

Bangladesh caretaker regime undertakes second reshuffle

Dhaka, July 29

BANGLADESH'S CARETAKER Government, tasked with organising the general elections by October, has carried out a second major administrative reshuffle, officials said today.

The reshuffling process has been heavily criticised by the Awami League of outgoing Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed who handed over power to the interim regime earlier this month at the end of her term.

Under the reshuffle, undertaken by former Chief Justice Latifur Rahman's caretaker Government, 21 district administrative chiefs were reassigned with four others placed in temporary transitional roles.

HC-11 307
The chiefs of Bangladesh's 64 administrative districts, known as deputy commissioners, play a crucial role during elections as they also work as chief ballot officials in their respective areas.

Immediately after taking power two weeks ago, Rahman undertook a first surprise reshuffle prompting some of the affected bureaucrats to protests to the country's President Shahabuddin Ahmed.

The Awami League bitterly complained at the reshuffle saying it was being done in a way that favoured the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by Sheikh Hasina's arch rival Khaleda Zia.

Outgoing Finance Minister

Shah Kibria, the Awami League's chief election coordinator, said the caretaker Government appeared to be "working a under BNP-made blueprint".

Carter invited

Former US President Jimmy Carter was to arrive in Dhaka tomorrow as the head of a five-member delegation to assess how Bangladesh is preparing for October general elections.

Carter's delegation was to meet with Government leaders, politicians, prominent citizens and academics during the five-day visit, according to the Dhaka office of the Washington-based National Democratic Institute, the sponsor of the trip.

AP/AFP

Carter to head Bangladesh poll observer team

DHAKA, JULY 29. The former U.S. President, Mr. Jimmy Carter, was to arrive in Dhaka on Monday at the head of a five-member delegation to assess how Bangladesh is preparing for October general elections. *Dhaka 10.17*

Mr. Carter's delegation was to meet with Government leaders, politicians, prominent citizens and academics during the five-day visit, according to the Dhaka office of the Washington-based National Democratic Institute, the sponsor of the trip. *10/17*

"The purpose of the delegation is to demonstrate the interest of the international community for a peaceful democratic election process in Bangladesh," an NCI press statement said today.

Among the delegation members are Mr. Serum Toiling, a Cambodian lawmaker, and three senior NCI officials.

NCI will send local and foreign observers to observe the ballots Bangladesh will hold to elect a 300-member Parliament in October.

No date has been set for the vote, which will be overseen by a caretaker administration.

The Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, left office on July 15 to pave the way for the polls. She is the first Bangladeshi leader to serve out a full five-year term in this violence-wracked South Asian nation. — AP

1.2.12

JUL 20 1979

16 BSF men killed in Bangladesh firing

NEW DELHI, APRIL 18. At least 16 BSF personnel were today killed in firing by Bangladeshi Army and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) men in a forward village on the Assam-Meghalaya-Bangladesh border.

The Union Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pande, quoting reports reaching here from the BSF border camp, told reporters that the 16 were killed when Bangladesh Army and BDR personnel resorted to unprovoked firing and shelling on the Boraibari BSF post and civilian areas.

Another report said a red alert was sounded in Mankachar subdivision of Assam's Dhubri district after nine persons were critically wounded when BDR men fired rockets on Sahapara

village close to the border. The BSF outpost at Kokripara were also targeted. Meanwhile the Border Security Force Director-General, Mr. Gurbachan Jagat tonight said the situation in Boraibari, was "serious." He denied that the BSF men had "intruded into Bangladesh territory. The territory belongs to us."

According to a report from Shillong, the Meghalaya Chief Minister, Mr. E. K. Mawlong, said the State Government was seriously concerned. The Additional Chief Secretary, Mr. J. Tayeng, today apprised Mr. P. D. Shenoy, Assistant Union Home Secretary, of the situation. The Home Minister, Mr. T. H. Rangad, suggested that intelligence failure on the part of

the BSF might have led to the intrusion and regretted that the State had to lose Pyrduwah. The Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, and the Defence Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, were closely monitoring the situation.— PTI, UNI.

Haroon Habib reports from Dhaka:

The BDR Director General, Maj. Gen. Fazlur Rahman, claimed that 16 BSF personnel and two BDR men were killed after the BSF launched a sudden attack in the northern Kurigram district today.

Talking to the Bangla service of BBC from the Indian side of the border, Indian officials said the incident took two BSF lives, while one BDR man was killed.

Bonhomle: Page 11

THE HINDU

APR 19 2001

Govt. will complete full term: Hasina

By Haroon Habib

DHAKA, APRIL 4. The opposition alliance ended its three-day country-wide hartal, marred by violence, on Tuesday demanding that the government resign after the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, ignored her challenger, Begum Khaleda Zia's March 30 ultimatum to quit and hand over power to a caretaker authority.

Though the opposition announced fresh programmes, including a 72-hour country-wide shutdown, Ms. Hasina announced in Parliament on Tuesday that her rivals would have to "wait with patience" for the next elections till the tenure of the present House ends on July 13.

"If they really want an early election, they will have to come to Parliament and hold discussions for settling all relevant issues regarding the formation of a caretaker government, which is constitutionally empowered to conduct elections".

The possibility of an early election in June got a jolt after the ruling party reacted to the opposition alliance's ultimatum to "pull the government down" unless it steps down by March 30. The alliance chief, Begum Khaleda Zia, rejected a presidential suggestion to hold dialogue with the government and withdraw her ultimatum and hartal.

The first reaction to the opposition's ultimatum came from the Prime Minister on March 30, when Ms. Hasina, addressing a rally, set conditions for early elections, which included an "undertaking" by the opposition alliance that it would go back to Parliament, withdraw the 60-hour hartal and assure the nation that they

would join the election process. The holding of dialogue with the government was another point.

Some ruling party insiders apprehend that the opposition alliance might lead them into a trap if they transfer power to a caretaker authority right now. "We doubt that they (opposition) may not join the election process," said one senior minister and ruling party stalwart preferring anonymity. "Once the caretaker government is installed, they will put forward a series of demands and create a situation which may not only extend the brief tenure of the caretaker government but also hinder holding of elections".

The opposition BNP Secretary General, Mr. Abdul Mannan Bhuyan, refused to accept the charge, saying "it is a lame excuse. Actually, they (Awami League) are afraid of opposition's unity and are fearing people's wrath".

Analysing the outcome of the 60-hour hartal, which the opposition dubbed as the "final assault", many national dailies admitted that such pressure has appeared inadequate to force the Hasina government to quit. They suggested the President take an initiative to resolve the crisis.

No such major untoward incidents occurred during the 60-hour hartal except for stray incidents of bomb blasts that killed two persons.

Unless there is any new drama or initiative by the President, despite his constitutional limitations, the Sheikh Hasina government is set to stay in power till July 13. After that power will automatically go to a non-party caretaker government.

THE HINDU

1.5 APR 20

Oppn.-sponsored stir hits life in Bangladesh

DHAKA: A general strike meant to force the resignation of prime minister Sheikh Hasina paralysed Bangladesh cities for the second consecutive day Monday after clashes that left one person dead and nearly 200 injured. No violence was immediately reported on Monday.



Sheikh Hasina

rioting charges.

Anti-government protesters returned to the capital's streets on Monday, chanting slogans such as, "Down with the corrupt government."

In response, hundreds of members from Hasina's governing Awami League party came out, shouting slogans against the strike. Nearly 6,000 security forces were on duty in the capital city of 9 million people.

Commuters, mostly government employees, used tricycle rickshaws to travel to work. Buses and private cars stayed off the streets for fear of attacks by strikers. The strike shut down businesses and schools and halted most traffic in Dhaka and 60 other cities and town across Bangladesh. Flights, trains and river ferries operated despite the strike authorities said.

The 60-hour shutdown was called after Hasina ignored an opposition ultimatum to step down by March 30, vowing to stay in power until July 13, when her government's five-year term expires.

Under the constitution, an incumbent must transfer power to a nonpartisan caretaker administration to supervise voting. An alliance of four opposition parties — the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote — called the strike to intensify its anti-government campaign. (AP)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

3 APR 2001

Dhaka clerics charged

Dhaka, Feb. 5 (Reuters): A Bangladesh court today ordered two key Islamic leaders to be remanded in jail as violence sparked off by their arrests spread and the country's main opposition chief called for their release.

Bangladesh police are preparing formal charges against Shaikhul Hadis Moulana Azizul Huq and Moulana Mufti Amini, president and secretary-general of radical Islami Oikya Jote, a lawyer said. Attorneys for the detained Islamists would apply for the men to be bailed out, the lawyer said.

The arrest of the two men, under the country's Public Safety Act (PSA), triggered violence in the capital and elsewhere with more than 150 people injured and

scores detained in two days of violence.

Bangladesh main opposition leader Begum Khaleda Zia has demanded that those arrested in the violent clashes be freed immediately.

Yesterday, police arrested Amini, his son and 14 associates for their alleged involvement in earlier unrest that led to a policeman's death.

Police said constable Badsha Miah was killed on Saturday by militants at a Dhaka madrasa during a day-long strike called by the Jote trying to overturn a court ban on Islamic edicts involving women's rights.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the policeman's death was "caused by traders of religion who

are driving Islam into violence".

But Khaleda today blamed the weekend killing of the policeman on "state-sponsored terrorism".

"The policeman was a victim of state-sponsored terrorism but the government is trying to shift the blame for his death on the opposition which it hounds routinely under a notorious Public Safety Act (PSA)," Khaleda said in a statement. She also demanded a judicial inquiry into the incident.

Today, followers of Amini and Huq blocked train lines and attacked a railway station in Brahmanbaria, east of Dhaka.

Local authorities called in paramilitary soldiers who helped police restore order and resume train movements between Dhaka and the port city of Chittagong.

THE TELEGRAPH

6 FEB 2001

Strike paralyzes life in Dhaka

Dhaka, February 1

THE BANGLADESHI capital was paralysed today by a general strike called by a group of 11 left-wing opposition parties to protest against alleged corruption and plundering of national wealth by the country's rulers and price hikes.

There were no immediate reports of violence in the early hours of the one-day nationwide strike called by the United Alliance, the third major anti-government street protest this year, police and residents said.

The streets in downtown Dhaka were deserted of cars and shops and schools remained shut as small groups of party activists and leaders carrying red flags and banners marched through the streets shouting anti-government slogans, witnesses said.

Limited bus and other transport services ran in some suburban districts amid tight police security, they said, adding that youth activists of the ruling Awami League party of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed also paraded the streets shouting pro-government slogans.

Today's stoppage is the third street action in Bangladesh since the January 20 bomb blast at a Bangladesh Communist Party rally in Dhaka left four people dead, sparking a protest strike the following day.

A second stoppage was enforced on January 22 by the main four-party opposition alliance led by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia as part of its campaign to force the ruling party to step down and stage early elections.

(AFP)

Policeman killed in Bangla riots

59-12
REUTERS 9/2

DHAKA, Feb. 3. — Islamic militants, protesting against a ban on fatwas involving women's rights, killed a policeman and wounded 15 others here today, police said.

They overpowered a police patrol in the city's Mohammadpur area, dragged the officers to a nearby madrasah and beat them with sticks.

"Constable Badsha Miah died and 15 others suffered serious injuries," Mohammadpur police inspector Mr Didarul Alam said.

"The body has been recovered and the injured have been moved to a police hospital," Mr Alam said. Over 35 militants were arrested.

Nearly 100 other people were injured as police clashed with militants, sources said. At least 40 people were held for throwing stones, police said.

Police used batons and tear gas, sources said. A spokesman for the Islamists, Mohammad Wasel said police also used rubber bullets.

Riot police and paramilitary troopers were deployed here today to prevent violence after Islami Oikyo Jote, a



Police drag and arrest an Islamic cleric during a protest in Dhaka on Saturday. — AP/PTI

radical Muslim coalition, called a day-long strike in protest against a court ruling.

The Bangladesh High Court decided in December last year to ban fatwas or edicts by Islamic clerics that could subject women to torture for alleged adultery and prevent them from mixing and working with men outside their

families.

Women and girls, carrying placards demanding equal rights, defied the Jote strike and marched to the national parade ground here.

Security forces kept a close watch amid fears of an attack by militants a day after at least 50 people were injured in clashes between police and Jote followers.

The alliance, demanding that the ruling be repealed and "punishment by death" for anyone supporting it, denounced the rally, organised by the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh, a group of mainly foreign-funded NGOs.

Adab secretary-general Mr Shamsul Huda earlier said that attempts to resist it were "provocative, undemocratic and unlawful".

Prof Kabir Chowdhury of Dhaka University said: "People of Bangladesh will no longer tolerate fatwas given by fundamentalists to achieve their ulterior motives. They are out to retard development and social justice."

All business establishments remained closed due to today's strike. Traffic was also disrupted.

THE STATESMAN

- 4 FEB 2002

Bangladesh parties at loggerheads over President

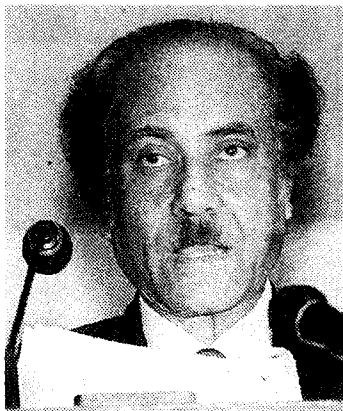
By Haroon Habib

DHAKA, FEB. 1. Political circles here are once again rife with speculation that the President, Mr. Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed has submitted his resignation.

The Opposition alliance led by the former Prime Minister, Begum Khaleda Zia has already taken up the issue, accusing the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina of conspiring against the President so that he resigned and a ruling partyman could be made President instead. But the Government has questioned the intention of the Opposition in raising the issue of the President's reported resignation. The President's office has not issued any statement thus far. The ruling party has also accused the Opposition and some newspapers of trying to create a conflict between the President and the Prime Minister.

Sheikh Hasina on Wednesday pulled up a daily for asking a provocative question at a recent news conference about the President's reported decision to resign and then picking up the issue to say that the Government was trying to ease out Justice Shahabuddin. "What kind of journalism is it," Sheikh Hasina asked.

Begum Khaleda Zia has appealed to Justice Shahabuddin not to resign, even assuring him that he will be made President for a second tenure if her alliance wins in the coming general elections. Winding up her speech in Parliament yesterday, Sheikh Hasina ridiculed Begum Khaleda's "sudden love" for the President, and said the Opposition leader was now shedding "crocodile tears" for the President, whose candidacy the Opposition had vehemently opposed even going to the extent of filing a case against his election. Explaining her position in the face of the mounting criticism over the issue, she said it was her Awami League M.P.s who had elected Justice Shahabuddin, a neutral person, to the office sacrificing party interests.



Shahabuddin Ahmed

"What else I could reply, if it is his (President's) decision? Did the questioner want me to get nervous," Sheikh Hasina asked, referring to the editorial comments of a daily appealing to the President not to resign in the face of provocation. Sheikh Hasina also saw the Opposition's move as a conspiracy ahead of the forthcoming general election and she urged the people to foil any "crooked design by vested quarters" to grab power by inciting disorder and anarchy.

There was more controversy when two High Court judges were elevated to the Appellate Division, reportedly superseding their seniors. Leading lawyer sympathisers of the Opposition staged an unruly demonstration in front of the chamber of the Chief Justice blocking court proceedings for hours. The Opposition lawyers, including some ex-Ministers of the previous BNP Government, also appealed to the President to reverse the appointments. But the Prime Minister has refused to bow to the pressure, saying the judges were appointed as per the Constitution and "any amount of vandalism in the highest judiciary" would not change the legal decision.

If the President decides to overturn the decision of the Government, there will not be a constitutional crisis.

THE HINDU

2 FEB 2001

Fujimori to stay holed up in Japan

Tokyo, Jan. 14 (Reuters): Deposed Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori today said he would not return to Peru until he is cleared of accusations that he has hoarded \$18 million in secret bank accounts.

Fujimori, who resigned last November shortly after arriving in Japan, said on a TV Asahi talk-show that he planned to remain in the land of his ancestors until "it is clear there are no secret accounts".

"I have been waiting for the investigators. It is a strange thing that they haven't come to Japan," Fujimori said. "I will cooperate with them fully. They know that I don't have these accounts."

Fujimori said he was also waiting for the results of elections scheduled for April and assurances of his safety before he considers returning to Peru.

April's election was called four years early after Peru's Congress fired Fujimori in November.

Unable to control spiralling corruption scandals over his spy chief, Vladimiro Montesinos, Fujimori fled to Japan in November where he resigned by e-mail. A furious Peruvian Congress sacked him as "morally unfit" to rule. That brought to a sorry end his 10-year rule, marked by market reforms and a successful stand against Marxist guerrillas.

"I will be here for some time," Fujimori said. Peru this month urged Japan to make Fujimori give evidence to the Andean nation's Congress over arms deals linked to his fugitive ex-spy chief, wanted on corruption charges.

Bangla on alert, Myanmar stalls on dam dispute

Cox Bazar, Jan. 14 (Reuters): Bangladesh today said its troops were ready to respond quickly if Myanmar soldiers opened fire across the countries' border or if Myanmar resumes construction of a dam on the Naf border river.

"We are ready for a prompt and appropriate response if they pull the trigger again or resume construction of the dam," said Colonel Shawkat Ali, a commanding officer of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) border force.

Tension along the border in southeast Bangladesh has been high for the past two weeks since Myanmar began building a dam, or embankment, on the Naf river at Totardia to divert water for irrigation and shrimp farming.

Bangladesh says the structure will cause soil erosion and flooding on the Bangladesh side and has demanded that it be stopped. The two sides exchanged fire across the Naf on January 8 but there were no casualties. Myanmar then suspended construction of the dam but deployed some 35,000 troops along its 320 km border with Bangladesh. The Naf forms part of the border.

Ali said Bangladesh had deployed more than 10,000 paramilitary troops to face any attack from Myanmar.

Witnesses said BDR troops have taken up position in fortified positions and bunkers. "We are maintaining a round-the-clock alert," Ali told reporters. "We are



Bangladesh soldiers on the banks of the Naf. (Reuters)

ready to defend our interests along the frontier."

Bangladesh is still awaiting a response from Myanmar to a call for a high-level meeting to resolve the dispute, he said.

Usually only a few hundred troops are stationed on either side of the Naf. Both countries have restricted the movement of civilians near the frontier.

The two countries fought a brief battle in 1967 over a similar attempt by Myanmar to build a dam in the Naf in violation of an international convention.

THE TELEGRAPH

15 JAN 2001