

BNP ready to take control of streets

Waits for PM's return today for Hasan decision

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

The ruling BNP will finalise its decision on Justice K M Hasan's taking over as chief of the next caretaker government after Prime Minister and party chief Khaleda Zia returns from Saudi Arabia today, and the party secretary general will place it at the next round of talks with his Awami League (AL) counterpart on Monday, sources said.

Besides this, to face any unexpected situation that might be created by the opposition, the BNP plans to take control of the streets across the country at any cost before the handover of power to caretaker government in the last week of this month. Policymakers of the party want this also as a show of its political might, sources said.

The party leadership has already asked the district and upazila units to gear up party activities in their respective areas on the

eve of the handover of power.

"Our leaders will not leave their areas, rather they will bring out processions and hold rallies across the country till power is handed over to caretaker government. District level leaders have been asked to keep control of the streets at any cost and continue political programmes," a senior BNP leader told The Daily Star yesterday.

According to party decision, the BNP will organise rallies in the capital as well as divisional and district towns and upazila headquarters on October 28 and 29. Its front organisations like Jatiyataabadi Chhatra Dal and Jubo Dal will begin holding rallies and bringing out processions from tomorrow.

The party has already applied for permission to have Paltan Maidan as venue for its October 27-29 programmes. The National Sports Council is yet to give it permission.

The Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote, coalition partners of the BNP, will also hold rallies in the capital simultaneously.

The BNP leadership is however worried about some party leaders and incumbent lawmakers as they could face public resistance in their areas due to their controversial activities in the last five years of coalition rule.

Sources said if the ongoing BNP-AL dialogue fails and confrontational politics follows, many more BNP lawmakers and leaders could face problems in their areas. So, a group of such leaders are trying to convince the party leadership to resolve the prevailing political stalemate through the dialogue.

Talking to reporters, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman already said the ongoing dialogue should end successfully, otherwise the nation will face a disaster.

On the Hasan issue, Law

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Yunus slams all nuclear nations

AFP, REUTERS, Seoul

Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus yesterday condemned North Korea's nuclear weapons drive, along with other nuclear-armed states, and urged the world to raise its voice against the weapons.

"The whole world condemns North Korea, we all do," he told a press conference in South Korea, where he arrived Wednesday to receive the Seoul Peace Prize for his pioneering work in fighting poverty.

Bangladesh's "banker to the poor" was awarded the Seoul prize just six days after winning the world's most prestigious peace award.

"If any new nation acquires a new weapon, anybody should join hands and raise their voice to stop it," the founder of Grameen Bank said.

"At the same time we should not forgive the people who already have (nuclear weapons). I'm against all nuclear stockpiles anywhere in the world."

Yunus said making nuclear weapons and maintaining them

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On the occasion of Jumatul Wida yesterday, hundreds of devotees offering prayers on the street adjacent to Baitul Mukarram National Mosque as the space inside failed to accommodate them.

PHOTO STAR

Jumatul Wida, Lailatul Qadr observed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Muslims across the country yesterday observed the holy Jumatul Wida, the last Juma of Ramadan, and Lailatul Qadr with religious fervour.

Millions of devotees attended the Juma prayers at different mosques seeking divine blessings for peace and progress of Bangladesh and unity of the Muslim ummah.

The devotees spent the night offering special prayers and reciting the holy Quran. They also visited the graves of their near and dear ones and offered prayer seeking eternal peace of the departed souls.

A large number of devotees spent the whole night at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque in the city and offered special prayers and

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US calls for free, credible elections in Bangladesh

AFP, Washington

The United States on Thursday called for free and credible elections in Bangladesh as a deadlock between the government and the opposition parties over electoral reforms threatened to jeopardise January's parliamentary polls.

"The US government views the next parliamentary elections in Bangladesh as a critical opportunity to strengthen democratic politics and governance in Bangladesh," the State Department said in a statement.

"The US supports free, fair, non-violent, and credible elections in Bangladesh. Our support is for the process, not for any political party," the statement said.

Bangladesh's main opposition Awami League and its allies have threatened to boycott the polls unless the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) replaces the proposed interim administration chief and top election officials they accuse of being pro-government.

The BNP is due to hand over power to the interim administration on October 28.

The two main parties have held five rounds of talks since October 5, but have been unable to reach a consensus on the electoral reforms. A sixth round is planned for October 23.

"The make-up of Bangladesh's caretaker government is a decision that the Bangladesh people must

make following the constitution," the State Department said.

The United States was encouraged that Bangladesh's major political parties had engaged in dialogue to try to resolve their differences on the elections, the department said, noting that the talks are ongoing.

"Our focus is on the entire political process -- not simply on election day events," it said.

An independent US panel on religious freedom earlier this week expressed concern over growing Islamist militancy in Bangladesh and called for measures to ensure that the country's democratic electoral process took place without violence.

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Unscreened blood seized by a mobile court from an illegal blood bank at Shahbagh in the capital. The photo was taken on September 13.

PHOTO STAR

Illegal centres selling unscreened blood

PINAKI ROY

The number of illegal blood banks has shot up in Dhaka and other parts of the country which sell unscreened blood to people putting the recipients of the blood at the risk of getting life threatening diseases.

Recipients of unscreened blood could be infected with hepatitis B, hepatitis C, HIV and cytomegalovirus, experts said.

They said the private blood banks often draw blood from donors who have disease and recipients of the blood run the risk of being infected with that disease. They also said the blood from the private blood banks are, in most cases, the blood of

professional donors.

Thousands of patients have been infected with diseases because of this, said Prof Nazrul Islam, chief of the virology department in Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

"We received many patients with hepatitis B, C and even HIV which they got from unsafe blood transfusion," he said.

"After screening, a bag of blood might cost up to Tk 1800 while unscreened blood could be bought for Tk 200 to Tk 500," a physician of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) said.

This correspondent visited the Diagnosis and Pathology Center at 166/A, Lake Circus,

Dolphin lane, Kalabagan in the city where they illegally sell blood.

When asked for six bags of O positive blood, the manager of the centre, refusing to give out his name, said, "We can give you each bag at Tk 800. But if you want us to test the blood for HIV and hepatitis, it would cost Tk 1800 for each bag. Or else, we would just perform the grouping, cross-matching, HBs, Ag and VDRL tests."

When asked, the manager admitted that the professional donors from whom they collect

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Thousands pour out of Dhaka for journey home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The rush of people heading home from the capital for the Eid-ul-Fitr holiday began yesterday leaving the city relatively less crowded.

This year, however, the rush is less visible than previous years since people have five days to leave the capital. This year, there is only one working day between the Eid holidays and the weekend prompting many office-goers to take leave on Sunday and depart from the capital early.

A large number of passengers especially women and children have already left on Thursday and

yesterday to avoid the late rush, sources in bus, train stations and launch terminals said.

However, the main rush is expected to start tomorrow evening after the last working day ends ahead of the holiday. Officials at the ticket counters of Kamalapur Railway Station, Sadarghat Launch Terminal and Gabtoli, Mohakhali, Saidabad and Jatrabari bus terminals said all tickets have already been sold in advance.

There are allegations that brokers, in connivance with ticket sellers, are selling tickets at double, in some cases triple, the price of the

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Sri Lanka stay alive

AGENCIES, Mumbai

Opener Upul Tharanga led Sri Lanka to a comprehensive seven-wicket victory over New Zealand in their Champions Trophy Group B match here on Friday.

The left-hander hit 56 and shared an 89-run second-wicket stand with captain Mahela Jayawardene (48) as Sri Lanka reached their target of 166 with 14 overs to spare.

Earlier, prolific off-spinner Muttiah Muralidaran, adjudged man-of-the-match, grabbed 4-23 as Sri Lanka bowled out New Zealand for 165.

Nathan Astle made a battling 42 for the Kiwis and Daniel Vettori hit an unbeaten 46 but the rest of the batting struggled to come to terms with the turning ball after electing to bat in the day-night international.

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200,000 sticks, oars ready for AL

HASAN JAHID TUSHER

The 14-party opposition combine is making around 200,000 sticks, oars and poles in the capital to build up resistance and paralyse the city in case the government hands over power to "BNP-partisan" Justice KM Hasan ignoring opposition's electoral reform demands.

"Each of our ward unit leaders has been asked to make 1,000 oars and poles," 14-party Coordinator for Dhaka city Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya, who is supervising the work, told The Daily Star last night.

Maya, also city Awami League (AL) general secretary, said they have made all-out preparations to protest Justice Hasan's taking charge as the chief adviser to the

caretaker government.

The AL has a total of 100 ward, 26 thana and 18 union units in the capital and there are around 50 city units of the 11-party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), and National Awami Party-the AL's allies in the opposition line-up.

The AL's front organisations Jubo League, Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), and Swechhasebak League with more than 300 city units have already directed their leaders to make at least 200 oars and poles each and exercise "maximum power" to take control of the streets on the day the government hands over power to Justice Hasan.

Jubo League Chairman Jahangir Kabir Nanak and BCL President Mahmud Hasan Ripon confirmed

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Two outlaws killed in 'shootouts'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two underground operatives were killed during 'shootouts' between their accomplices and the law enforcers in Chuadanga and Pabna yesterday.

They were identified as Tariqul Islam, 40, a regional leader of outlawed Biplabi Communist Party (BCP), and Belal Hossain of Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBC-ML-Lalpataka).

Our Kushtia correspondent reported that Tariqul was killed during a 'shootout' with police and his cohorts at Harkandi of Alamdanga upazila in Chuadanga early yesterday.

He was the son of Raza Mia of Harkandi.

Police claimed a team of Alamdanga police arrested Tariqul

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Household belongings of State Minister for Sports Fazlur Rahman being shifted from his official residence on Hare Road in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO STAR

Shop owner gunned down in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A customer gunned down a tyre-store owner and injured another person at Shyamoli in the city last evening following a feud between the two over the payment of a radial.

The victim was Parvez Anwar, owner of Choice Tire and Battery Shop on Mirpur Road, while the injured Samsul Haque is an employee of a nearby shop.

Parvez's sister Lipi Begum said Mizanur Rahman Masum, whom she claimed to be a goon of the locality, killed her brother. Lipi told the reporters that Masum bought a tyre from Parvez two months ago and paid for it with a cheque, which bounced.

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