



A pedestrian helps a young shopkeeper who was injured when police fired rubber bullets in Dhanmondi area to disperse a JP procession towards the Sangsad Bhaban yesterday. — Star photo

BNP willing to accept Ninian formula: B Choudhury

By Nazmul Ashraf

The ruling BNP is willing to accept Sir Ninian formula for an interim government to conduct the next general elections, hinted vice chairman of the party and Deputy Leader of Parliament Prof Badruddoza Choudhury yesterday.

Dialogue (between the BNP and the Opposition) can resume following the Prime Minister's September 1 fresh offer, and the fresh talks may be based on the Ninian formula, Prof Choudhury said while talking to some reporters at his Sangsad Bhaban office.

Commonwealth Secretary General's emissary Sir Ninian Stephen, while seeking to facilitate a government. Opposition dialogue late last year, had suggested formation of a 10-member interim government with equal number of members from the two sides to conduct the next general elections.

"In fact, they (the Opposition) had accepted the formula. But I don't know the mystery behind their retreat."

Replying to a question, he said if accepted by the parties concerned, an interim government based on the Ninian formulae could be formed with members of the present Parliament even after its dissolution.



Security officers prevented a crowd of some one thousand delegates from entering the alternate venue where US First Lady Hillary Clinton delivered a speech at the NGO Forum in Huarou, China, yesterday. The venue was changed due to rain. — AFP/UNB photo

US-China fresh tussle over HR

BEIJING, Sept 6: The United States and China tussled for a second day over human rights at a world women's conference today while behind the scenes charges flew of an "unholy alliance wanting to roll back sexual equality," reports Reuters.

US ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright teamed up with First Lady Hillary Clinton to criticise China's treatment of women activists at the conference.

Both sides also had different versions of why the first lady's top aides were left standing in the rain during one of her speeches.

As the clock ticked down on the last hours of Clinton's two-day visit, China maintained a studied silence on replying to the US charges which include denunciation of Beijing's population control policies.

"No women — whether in Birmingham, Bombay, Beirut or Beijing — should be forcibly sterilised or forced to have an abortion," Albright told a plenary session of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women.

"It is unconscionable ... that the right to free expression has been called into

Raphel lauds development activities in CHT

KHAGRACHHARI, Sept 6: US Assistant Secretary of State Robin Raphel said she was impressed with the on-going development activities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, reports UNB.

"I am really charmed to see the development activities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, particularly in the Khagrachhari district," she said talking to reporters at Bibhutivishan Karbarpara, a frontier village in Dighinala thana of the hill district the senior US official visited today.

Raphel, now on a four-day visit to Bangladesh, flew to the remote village at about 12:30 pm and talked to the villagers rehabilitated there after return from camps in India.

Later, she flew to Baghaichhari thana of Rangamati district and visited New Lanaka village there. She spoke to the "Panku" tribesmen in the area.

During her four-hour trip to the two hill districts, Raphel talked to cross-sections of tribal people to know their condition, particularly their state of living after repatriation from India.

Counsellor of the US Embassy in Dhaka William H Hill, Military Attache Lt Col Dunn, Director General of South Asia Department of Bangladesh Foreign Ministry Asaf-ud-Dolah and GOC of Chittagong Major General Azizur Rahman accompanied her during the visit.

Hartal observed

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Another bomb blast near Rampura Bazar at around 3 pm seriously injured one Anjad Hossain, 25. Witnesses said pickets stabbed two youths — Dulal, 17, and Shahjahan, 18 — who were passing the Kataban area at around 11:30 am on a rickshaw and were confronted by the pickets.

The AL and JP in two separate processions at around 11 am tried to break through the police cordon at the Manik Mia Avenue, at the Mirpur Road intersection.

While the AL attempt to break in the cordon was foiled peacefully, the JP procession, led by party Secretary General Anwar Hossain Manju, locked in a clash with police.

The JP workers at one point began throwing bricks at the police who started charging batons to disperse the procession. Witnesses said that a young boy — Israfil was struck by a rubber bullet fired by police. Israfil was admitted at the DMCH.

Similar attempts were also made by the AL and JP activists to penetrate barricades from the Farmgate point were foiled by the police in the morning. At Mahakhali at 12 noon, the JP held a brief rally which was addressed by Raushan Ershad, Moudud Ahmed, Col (ret'd) Abdul Malek and others.

In a cracker blast at Bangabandhu Avenue at around 10:30 am, a passerby Idris Ali, 40, was seriously injured. He was admitted to the DMCH for treatment of his injured legs.

Talukdar refuses to comment on Hasina's proposal

BNP secretary general Abdus Salam Talukdar yesterday said any arrangement to resolve the present political problem must be made within the ambit of the present Constitution, reports UNB.

Asked to comment on Awami League President Sheikh Hasina's specific proposal for a neutral caretaker government headed by the Chief Justice, he said, "We have no comment on it."

Talukdar said: Our stand is clear ... any solution must be sought out within the Constitution and through discussion. In this context, he referred to the Prime Minister's offer that she and her cabinet will resign 30 days ahead of election.

He also disagreed with Hasina's suggestion that a neutral caretaker government as she proposed could be ratified by new Parliament as was done in the case of acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed after the fall of Ershad regime.

NGO Forum's action plan

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A few of the global forces affecting the quality of life of the human community, and the challenges these pose for women.

The second part of the plenary sessions ended yesterday and highlighted initiatives and strategies used by women and organisations over the past decade to bring about those changes.

The third part of the plenary sessions also started yesterday and focused on commitment to the future.

These sessions scheduled from 6 to 8 Sept will be a culmination of consultations of the past six days. NGOs and women's organisations will share Regional Action Plans highlighting their strategies for future action.

The Asia Pacific Regional Action Plan will be presented today.

At the plenary on communications and media Kama Basini, the famous woman activist from India, asked the 2,5000 participants to cherish every moment of the NGO Forum on Women because there will not be one like this in this century.

Women activists have called to counter the negative propaganda by the Western media which emphasizes the negative, ignoring the voices of thousands of women who are finding hope and inspiration at the NGO Forum.

Some highlights of the NGO Forum included the tribunal on crimes against women organised by the Asian Women Human Rights Council. Women from Rwanda, Bosnia, Palestine, the Philippines and Korea testified one by one of the horror inflicted on them during wars and armed conflicts.

French N-test

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The tests caused a storm of protest, particularly among Pacific and Asian nations.

There have been sporadic consumer boycotts of French wine and luxury goods in Australia, New Zealand and Japan, the most outspoken critics of Chirac's policy, but the pinpricks have done little perceptible damage to France's exports.

72-hr hartal

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and textile mill workers from September 17.

Awami League president Sheikh Hasina, announcing her party's programme at a rally in front of the Jatiya Press Club called it an "allopathic prescription" to unseat the government, news agency reports said.

The AL programme includes country-wide demonstrations and torch processions from September 13 to 15.

She also directed the party workers to ensure that no ministers, secretaries or other high officials can attend their offices at the Secretariat, the heart of the government, during the hartal hours.

"Burn down whole of Dhaka city if there is any firing," she told the rally. The opposition leader said fair voting is not possible under the BNP government. "Our demand is clear, election must be held under a caretaker government."

The Jatiya Party's programme was announced by its acting chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury from a rally at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram National Mosque in the afternoon. The JP programme include gayebana janazas and mourning processions in the city besides country-wide demonstrations and torch processions from today till September 15.

Jamaat's programme was announced by its secretary general Matur Rahman Nizami at a press conference at the party central office.

Jamaat will also stage demonstration in capital Dhaka today to protest what they said killing of two people during yesterday's hartal. On Friday it will hold 'do'a' and bring out mourning processions across the country.

Hasina's proposal

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questions from the newsmen, the AL chief said, once the government agrees to the idea of an interim government, it might not be difficult to make the Chief Justice agree to head the government for an interim period. In this regard, she said "I had first proposed to the then Chief Justice Shahabuddin to head the interim government in 1990."

Asked whether she was in favour of holding a dialogue for resolving the long-drawn political impasse, the AL chief said, "Dialogue can be held only after the acceptance of our demand by the government."

Asked if she had discussed the idea of an interim government headed by the Chief Justice with the visiting US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Robin Lynn Raphel during her talks with the latter Tuesday, Hasina replied in the negative.

In reply to a question regarding Robin's playing any role in solving the political crisis, Hasina said, "I don't know. This is our internal affair. We shall solve it. Why don't you ask Robin or the Prime Minister about Robin's playing any role in this regard?"

After addressing a party rally just outside the Press Club at 6:30 pm, the AL chief flanked by senior party colleagues including Abdus Salam Azad, Abdur Razzak, Tofael Ahmed, Motia Chowdhury and Suranjit Sengupta, walked into the Club to address the press conference. She dwelt on the socio-political scenario in the country at the press conference.

She criticised the Prime Minister for not visiting Dinajpur yet, after the death of a young girl named Yasmin in police custody and killing of seven people in police firing there. The whole world came to know the incident and "we have no place to hide our shame," she said.

"I visited the trouble-torn town and urged people to refrain from taking law in their own hand. It is now proved after the second post mortem report that Yasmin was raped before being killed."

She blasted BNP for its "attitude of politicising everything" and demanded reform of the administration and the Election Commission before the next general elections.

Referring to a newspaper report yesterday, the AL chief alleged that the government was releasing its activists from jails to get prepared for vote dacoity in the next elections.

Mentioning the PM's earlier proposal for stepping down 30 days ahead of the elections, Hasina asked "Why 30 days and why not 90 days? If you are willing to step down then why don't you give the 'caretaker government' enough time for preparations for holding the elections?"

Hasina also mentioned the 'effectiveness' of the present Parliament, 'widespread corruption' by the ruling party men and price hike of essentials.

"Presently, the country is facing a food deficit of 45 lakh tons," the AL chief said.

Earlier, addressing the post-hartal rally, Hasina urged the people to make the next programmes of the party a success.

OMS for govt employees

The government has decided to supply rice to the third and fourth class employees of government, semi-government and autonomous bodies under Open Market Sale (OMS) system, reports BSS.

The decision will take effect immediately. The government has asked the persons interested to apply to the district controller of food through the head of their respective organisations mentioning the area from where they intend to take delivery.

JP: Caretaker govt

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clashes with police and consequent death of seven people in the town. Besides, special police super Anzad Hossain has been given the special task to supervise the inquiry, according to sources.

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caretaker government will not be involved in establishing accountability. It will be left with the next elected government," he assured.

The rally, organised by the city JP, was also addressed by the party leaders Moudud Ahmed, Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Shah Moazzem and Anwar Hossain Manju. It was chaired by the city JP president, Col (Ret'd) A Malek.

Amidst anti-government slogans and demands of "direct action" from the crowd, Chowdhury announced the party strategy for dislodging the BNP government. The programme includes a 72-hour hartal on 16, 17, 18 September throughout the country besides demonstrations, picketings, torch processions and mourning processions before the beginning of the strike.

Addressing the rally, Moudud Ahmed said, "The BNP has pushed the opposition to the streets closing all the avenues of a negotiated settlement to the political crisis in the country." The constitutional reforms proposed by the opposition were never allowed to be discussed in Parliament, he alleged.



Chandpur town during the day-long hartal yesterday. — Star photo by Shirin Akhter

Hartal at Chandpur

From Our Correspondent

CHANDPUR, Sept 6: A dawn-to-dusk hartal was observed at Chandpur today in demand for protection of the town from erosion of Meghna and Dakatia rivers.

People of all walks of life spontaneously observed the hartal, called by the Chandpur Protection Committee, comprising all political parties and socio-cultural organisations.

All vehicles including rickshaws were off the roads and petty fish and vegetable vendors in "kutcha" bazars joined all business establishments and educational institutions in pressing their demand for protecting the port town.

"Save Chandpur" was the slogan chanted by people of all walks of life who paraded the streets in numerous stray processions throughout the day in the town.

At a protest meeting in the afternoon, the Chandpur Protection Committee leaders got the townsmen pledged to join a day-long mass hunger strike in front of the DC's office and the Water Development Board office on September 19 to press their demand.

The Midnight File

Renewed NATO airstrikes on Serb army compound

LUKAVICA, Sept 6: Renewed NATO airstrikes have left a Serb army compound in this southern Sarajevo suburb almost deserted with windows shattered but no other serious damage visible, reports AP.

PM: Educate girl child

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community, she said.

The UN body arranged the discussion on "Education: Priority Action for Girls" at Beijing International Convention Centre to mark the Fourth World Conference on Women being held in the Chinese capital.

UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy received the Bangladesh Prime Minister when she arrived at the meeting venue in the morning to attend this special programme participated by delegates from around the world.

Endorsing the UNICEF initiative as an "extremely useful programme", Begum Zia said the imperative of educating the girl child must be understood in a wider perspective.

"An educated girl builds an enlightened family which ultimately leads to an enlightened nation," she said, but regretted that this is not easily acceptable to many traditional societies.

"In most cases, a fresh beginning had to be made," the prime minister said at the inaugural session of the programme while narrating how Bangladesh succeeded in spreading education, particularly among the girls, giving them priority in the programme.

As the country first decided to create mass awareness about the importance of educating the girls, she said the media and all other means had been geared to

JS session

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House in March last year, the sittings sometimes began behind schedules.

Despite the timely attendance of the ruling party MPs yesterday, most of the cabinet ministers remained absent from the sitting. Deputy Leader of the House Prof Badruddoza Choudhury, LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Abdus Salam Talukdar and Home Minister Abdul Matin Choudhury and some other ministers were present.

In the absence of Finance Minister Saifur Rahman and Shipping Minister M K Anwar, State Minister for Finance Mojibur Rahman and Minister for Shipping A B M Zahidul Haq moved two bills — the Ansar-VDP Development Bank Ordinance, 1995 and the Mongla Port Authority (Amendment) Bill.

Earlier, the House adopted separate obituary references on Md Keramat Ali Talukdar and Mirza Muraduz-zaman — both BNP MPs, former minister and provincial assembly member Abdul Matin Talukdar, ex-MP Syed Masud Rumi and former member of the provincial assembly Nabab Ali Sarwar Khan. They died after the last session of this Parliament.

This was followed by a brief question-answer session.

Before adjourning the session, the Deputy Speaker informed the House about the vacation of 142 parliamentary seats, belonging to the opposition parties including Awami League, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami.

Yesterday's sitting continued for three hours with nearly a half-an-hour break for Maghreb prayers. The session was adjourned at 8.06 pm and it resumes at 5 pm today.

Jamaat

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trial caretaker government.

He said fair election is never possible as the party in power always politicised administration, used black money and patronised terrorists to manipulate election results in its favour.

On the Prime Minister's proposal for resignation 30 days before election, the Jamaat leader said it is a partial recognition of the Opposition demand for a caretaker government.

But the proposal became ineffective as the Prime Minister is silent about who will run the government during that period. Nizami said.

About Begum Zia's September 1 speech, he said the Prime Minister's warning against hartal and projection of distorted news of the opposition programme over the state-owned media give a sign of imminent fall of this government.

PM: Polls

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alleviation and other socio-economic uplift efforts, she told the reporters accompanying her during the tour.

"Our socio-economic programmes are better than those of other developing countries," she observed in light of her exchange of views with world leaders.

Begum Zia said in her eyes China had achieved a tremendous development in different sectors since she last saw the socialist country. In this regard, she referred to her tour of China in 1981 and 1991.

She reached Dhaka at 7:45 pm yesterday.

One shot dead

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died shortly after an attack by a group of 20 unidentified armed people from Maniknagar.

The killing was a sequel to the murder of one Akhter at Maniknagar last month, police said. According to other sources, the incident was the result of a land dispute in the area.

Mojib's nephew, Nurul Islam, 25, an autorickshaw driver, was injured during the attack at about 11:45 am, police and medical sources said.

A teenaged boy, Razu, a sweeper of the Dhaka City Corporation, also received bullet injuries when the gang stormed the area at about 6 am.

The injured were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

Grameen Bank

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the purchase of simple tools, farm animals or a mode of transport that, with hard work, can make them self-sufficient.

Clinton, attending the Fourth UN World Conference on Women, said Grameen's trust was reflected in kind — 97 per cent of its loans were repaid within a year, proving that the women were an excellent risk.

Clinton said such "micro-credit" could be a lifeline for people who had been "marginalised ... down-sized" in the globalisation of the world economy, as companies cut payrolls and made staff work longer hours to remain competitive.

"Women just need a jump start," she said. This is the kind of joint effort that we need to support."

She recalled that help from the Grameen Bank and the South Shore Bank of Illinois had catalysed similar "micro-enterprise" projects in Arkansas, when her husband, Bill Clinton, was Governor.

Clinton was speaking at a panel organised by the UN Development Fund for Women (Unifem), to which she also announced a US contribution of a million dollars.

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brain surgery after which he went into a coma. In view of his worsening renal condition, a peritoneal dialysis was conducted, but all to no avail.

Chief minister Jyoti Basu expressed shock at the demise of the noted music director.

A pall of gloom descended on the world of film and music last night as the news of Salil Chowdhury's death spread.

Film maker Mrinal Sen, expressed deep shock at Chowdhury's death, describing him as pride of Bengal.

Borne 1925 in Assam, Salil Chowdhury inherited his interest in music from his father Dr Gyanandramoy Chowdhury, an expert of Indian classical and western music.