Vision.

US ready

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pitched a very different message.

"This election is a choice between whether we will have four more years of incompetence, failure and disaster, or whether we'll begin the four greatest years in the history of our country," he said to cheers.

He repeatedly called Harris and her running mate Tim Walz stupid during the rally.

'LOCK HIM UP'

The race is overshadowed by extraordinary tensions and fears of violence or a refusal by Trump to recognize the results if he loses, as he continues to do over his 2020 loss to Joe Biden.

Harris told NBC that her campaign was "of course" ready for a scenario where Trump prematurely claims victory during a vote-counting process that could take days to complete.

Biden, who has been an infrequent presence in Harris's campaign, took a shot at Trump Tuesday by re-wording the ex-president's notorious anti-Hillary Clinton chant of "Lock her up".

On a visit to New Hampshire, Biden told a small crowd that "we got to lock" Trump up — adding quickly, "politically lock him up."

With Trump facing multiple pending criminal charges as he competes against Harris to succeed Biden, the White House has been very careful not to weigh in on the Republican's legal problems.

The Trump campaign responded that Biden and Harris had a "plan all along... to politically persecute their opponent."

About 18 million Americans have already voted by mail or in person — representing more than 10 percent of the total in 2020.

Some polls appear to be giving the Republican, who at 78 is the oldest nominee from a major party in US history, a slight edge recently — but all within the margin of error.

Whatever the result, US voters will make history on November 5: they will either elect the country's first woman president, or they will put the first convicted felon into the White House.

Chhatra League

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"Bangladesh and Dhaka University are now free from stigma. We would like to thank the interim government," said Nusrat Tabassum, a coordinator of the student movement, at Raju Sculpture of the university.

Last night, Mujahidul Islam Selim, former president of Communist Party of Bangladesh, said the BCL men who committed crimes should have been identified and brought to justice instead of the ban on the organisation.

"Will banning Chhatra League bring any good? No. These people will start getting public sympathy even though they were hated by people for their terrorist activities," he told The Daily Star.

Ensuring the rights of all the students would have been more effective, he said.

History says an organisation cannot be abolished in this way because a legal ban is an expression of weakness, he said.

Founded in January 1948, Chhatra League played significant roles in the country's Liberation War, the Language Movement in 1952, Six-Point

Movement in 1966, mass uprising in 1969, the AL's election victory in 1970, and the ouster of HM Ershad in 1990.

Bahauddin Nasim, joint general secretary of the AL, condemned the interim government, saying that the ban on BCL is an attack on the spirit of Liberation war and the constitution.

"This government is illegal. It has no constitutional foundation. How can it ban an organisation like Chhatra League that played a vital role in the Liberation War and all other democratic movements before and after the country's independence? Chhatra League is an organisation of this land and will continue to be so in the days to come," he said.

Notwithstanding its glorious past, the BCL started to draw widespread condemnation for its activists and leaders' activities after the AL came to power in January 2009.

In April that year, Sheikh Hasina, who was the organisational leader of the BCL, resigned from the post, expressing disappointment about BCL's unruly activities.

BCL leaders engaged in violence, mostly to make money through

tender manipulation, extortion, and dominance over university campuses.

In 2012, BCL activists hacked a 24-year-old tailor named Biswajit Das to death. Other chilling crimes include the murders of Buet student Abrar Fahad in 2019, Jahangirnagar University student Zubair Ahmed in 2012, and Dhaka University student Abu Bakar Siddique in 2010.

BCL wrongdoings drew so much criticism that Sheikh Hasina removed its president and general secretary — Rezwanul Haque Chowdhury Shovon and Golam Rabbani — from their posts in 2019.

The organisation played repressive roles during the widespread protests for safer roads and reforms to quotas in government jobs in 2018.

Late last night, BCL President Saddam Hussain, and General Secretary Sheikh Wali Asif Enan issued a statement via WhatsApp, rejecting the ban and terming it illegal and unconstitutional.

The blood of BCL leaders and activists is in every inch of this country, it said, adding that the government should immediately step down.

4 dead, 14 hurt in attack at Turkey defence firm

AFP, Ankara

Four people were killed and 14 others wounded in an attack on the headquarters of a top Turkish defence firm near Ankara, Turkish officials said yesterday.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was holding talks in Russia with Vladimir Putin at the time, confirmed the toll, and condemned what he said was a "heinous terrorist attack" at state-run Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI).

Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said three of the injured were in critical condition and that two attackers "a woman and a man, have been neutralised".

He said work was under way to determine their identities but did not say whether there were any other attackers still at large.

Local media broadcast footage showing clouds of smoke and a large fire raging at the site in

Kahramankazan, a small town some 40 kilometres (25 miles) north of Ankara.

The incident happened as Erdogan was meeting Vladimir Putin at a summit in Kazan, with the Russian leader expressing his condolences over the attack.

Media outlets which had been showing live footage from the scene were forced to halt their broadcasts after Turkey's media watchdog ordered a blackout of images from the site.

Haberturk TV said there was an ongoing "hostage situation" without giving further details, while the private NTV television spoke of gunshots after the blast, which took place around 4:00 pm (1300 GMT).

There was no immediate claim for the attack but the justice minister said an investigation had been opened.

NTV spoke of a suicide attack, saying "a group of terrorists" had burst into TAI's headquarters and one of them blew themselves up.

Who's calling the shots?

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What emerged as a probable reason was a Facebook post by Salauddin Ammar, a coordinator of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement's Rajshahi University (RU) unit. Also invited to the parade, Salauddin alleged in his post on October 19 that all 62 assistant police superiors had been recruited during the Awami League regime. Thus, he rejected the invitation.

Subsequently, Ammar welcomed the move to postpone the function and told this newspaper that deserving candidates should be appointed to these positions.

Sources in the police told this newspaper that a background check would be conducted on the 62 ASPs to determine their affiliations with the Awami League.

Although Sardah Principal Masudur Rahman insisted that the parade had

not been postponed for any "political" reasons but "at the direction of higher authorities", the sequence of events provides grounds for scepticism.

This batch of ASPs had been through an extensive screening process that included several rounds of competitive exams that began six years ago. This was followed by a year of intense training. Now, their fate hangs in the balance.

The sudden postponement, which must have surprised many, exposes a glaring lack of coordination within the home ministry and its agencies. It raises questions about who are making such decisions at the ministry, which is also responsible for the country's law and order. Are these decisions being made in isolation, without proper consultation? And if so, what are the underlying causes of this disconnect?

As the key official, the adviser's

lack of prior knowledge indicates a clear absence of communication between the home ministry and law enforcement agencies. It also suggests that crucial decisions may be made without adequate consultation. This not only undermines the adviser's authority but also points to larger issues.

People have high hopes about the police because of reformative measures being taken by the interim government after one and a half decades of the force's politicisation and use as a tool of suppression. Now, a lack of coordination between the authorities will frustrate the public and the police.

If capable officers feel their career prospects depend more on political patronage than their merit, the police risk losing some of their brightest minds.

Extradition only if death penalty abolished

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government issues a moratorium on the death penalty and makes amendments to ensure a fair trial, the foreign governments sheltering deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her senior cabinet members should not extradite them to face trial.

India and other relevant governments should support Bangladesh's justice process by adhering to extradition agreements once the government makes amendments to ensure that the accused will be safe and will face a fair trial by international standards, HRW said.

"Without clear commitments to international standards, the interim government risks undermining the justice process," said Julia Bleckner, senior Asia researcher at HRW.

The tribunal, which was established under Hasina's government in 2010 to address crimes against humanity committed during the 1971 Liberation War, has previously been fraught with violations of fair trial standards.

This included failure of evidence gathering, lack of independence of judges including collusion with prosecutors, witness tampering, denying proper rights to defence, forcibly disappearing relatives of the accused and the use of the death penalty, it said.

The interim government has issued important amendments to the ICT Act, the law establishing the tribunal, including provisions for transparency by allowing the presence of international observers and for broadcasting trial proceedings.

Amendments also included important requirements for victim and witness protection.

Nevertheless, additional amendments are necessary to ensure that trials are fair and carried out following international standards and the rights enshrined in the Bangladesh Constitution.

The government should repeal Article 47(A) of the constitution to allow the accused protection of their constitutional rights, including the right to enforce their fundamental rights under Article 44 of the constitution, it added.

Furthermore, the interim government should urgently create an adequately resourced witness and victim protection unit within the court administration.

At a minimum, such a unit should be able to protect witnesses, victims, and their family members before, during and after court appearances, particularly for individuals who testify against serving security forces personnel.

Such a unit should also have the expertise to determine when in-country or, in extreme cases, out-of-country relocation is appropriate and to make suitable arrangements.

Witnesses should know what rights they have and the protections that are available to them, both inside and outside the courtroom.

Any prosecution should be rooted in fair trial standards, the HRW said. These include the presumption of innocence, the right to equal access to justice and the right to trial before an independent, impartial and competent court.

The plot thickens

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members Amir Khasru Mahmud and Salahuddin Ahmed, represented the BNP at the meeting.

Later, at the BNP chairperson's office in Gulshan, Salahuddin told reporters, "The presidency is the highest constitutional position, and it is also an institution. If this position becomes vacant due to resignation or removal, it will create a constitutional and national crisis."

Meanwhile, the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement and the Jatiya Nagorik Committee at a press briefing yesterday evening called for national unity for scrapping of the 1972 constitution and removal of the president.

At the presser, Hasnat Abdullah, convener of the four-member committee of the movement, urged all parties, except the Awami League, pro-AL student body Chhatra League, and the Jatiya Party, to respond to the call for national unity.

He said, "If any party does not join us in the call for the repeal of the 1972 constitution and the president's resignation, we will boycott them. We will not accept the 1972 constitution, as its existence prolongs the political crisis."

"This constitution has always established and reinforced a fascist structure. Sheikh Hasina has always said that 'we must maintain constitutional continuity'. Whenever she was asked to resign or hold discussions about a caretaker or neutral government, she would readily refer to the need to uphold this constitution," he said.

"Our demand is for President Shahabuddin to resign. However, we do not want this type of movement to escalate. We have already communicated with the protesters near the Bangabhaban. I urge those involved to trust the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement. We will lead collectively and face all conspiracies through our activism."

Nasir Uddin Patwari, a member of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, said, "We are engaging with the political elite but do not seek roundtable discussions. We believe in addressing issues on the streets. Sheikh Hasina has evaded accountability on the streets, and it is there that decisions will be made."

Meanwhile, Information Adviser Nahid Islam stressed the need for

political consensus and national unity, rather than following legal or constitutional procedures for any decision regarding the president.

"The interim government is consulting with all stakeholders, and a decision may be forthcoming ...," he told reporters at the Secretariat.

"Whether the president will remain in office is currently not a legal or constitutional question. It is a political decision. To make the decision [on the president], we are prioritising stability, security, and discipline in the state," Nahid said.

The adviser called upon the protesters not to stage demonstrations as the government has received their message.

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said the government has not made any decision regarding the removal of the president from office.

"We will inform you of any development regarding the matter," he told reporters after the meeting with the BNP.

The debate regarding the removal of the president started after daily Manab Zamin's political magazine "Janatar Chokh" on Sunday published an article containing the president's remarks that he heard Sheikh Hasina had resigned as the prime minister, but he did not have any documentary evidence.

"I tried [to collect the resignation letter] many times but failed. Maybe she did not have the time," he was quoted as saying.

The next day, Law Adviser Asif Nazrul said the president lied, and it was akin to misconduct. He questioned the president's mental capacity to serve.

Later, student bodies, including the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, demanded the removal of the president.

On Tuesday, several hundred protesters under the banners Raktim July 2024 and Shadhinota-Sharbobhoumotto Rokkha Committee attempted to break through the security barriers in front of the Bangabhaban.

A robust four-layer security measure has been established at the Bangabhaban. But demonstrators have made sporadic attempts to gather near the president's official residence.