



Opposition coalition veers away from hartals, sieges

HASAN JAHD TUSHER

Seeing spontaneous participation of both the general public and party activists in the ongoing road march programme, the Awami League (AL)-led 14-party opposition coalition might not go for hard-line programmes like non-stop hartals until the next election if no massive untoward incident takes place in the country's political arena.

Rather, the opposition coalition has been planning to step up its agitation and propaganda on the streets including grand rallies and sit-in programmes involving tens of thousands of people to force the four-party alliance government to carry out the proposed electoral reforms before handover of power in October.

The opposition parties are now

gearing up for six days of road marches at union parishads, at district levels across the country, and in the capital beginning on July 25.

As thousands of people joined the marches, they turned into pre-election campaigns creating an election like environment in the capital and in other parts of the country, which fascinated the opposition leaders and encouraged them to avoid hard-line programmes like hartals, laying of sieges and blockades, sources said.

Talking to The Daily Star, senior opposition leaders said they believe that the ongoing movement on the streets is more effective than their previous programmes like hartals and laying of sieges. They said leaders and workers remain absent in hard-line programmes fearing

arrests, injuries and harassment by the law enforcers.

"The ongoing road march programme where tens of thousands of people are participating spontaneously will be escalated into a mass upsurge if the government tries to hand over power to the caretaker government without bringing about the reforms," AL Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader told The Daily Star.

Quader, a close aide to AL President Sheikh Hasina, also said they want to participate in the upcoming election in a victorious mood after forcing the government into implementing electoral reforms through public pressure.

Sources said Hasina, who is also

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Surgery forces Castro to cede power

AP, Havana

An operation forced Fidel Castro to temporarily cede power to his brother for the first time in 47 years, abruptly ushering in a period of uncertainty in the communist island as the severity of his illness remained unknown.

Castro, less than two weeks away from his 80th birthday, did

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VOTER LIST EC may turn to PMO for fund

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) secretary yesterday said they would contact the Prime Minister's Office, if necessary, to get funds for expediting the task of updating the voter list.

The finance ministry is yet to allocate funds for the job that began on July 1.

"The task is still going on slowly. Field level staffs engaged in updating the voter list are not enthusiastic about doing the job due to shortage of money," EC Secretary

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52 killed in fresh Iraq violence

AP, Baghdad

Bombings and shootings across Iraq killed at least 52 people Tuesday, including 24 people in a bus destroyed by a roadside bomb. The attacks further damage the US-backed government's efforts to establish control over the country.

The bus, carrying many Iraqi soldiers, was struck in the northern industrial city of Beiji, killing everyone on board, said Defence Ministry spokesman Mohammed al-Askari.

Police earlier said that 20 Iraqi soldiers were killed on the bus. Al-

Askari confirmed that many of the passengers were soldiers, but said he did not know how many. He said the bus was not being escorted by US troops, as earlier believed.

Following the blast, a curfew was imposed in Beiji, 155 miles, north of Baghdad.

In the Karradah neighbourhood of Baghdad, a car bomb exploded during morning rush hour near a bank, killing at least 14 people and injuring 37, said police Lt. Col. Abbas Mohammed Salman.

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Richard Boucher arrives today

UNB, Dhaka

US Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher arrives in Dhaka today on a two-day visit to Bangladesh.

During the visit Boucher will hold talks with the government and opposition leaders as well as civil society members on certain pressing issues facing the country.

He will talk on how America could help hold successful elections, achieve economic prosperity and fight terrorism.

"I'll talk to people in Bangladesh about how the United States can be helpful...in seeing them succeed in the upcoming elections," he told a State Department press briefing in

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A garment worker chants slogan demanding pay hike and other facilities during a demonstration organised by Swadhin Bangla Garments Sramik Karmachari Federation at Muktagong in the capital yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka to lead LDCs in WTO again

JASIM UDDIN KHAN

Bangladesh has again been selected to represent the 49 Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) for the next six months.

The LDCs unanimously agreed to pass the baton of leadership to Bangladesh from Gambia due to the latter's inefficiency as co-ordinator in preserving their interests in the world trade forum, said commerce ministry sources.

The country's permanent representative to Geneva in a fax message yesterday informed the ministry of the latest developments.

The sources said the selection will help Bangladesh to uphold its interest in bilateral and multilateral negotiations to be commenced under WTO next time.

"The LDCs especially Bangladesh will face some serious challenges in WTO to have as many as its items of export removed from the other countries' negative lists," a high official of the commerce ministry said.

He said as the leader of the group, Bangladesh will definitely get

support from the other LDCs in promoting and protecting its interest during the trade negotiations.

Meanwhile, the steering committee on WTO headed by Commerce Minister M Hafiz Uddin will meet tomorrow to discuss the Doha Development Round.

At the meeting, the ministry will review the progress reports of three committees on WTO (market access, product diversification and manpower export under mode-4).

The sub-committees have already submitted their reports to

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79 more back home from Lebanon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seventy-nine more stranded Bangladeshis returned home yesterday morning from war-battered Lebanon with assistance from International Organization for Migration (IOM).

With these latest returnees, their total number reached to 284.

Officials of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training, International Organization for Migration (IOM) and Qatar Charity

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PHOTO: STAR

Four Hilly Mynas, an endangered species, are crammed into a small cage at a Kataban pet shop in the capital in violation of the Wildlife Preservation Act 1974 that prohibits capture and sale of these rare birds.

Contempt rule issued against 11 SC lawyers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a contempt rule on eleven Supreme Court lawyers to explain why proceedings of contempt of court should not be brought against them for violation of the HC's suo moto ruling on May 23, 2005 and also for committing other contemptuous acts.

The ruling came following a contempt petition filed by a Dhaka judge's court advocate Gazi Rabiul Islam Shagor on June 29 alleging that the eleven lawyers violated the HC's ruling by boycotting court and by obstructing entry of judges

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Striking teachers block roads, waterways

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Front of Teachers and Employees (NFTE) yesterday barricaded roads and waterways for an hour at the district headquarters across the country while the government sat with the teachers on strike for dialogues.

NFTE claimed communication with northern district was cut-off from 10:00am to 11:00am as vehicles could not move at Alenga in Tangail. Launches did not depart from the Barisal launch terminal before 11:00am yesterday.

Four representatives of the government headed by Education Minister Osman Farruk sat for dialogues at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday with leaders of NFTE, a platform of eleven teachers and employees organisations.

The government has started dialogues with agitating teachers' organisations since Sunday. Dialogues with the leaders of Shikhhak Karmachari Oikya Jote

(SKOJ), led by Shariful Islam, Bangladesh Shikhhak Karmachari Samannay Parishad, led by Ashraful Islam, and Bangladesh Shikhhak Karmachari Oikya Parishad, led by MA Awal Siddiquee, have already been completed without achieving a permanent solution to the problems.

Minister for Education Osman Farruk said he has arranged dialogues with all groups of teachers separately as demands of all platforms of the striking teachers are not the same.

He will submit a recommendation report to the prime minister after having discussions with all the factions of teachers on strike.

Along with the continuous indefinite strike at the non-government high schools, colleges and madrasas since July 6, teachers and employees of the educational institutes under four platforms have already been staging demonstration

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Prayer Timing		
August 2		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-47	6-50
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation