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Opposition agitation will never see success: PM

NASIRNAGAR, Brahmanbaria, Oct 8: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia today said the current Opposition agitation would never see success as the people do not support their 'illegal' demand, reports UNB.

"Their agitation for a caretaker government is unconstitutional and illegal," she said. "People know which agitation is right and which not."

Begum Zia made the remarks at public meeting at Ashutosh Pilot High School ground here in the afternoon as the major Opposition parties ended a 32-hour hartal today with a note of warning that they would go for tougher action if their demand for election under a neutral caretaker government is not met.

"It is possible to make agitation a success if it is waged against an illegal government. But it is impossible to succeed in an agitation against a democratic government," the Prime Minister observed.

She said the people had involvement with the anti-autocracy agitation to oust the illegal government. But everybody sees that there is no people's support to the current agitation of the Opposition.

She said her party went to power with people's mandate and people are very much with the BNP government. Refuting Opposition contention, she categorically said her government is totally legitimate and constitutional.

Begum Zia further said the

'Parliamentary Election-1991' medal for armed forces

A memento medal called the 'Parliamentary Election-1991' will be introduced for the members of three services of the country, the Defence Ministry in gazette notification said, reports BSS.

The presidential order in this connection will come into force with retrospective effect from February 27, 1991 — the day last national elections were held.

The delayed gazette notification (Aug 17, 1995) available in the city yesterday said the government has approved a proposal for introduction of a medal for military personnel in remembrance of the parliamentary elections, held on February 27, 1991. All the

Star photo

PM to receive Iranian President tomorrow

Accord on energy, manpower, trilateral transit likely

By Diplomatic Correspondent

Trade and economic relations between Tehran and Dhaka are expected to attain a new dimension during the forthcoming visit of Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani who arrives in the capital tomorrow on a four-day state visit.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia will receive the President and Madame Rafsanjani at the Zia International Airport in a departure from protocol.

An advance delegation of Iranian officials who arrived here on Saturday led by Rasoul Lahijan, Deputy Minister for Reconstruction, is having last minute discussions with Bangladesh government representatives to hammer out details for the signing of at least five memoranda of understanding (MOUs). These range from cooperation in energy and manpower sectors to obtaining transit facilities through Iran and Turkmenistan for despatch of Bangladeshi goods into Central Asian countries.

Other areas in which MOUs are being discussed and are likely to be signed after finalisation between officials of the two countries on October 12 are cooperation in agriculture sector, shipping, telecommunications, protection of private investments, scientific and technical cooperation, drug trafficking and avoidance of double taxation.

A significant MOU due to be signed is a transit agreement among Bangladesh, Iran and Turkmenistan which would facilitate passage of goods through Iranian ports and overland routes into neighbouring Turkmenistan. The trilateral agreement would enable Bangladeshi products to have access to neighbouring Central Asian countries.

The Minister for Foreign Economic Relations of

Star photo

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Dhaka Day by Day



Some pedestrians took shelter on a traffic island to protect themselves from rain during hartal hours in the city yesterday.

Hartal ends peacefully

By Staff Correspondent

The Opposition-called 32-hour hartal in five divisional headquarters ended at 2 pm yesterday with no report of any major untoward incident.

Awami League, Jatiya Party and Jamaat-e-Islami called the hartal to press their demands for dissolution of the present Parliament and general elections under a neutral caretaker government.

The three parties have also called a 96-hour hartal from October 16 if their demand is not met by then.

The 32-hour hartal was observed in Dhaka, Chittagong, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet. Rajshahi was exempted from the shutdown in view with the floods in the northern districts.

In the capital, all modes of transport except a good number of rickshaws went off the roads. But in some areas, passenger buses started coming out on the roads from around 12 noon.

Pickets were found somewhat tolerant about the playing of rickshaws during the hartal period. Pickets were not so active following the late autumn shower yesterday.

In one incident at Asad Gate, pro-hartal activists damaged a minibus coming from Gabtali at around 11:45 am. Police intervened when they tried to set fire to the bus.

Police chased a group of pickets when the latter pelted stones at them at Jatrabari crossing at about 10:30 am. None was, however, injured.

Processions were brought out and rallies held in Gulistan, Bangabandhu Avenue, Purana Paltan, Topkhana, Shabbagh, Farm Gate and Asad Gate areas of the city.

Educational institutions, shopping centres and business houses remained closed during the hartal period, while transaction in banks was poor and attendance in government offices was thin.

Police and BDR were seen patrolling the city streets throughout the hartal hours.

Railway sources said that train service between Dhaka and other parts of the country operated as usual.

Biman cancelled four of its domestic flights due to hartal. Biman sources said.

Normalcy in the city returned as soon as the hartal period was over.

Reports from Chittagong, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet said the hartal hours passed off peacefully, disrupting normal life.

Situation may worsen: DG Health

Diarrhoea claims 103 in Rajshahi division

By Staff Correspondent

A total of 103 people died of diarrhoeal diseases and 8161 were attacked so far in the flood affected districts of Rajshahi Division.

Diarrhoeal diseases might spread in the flood-hit areas with the recession of waters, said Prof Shamsuddin Siddiqui, Director General of Health Directorate at a press conference at Rajshahi circuit house last night, our correspondent reported.

The overall flood situation in Bogra, Naogaon, and Rajshahi is 'severe' the DG said.

He informed the journalists that about 2500 doctors and 12,000 health workers were working in the flood affected areas of Rajshahi division. Transport is the main obstacle in reaching services to the flood affected people, he said.

The flood situation remained unchanged in Rajshahi and Natore but continued to improve in other

Khaleda holds 3-hr meet with key party leaders

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia had a long discussion last night with three of her senior cabinet colleagues and key party leaders, who are believed to have been trying for a negotiation with the agitating opposition to end the persisting political impasse.

The three-hour meeting beginning at 8:30 pm took place at the residence of the Prime Minister.

Acting Secretary General of the BNP and Food and Agriculture Minister Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, Information and Commerce Minister Shamsul Islam and Communications Minister Oli Ahmed attended the meeting.

Details of the meeting could not be known immediately.

EC yet to compile total number of voters

By Staff Correspondent

The Election Commission (EC) could not give the exact number of voters in the country till yesterday though the final voters' list was published at local levels on Saturday.

A top EC official said that they were yet to compile the lists from different parts of the country. The total number of voters might be around 50.6 million, he said when contacted yesterday.

Meanwhile, the EC was scheduled to start the process of preparation and distribution of Identity (ID) cards through some 51 firms yesterday.

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NEWS BRIEFS

Sumatra quake: PM, Hasina shocked

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Awami League president Sheikh Hasina have expressed deep shock and sorrow at the deaths of 100 people in a severe earthquake in Sumatra Island of Indonesia. In separate messages to Indonesian President Soeharto, Begum Zia and Hasina conveyed sympathy to the bereaved families, report agencies.

Teesta, Ekota train services extended

Bangladesh Railway has decided to run Teesta and Ekota intercity trains today and tomorrow — their respective day-off — to facilitate journey of the passengers stranded due to disruption of road communication in the northern region of the country, reports BSS.

DU reopens today

By DU Correspondent

Classes of the Dhaka University will resume today after a week-long Durga Puja and autumn vacation. The classes remained closed from October 1.

BCL leader granted bail

PABNA, Oct 8: A Chhatra League (S-P) leader, convicted in absence last month, was given a 10-day ad interim bail today. Official sources said KM Hasan Kabir Arif, Vice President of the BCL central committee and former VP of Edward College Students' Union surrendered to the court this morning and prayed for ad interim bail. The court accepted his prayer to allow him to appeal to the higher court, reports UNB.

Banks still maintaining 5pc more liquidity

By Inam Ahmed and RM Titumir

In spite of a fall in liquidity in the banking sector, the scheduled banks are still maintaining about five per cent more liquidity than their requirement of Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR), according to senior officials of the finance ministry.

According to latest figures of Bangladesh Bank, banks are maintaining about Tk 2300 crore excess liquidity, about Tk 900 crore in securities and about Tk 1400 crore in cash. During the last fiscal year, excess liquidity with the banks usually ranged between four to five thousand crore taka.

This fall in liquidity is due to bond financing by banks and credit expansion, the officials claimed saying there is nothing to fear.

The Nationalised Commercial Banks (NCBs) are maintaining liquidity of about Tk 1500 crore, private banks about Tk 500 crore and foreign banks about Tk 300 crore in excess of their

SLR. The officials said.

Bulk of the securities belong to the three NCBs — the Sonali, Janata and Agrani banks.

"The existing crunch on liquidity arose out of the banks' investing in various types of long term tradeable bonds in excess of their SLR requirements," said one of the officials. "The situation is expected to improve in a short time with the various monetary measures taken by the central bank."

The Bangladesh Bank has already decided to stop paying interest on foreign exchange reserves kept under SLR with the central bank by the scheduled banks. This step will force those banks with foreign exchange reserves to look for bonds and tradeable securities in the money market, a senior official of the Bangladesh Bank said. The banks which now have cash crisis will then trade their bonds which will remove

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AL threatens to go for tougher programmes

By Staff Correspondent

Awami League leaders yesterday threatened to gherao the Prime Minister's residence and "paralyse the country through tougher programmes" if the government failed to fulfil the demands of the Opposition even after its planned 96-hour hartal from October 16.

The AL leaders were addressing a rally in front of their Bangabandhu Avenue party office here after the 32-hour hartal called by the opposition political parties in five divisional headquarters demanding dissolution of parliament and holding of general election under a neutral caretaker government.

Presided over by Reazuddin Ahmed, vice president of the city AL, the rally was addressed by presidium members Abdus Samad Azad.

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Fall of BNP govt imminent: JP

By Staff Correspondent

The Jatiya Party yesterday reiterated its resolve to continue the ongoing agitation until the demand for general elections under a neutral caretaker government is realised.

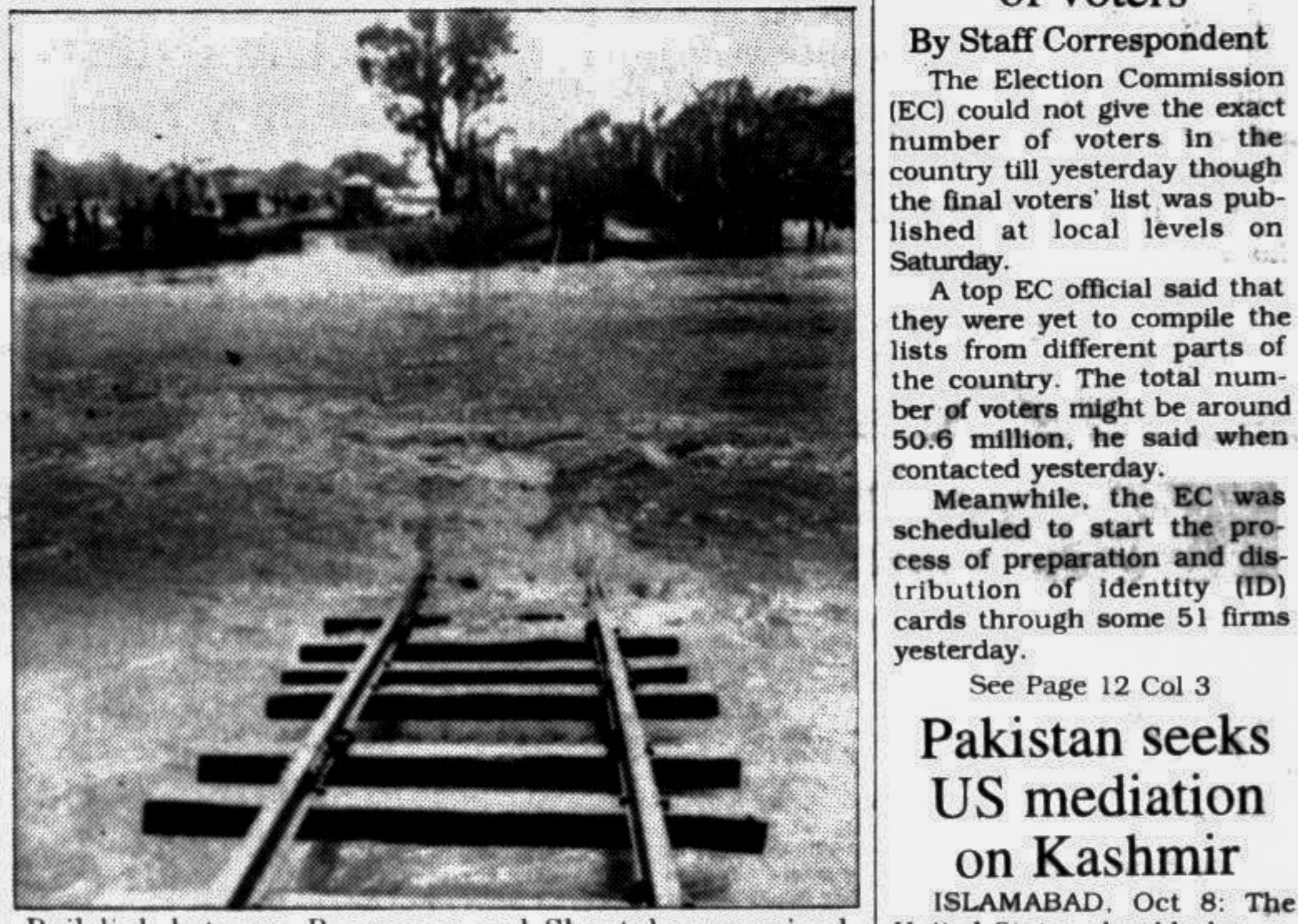
Addressing a post-hartal rally at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram mosque in the afternoon, JP leader said that the days of the BNP government were numbered and its fall was imminent.

Roushan Ershad, the wife of the former president HM Ershad congratulated the people on observing the hartal successfully in the five divisional headquarters.

Amidst slogans demanding the release of the deposed president, Roushan, a presidium member of JP, urged the people to observe the 96-hour hartal scheduled to start from Oct 16.

"The day my husband is released from jail, I will quit politics," she said urging people to gear up the movement for the release of

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Rail link between Bonarpara and Shantahar remained snapped till yesterday as a portion of the rail track was washed away earlier by the flood waters at Bati in Gaibandha near Bonarpara station.

Operation of Power Cell to be delayed further

By Sharier Khan

The activities of the newly formed Power Cell under the Energy Ministry will be delayed further by at least another month as the recruitment process has not been completed and its office premises is yet to be finalised, according to ministry officials.

Set up four months ago to facilitate private sector participation in power development and to undertake the task of determining power tariff for private power generation.

Only two officials out of 28 posts, mostly for engineers and specialists, have joined on deputation in the Cell for a two-year term.

The Cell would be fully and effectively functioning only after joining of a World Bank consultant, whose task would be to review the memorandum of understandings (MOUs) signed with foreign private power companies and help frame a model power purchase agreement.

The World Bank consultant is likely to join the Cell next month, Energy Ministry sources said.

The slow pace of progress in setting up the Power Cell would also delay the framing of the model tariff structure by another nine to ten months, the ministry sources said.

"The internal processing of the government to start the functioning of the Power Cell has been completed," the source said.

Divided into three components, the jobs at the Cell is falling to attract engineers and experts, the source pointed out. "Because, these jobs offer a monthly salary of Tk 20,000 to 25,000 mostly and do not offer any bonus on any occasion," he said. Whereas, their regular jobs offer a monthly salary of Tk 9,000 basic, plus 40 per cent house rent, festival bonuses and a number of facilities which are not available.

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Equipment for Ctg Port arrive

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Oct 8: Two consignments of equipment for Chittagong Port, imported from the US and Italy, reached the port today.

The consignments, 10 tractors and 4 forklifts are part of the equipment being procured by the Chittagong Port Authority to ease the congestion at the port through quick unloading of cargo, according to port officials.

The rest of the equipment will reach the port by the end of November this year.