

## KM Hasan steps aside for the sake of people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former Chief Justice KM Hasan yesterday said he decided to stay away from performing his constitutionally mandated responsibility as chief adviser to the caretaker government in the interest of the people.

He also urged the political parties to put aside their differences and cooperate towards holding a peaceful election, which reflects the will of the people.

In a press release distributed to the journalists by an advocate in front of his residence at Dhanmondi yesterday evening, Justice Hasan said it is very sad and

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# President offers to be chief adviser

AL rejects outright, asks him to form caretaker govt by today; lajuddin sits with political parties today for 'consensus man'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The hope that flickered with former chief justice KM Hasan's refusal to take office of the chief of the caretaker government seemed to have dimmed again as the BNP and the AL failed to reach a consensus about who should head the caretaker government and President lajuddin Ahmed offered himself as a possible head, a suggestion that the AL outright rejected.

The AL has urged the president to form the caretaker government by today so that it can start work by evening. Meantime, lajuddin will sit

with four major political parties -- AL, BNP, Jatiya Party and Jamaat -- today in a bid to find a consensus man to head the crucial post to conduct elections.

"The president expressed his desire to assume the post of the chief adviser to the caretaker government, but we told him that we want to follow the constitution," Jallil told reporters last after consulting with the party chief.

lajuddin invited Jallil and Bhuiyan yesterday afternoon to Bangabhaban after former chief justice Hasan formally refused to take oath as 'the political parties

cannot resolve their differences through dialogue'. The AL general secretary told the president that his party would not object to anyone except Hasan and Chief Election Commissioner MA Aziz becoming the caretaker government head. Jallil proposed the names of former justices Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury and Hamidul Haque as alternate candidates.

But lajuddin said there exists a legal debate about Mahmudul Amin. At this stage, Bhuiyan chipped in and questioned the 'ability' of Hamidul, the other former justice.

The president then offered himself as the caretaker government head.

Jallil left Bangabhaban without debating the issue any further and sat with his party on the president's proposal at Sudha Sadan. Within five minutes of his meeting with Sheikh Hasina, president of the AL, Jallil called the president and informed him about his party's reservations about his offer heading the caretaker government and asked him to follow the provision of the constitution.

Later, Hasina explained the constitution to the press in the

evening. She said the president should have approached the second justice in line as soon as Hasan refused to take oath. If the second man also turned down the proposal, then the president should have approached the next persons until he could find a justice willing to take over the post. If none of the justices was available, then the president should have consulted with the major political parties to find a person acceptable to all. The president could have offered himself as the caretaker government only if all these efforts failed to yield results.

Hasina further added that President lajuddin is more politically biased than Hasan since he was picked up by the BNP lawmakers.

Sources in the BNP said the proposal of the president to become caretaker chief himself, which came after AL Secretary General Abdul Jallil and his BNP counterpart Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan could not agree on any former judges to head the caretaker government, quite acceptable to the BNP as he was chosen by them to replace Bandruddoza Chowdhury, the founding secretary general of the BNP.

They said BNP had opposed Mahmudul Amin and Hamidul Haque, as proposed by the AL, just as the 14-party had rejected Hasan and Aziz. If the BNP could make Amin and Hamidul feel embarrassed in the similar fashion of Hasan, then a consensus candidate, a near impossible thing, would be the next option. So the BNP was more than sure than the onus would ultimately fall on the president to become the caretaker head in addition to his presidency.

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# Downtown Dhaka turns into battlefield

# 12 killed, 2,000 hurt as violence hits country

STAR REPORT

Downtown Dhaka turned into a fierce battlefield yesterday with thousands of AL workers clashing with Jamaat supporters at Paltan for seven hours and with police at Bangabandhu Avenue and Golapshah Mazar that left at least five killed.

The dead are Monir Hossain, 30, an AL activist also a garment factory employee, Russell Ahmed Khan, 35, Khilgaon thana joint secretary of Jubo Moitri, Mohammad Mujahid, 20, an Islami Chhatra Shibir activist, Jasim Uddin, 24, a Shibir activist of ward no 67 in the city, and two others whose identities could not be known immediately.

AL workers beat to death at least two Jamaat workers with oars and sticks they were carrying. But Jamaat hit back with firearms, firing at least a hundred rounds, killing at least one AL man. The police remained a silent spectator to the mayhem.

The downtown streets turned into a horror place with bricks flying at every direction, shops and establishments vandalized and tyres and furniture burning, billowing black smoke that canopied the city sky.

The first of the clashes started at Paltan at 11.30am where the Jamaat workers had blocked the whole stretch of the street in front of the Baitul Mokarram mosque, a traditional bastion of Jamaat. A 14-party rally passing by the Jamaat gathering suddenly started throwing bricks and sticks at the Jamaat workers yelling slogans like "catch the Razakars (collaborators)".

Caught unawares, the Jamaat first retreated to the mosque gate. But one of their workers were caught by the attackers who beat him to death.

Within minutes, the Jamaat regrouped and launched a counter attack, chasing the AL men back. Stones and bricks started flying in both directions. Jamaat men set afire some tyres and wooden benches to create a thick smoke screen.

As thousands of AL workers started assembling, the Jamaat workers opened repeat shots from firearms, leaving at least five AL men critically wounded. The agitated AL workers damaged hundreds of shops and offices by the Bijoynagar road.

After a few minutes of lull, the two groups started their chase and counter-chase and the place bore much semblance to the Rwandan scene of Hutus and Tutsis going for each other's throats. One group charged into the other with blood curdling war cries, the other group ran in wild panic. But not all of them could sprint to safety and a few always stumbled to the ground. The fallen is immediately grabbed

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Supporters of 14-party combine and Jamaat-e-Islami hurl brickbats at each other during a Jamaat rally near Paltan intersection yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

STAR REPORT

At least 12 people were killed and about 2,000 wounded, many by bullets, as activists of outgoing BNP-led four-party coalition government and Awami League-led 14-party opposition combine clashed in an escalation of violence across the country yesterday.

Reports came that seven were killed while over 1,400 injured in clashes between the activists of the two alliances at different places outside the capital. Five were killed in Dhaka.

The political activists vandalised and set fire to offices and houses of rivals as they came out on streets with vengeful programmes a few hours after curtain fell on the coalition government.

Local administrations imposed section 144 on political gatherings in different parts of the country to check violence, but the political activists carried on with their programmes defying the ban.

The dead include two activists of Awami League (AL) and Jubo League killed in Kusthia and Meherpur, a Jamaat-e-Islami member in Magura, an Islami Chhatra Shibir leader in Kurigram, and three BNP men in Narsingdi and Bagerhat.

**MEHERPUR**  
Jubo League activist Abbas Ali was killed in Gangni upazila when police opened fire on an AL procession, leaving at least 50 injured.

When the rally reached Gangni bus stand, some AL activists stormed into a BNP office there and started to ransack it. As a joint forces team rushed there, the AL men threw bricks at the police, prompting them to open fire.

**KUSTHIA**  
BNP cadres opened fire on an AL procession passing the Bheramara upazila BNP office around 4:30pm. At least 50 activists of both the parties were hit by bullets. They were admitted to Kusthia general hospital.

Critically injured Bashir Uddin died at about 7:45pm. At least 15 policemen were also injured in the Meherpur and Kusthia incidents.

**KURIGRAM**  
A Shibir leader was killed and at least 60 activists were injured in a clash between the 14-party and four-party alliances near the Central Shaheed Minar area at 1:00pm yesterday.

The clash began after the BNP hurled two cocktails on an AL procession.

Critically wounded Rafiqul Islam, president of Panchgati Union unit of Shibir, succumbed to his injuries at about 5:00pm.

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# President should follow constitution

Says Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged President lajuddin Ahmed to take immediate steps for a non-partisan person to take oath as the chief adviser to the caretaker government to put an immediate end to the countrywide violence.

AL General Secretary and also the 14-party coordinator Abdul Jallil demanded that the president bring the prevailing volatile situation quickly to an end to keep the democratic system prevailing in the country.

Hasina said as Justice KM Hasan declined to take charge as the head of the caretaker government, the president should ask next person eligible as per the constitution immediately.

She was talking to the reporters at her Sudha Sadan residence in the capital following a meeting of the party president members after the AL general secretary met the president in the evening.

"We do not want conflicts to be alive, we want peace. The sooner the president takes steps to conduct the swearing in as per the constitution, the better for the conflict to end," the AL president said.

Hasina also said that until an interim government takes over, the AL-led 14-party combine's ongoing blockade programmes would be continued. She also urged the



countrymen to resist the 'looters' of BNP-Jamaat.

Protesting the BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's speech at the end of her five-year mandate, Hasina said that Khaleda Zia invited violence as she knows that the people would not vote them in the upcoming polls due to their wide scale corruption and misrule.

The AL president also asked all the state employees including the law enforcers and members of the armed forces to maintain neutrality and not to stand against people who have been fighting for their voting rights.

Senior leaders of the 14-party combine were present at the briefing.

# Hasina's SSF protection withdrawn

AL smells conspiracy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government withdrew the Special Security Force (SSF) from the Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina's Dhanmondi residence Sudha Sadan at around 3:00am yesterday just three hours into their deployment as the eighth parliament was dissolved at 12 midnight.

Expressing deep concern at the incident, AL described it as a conspiracy and abuse of power of the "previous BNP government." At a press conference at AL Dhanmondi office, AL General Secretary Abdul Jallil said that the regular police protection, which was withdrawn following the deployment of the SSF, resumed at 10:00am, adding that the AL chief remained unprotected in the meantime.

Jallil also demanded withdrawal of the SSF from the BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's house following the incident.

On October 26, a director of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) Mostafizur Rahman in a letter to Sheikh Hasina said that the SSF will ensure her security after expiry of the parliament as per the SRO, he added.

According to the Statutory Regulatory Order (SRO) 281/2002, the immediate past prime minister and the leader of the opposition enjoy equal security facilities soon after the dissolving of the parliament.

# Country brought to a standstill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka siege programme by the Awami League (AL) led 14-party combine virtually paralysed the city life yesterday.

The blockade programme that was aimed at preventing the immediate past chief justice KM Hasan from taking charge as the chief adviser to the caretaker government will continue until the chief adviser

assumes office, 14-party sources said.

Exchange of bullets between rival political activists, charging of bombs, pelting of brickbats, rallies and processions with sticks and oars and chase and counter chase marked the day while the capital was de-linked from the rest of the country due to the disruption of vehicular movement.

On Friday night, tens of thou-

sands of city dwellers coming back after the Eid holidays suffered miserably as inter-district buses could not enter the city. The situation was similar yesterday too.

The city streets were under the control of agitators who were chanting slogans and parading with sticks and oars. Only a handful of general people and vehicles were seen on the street as a sense of utter

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An unidentified man armed with a handgun fires a shot during yesterday's daylong clash between Jamaat-e-Islami and 14-party combine near Paltan intersection in the capital.

PHOTO: STAR

# Accept whatever president decides

Tough-talking Khaleda asks opposition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson and outgoing Prime Minister Khaleda Zia yesterday urged the opposition to accept whatever decision the president should take on caretaker chief and said her party will do the same.

Blasting the opposition parties for leading the country to anarchy, she asked her party leaders and workers to prepare for facing the opposition alliance across the country.

"We will not sit back and allow them to create anarchy," she told a huge rally in front of the BNP central office at city's Naya Paltan yesterday afternoon.

"From now on, we will speak the same language that they have been speaking. Now I'm asking you (the people) to give them a reply befitting what they [opposition] have been doing," Khaleda said in her last speech as the prime minister. Blaming the opposition for chaotic situation in the country, she said now they (AL) will have to face the treatment they deserve."

People will resist those who seek to throw the country into anarchy, indiscipline and violence, she said. Calling on the opposition to



accept the president's decision for the sake of a free and fair election, she said, "The president is the only elected representative now. He will decide on how to ensure a free and fair election. We will accept whatever he decides in this regard."

"Everyone who loves the country should accept his decision in the interest of peace and national stability," she said adding that those who will refuse to do so and continue to create chaos should be dealt with an iron fist.

Khaleda said she will hand over power as per the constitution and

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