

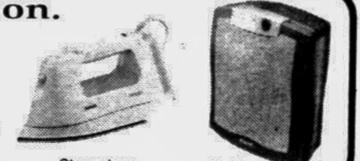
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BNP suffers dilemma over return to JS

AL needs opposition in House but makes no move

By Nazmul Ashraf

BNP is still undecided about joining the Jatya Sangsad session beginning November 1. And chances are slim that the party will return to the House while the anti-government campaign is gathering steam.

The ruling Awami League sources spoke of fresh plans about attempts to bring the opposition parties, especially the BNP, back to parliament. But no concrete move has been made as yet.

The opposition parties walked out of the House on July 5 protesting the passage of the Upazila bill when the treasury bench rejected the changes they had proposed. They have since refused to join JS sessions.

It is very crucial for the government to ensure Opposition presence in the House during the forthcoming session when it hopes to move the planned constitutional amendment on parliamentary seats reserved for women.

The Cabinet recently approved a draft law seeking continuation of the reserved seats for another 10 years as the provision expires in 2000. The passage of the bill requires two-thirds of the House members, which the ruling party and its allies cannot make.

According to sources, the BNP lawmakers are divided in their opinions on their return to parliament. Quite a large

number, which is growing, of MPs argue that joining the JS sessions would be meaningless after launching the "one-point movement" to oust the government.

This group of MPs, strongly backed by their non-MP party colleagues, also insists that the resignation letters of the party lawmakers be submitted to the Speaker immediately "to begin the process of end to the present Parliament".

More than a year ago, BNP MPs deposited their resignation letters with party chief Khaleda Zia.

But others prefer joining the coming session before deciding on a "permanent boycott". This group argues that the party MPs' presence would help "expose" the treasury bench and thus could make a better case for the boycott.

Meanwhile, recent remarks by Khaleda, who seldom attended sessions of the 39-month-old seventh Parliament, bore clear indications of her party's permanent boycott.

Opposition chief whip Khandaker Delwar Hossain told The Daily Star yesterday that the BNP was yet to decide on its return to parliament. A decision will come from a meeting of the BNP Parliamentary Party (BNPPP), which he said was expected when the session would be very close.

Asked about differences in

opinion on attending parliamentary sessions and the party chief's indication for a permanent boycott, he said, "An official decision would only be taken in the BNPPP meet".

An influential party leader said the planned BNPPP meeting would be influenced to a large extent by the developments in the days before November 1 as well as during the October 21 hartal called by BNP-led alliance.

A BNP decision on the Parliament is also subject to consultations with its partners - the Jatya Party of Ershad and Jamaat-e-Islami, he added. The other alliance partner, IOJ, has no MP.

Sources indicated that the crucial decision might also come from the party's policy-making National Standing Committee or even from the party chief as was the case with the last session which BNP did not attend. The BNPPP only endorsed her decision but did not resolve to continue the boycott of the present parliament.

The BNP's boycott of the 14th session ending in the first week of September was attributed to the government plan to allow transhipment facility to India.

The last time the party MPs were present in the House was July 5, three days before the 13th session was over.



Secretaries general of four opposition parties holding a meeting with JP chief H M Ershad in the city yesterday to chalk out their next action programmes. — Star photo

Top lawyers decide not to plead for Ershad Shikdar

From Staff Correspondent

KHULNA, Oct 19: Noted lawyers of Khulna Bar Association have decided not to plead for Ershad Shikdar in court.

Some lawyers have expressed their desire to defend him in the court while others are in a fix what to do. But all are afraid of taking his case because of public sentiment, according to sources in the association.

Leaders of the ruling party and all its front organisations have been urging the lawyers not to defend him in court.

When asked, advocate Feroze Ahmed, Secretary of Khulna Bar Association, today said the association has not taken any decision. It will depend on individual decision, he said.

Shikdar was produced before the court of Additional District & Sessions Judge (Court-1) Hasan Imam today in connection with the fatal murder case. He was produced before the same court in connection with the same case earlier on October 6.

But charge could not be framed today due to some legal complications, said AC (Court) Ebadul Islam. Four out of the 10 accused in this murder case are absconding. They are Nasir Khan, Faruk Jamai, Shaheb Ali and Zainal Shaikh. The next date for hearing the case has been fixed on November 23, he said.

KMP today claimed that Shikdar killed at least 23 people only during the last ten years. The victims were Moslem, Jainal, Panna, Nantu, Insaif, Khaleque, Kamal, Shajahan, Teko Aziz, Dakaiya Aziz, Akimul, Abul, Jahangir, Farid.

Mouze Ali, Khalid, Shiraj, Kalu, Altaf, Fatik, Babu, Barak and Kasher.

So far, 17 murder cases have been filed with different police stations in the metropolitan city. Filing of cases for the rest of the killings are under process, sources in the KMP said. Shikdar is now on a 32-day remained in connection with five murder cases only.

The KMP has written a letter to the Income Tax Department for investigation into sources of Shikdar's fabulous wealth and tax evasion. Income tax officials will meet KMP officials on October 23 to discuss the matter and filing of cases, they said.

The Khulna City Corporation will also be requested to look into official records regarding any lapses in payment of holding tax and other dues, the source added.

Meanwhile, two Sub Inspectors of Khulna thana have been transferred with immediate effect. Town Sub Inspector (TSI) Alamgir Hossain has been transferred to Barisal on charge of taking bribes from Shikdar at different times. The KMP has evidence of his connection with Shikdar, the sources said.

Sub-Inspector Fazlur Rahman has been transferred to Rangamati for his alleged involvement in torturing Shikdar during interrogation in connection with the Jahangir murder case.

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Bus driver beaten to death in Tangail

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They took her to a nearby abandoned house and raped her one after another. Later, they strangled the girl.

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UZ polls

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He said the meeting discussed the government's "conspiracy" to disunite the four parties and expressed the determination to maintain unity.

"None of the alliance partners will step into government's conspiracy," he said.

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Bijoya Dashami today

By Staff Correspondent

Bijoya Dashami today. Durga Puja, the greatest religious festival of the Hindu community, began on Friday last.

The emergence of Goddess Durga will be held tonight.

President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in separate messages greeted the members of the country's Hindu community on the occasion of their religious festival.

Maj Gen (rtd) C R Dutt, BU, Bhandonta Bodhril Mahathero and Siril Sikder, the trio Presidents and Dr Nim Chandra Bhoumik, General Secretary of Bangladesh Hindu, Buddhist, Christian Unity Council yesterday greeted the Hindu community.

The leaders urged them to be imbued with the teachings of Bijoya and eliminate crime and injustice for prosperity of the country.

Mayor of Dhaka Mohammad Hanif yesterday visited different Puja Mandaps including Shakhari Bazar, Tanti Bazar, Mohammadpur Bashbari, Raier Bazar, Zafraabad and Pulpur.

Student's bid to mug teacher on DU campus

By DU Correspondent

A former Dhaka University student, Hafizur Rahman, yesterday made an abortive bid on the campus at mugging Dr. Muhammad Shahjahan Mia, who once taught him Bengali literature at the university.

The mugger, however, was polite in his approach during the stick-up.

"Sir, give me Tk 500," said the student riding a racing bicycle, as he waylaid the rickshaw carrying his former teacher.

Refusal by the teacher rather enraged his former student, who, in turn, raised his demand to Tk 2,000, which he threatened to extort forcibly, unless the teacher obliged willingly.

The teacher then cried out for help. A crowd chased the mugger into the adjacent Zahurul Haq Hall, where he resides, illegally.

Stupefied by the behaviour of his former student, Dr Shahjahan lodged a complaint with the Proctor's office. He also filed a case with Ramna police in this regard.

"It is really unfortunate that one of my former students tried to rob me," Dr Shahjahan later told The Daily Star.

Another guest house in Baridhara sealed

By Staff Correspondent

Another unauthorised guest house in the city's Baridhara area was sealed by a joint team of Gulshan police, Special Branch of police and Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) yesterday, police said.

The joint team has started sealing unauthorised guest house in posh areas of the city after a special committee, headed by Director General of DNC, was formed to curb drug abuse.

The joint team has so far sealed six guest houses in Banani, Gulshan and Baridhara areas since Friday.

The joint team yesterday raided Best Eastern, a guest house, on Road Number One in Baridhara at about 4 pm.

A general diary was filed with Gulshan thana in this connection.

Senior US official to visit Dhaka from Oct 23

By Diplomatic Correspondent

A senior US government official, Matt Daley, will be in Dhaka on a two-day visit beginning October 23. He will be here to discuss a wide-range of bilateral issues concerning Washington and Dhaka with senior government officials and leaders, a spokesman of the US embassy said yesterday.

Referring to a report published in a daily yesterday that US President Clinton's envoy Bruce Reidel will proceed to Dhaka from Delhi, the spokesman said, the report was not correct.

On President Bill Clinton's proposed visit to Bangladesh, the spokesman said the US President has expressed his intention to visit Dhaka early next year, but no date has yet been worked out.

Regarding Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's desire to take a bilateral trip to the US the spokesman said that no date has been fixed yet. He, however, added, "We are working with the Bangladesh Ministry of Foreign Affairs."

No steps taken

From page 1

He said, "The responsibility does not lie with the health ministry alone. There are many government bodies for checking food adulteration."

Referring to the responsibility of Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) in this regard, Reza said, "If those industries are allowed to manufacture adulterated food, then the country could be flooded with such hazardous food."

Benazir wants to be PM, Imran backs coup

LONDON, Oct 19: Former Pakistani leader Benazir Bhutto said today she wants to return to her homeland and become prime minister again, reports AFP.

Benazir, speaking in London where she is now living, urged the country's new military ruler, Gen Pervez Musharraf, to draw up a timetable for a return to democracy after last week's bloodless coup.

Although declining to condone the coup which ousted the elected government of her arch rival Nawaz Sharif, she has already voiced understanding that the situation had become untenable.

Speaking here today, she insisted: "I do want to go back to Pakistan to participate in a free election."

She said she wanted "to go back to my people and ask them to elect me as a prime minister" again, but "only when I feel that my people have a chance to exercise their political rights."

Imran Khan
Meanwhile, former cricket star-turned politician Imran Khan said today he was prepared to provide alleged evidence of "corruption" against deposed premier Nawaz Sharif.

"We will fully cooperate with the new government as we have collected details of money laundering, corruption and fraud against Sharif," the 45-year-old Khan told reporters in Karachi.

"I see his future in jail," Khan said, branding Sharif's two-and-a-half year tenure as "dictatorial and aristocratic rule of a corrupt ruler."

He backed the military coup, saying: "whosoever believes in democracy never likes to see the military coming into power, but the situation here was different. It was necessary, it was their compulsion."

11 BNP men

From page 1

The Second Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court yesterday framed charges against the 11 under Section 3 of the Explosives Act.

A petition was moved on behalf of the accused for discharging them from the case. Rejecting the petition, the judge Mia Mohammad Sharif fixed January 3 for cross-examination of the witnesses.

SEC bends rules to favour Beximco cos

From page 1

1999, the board again decided to refer it to the legal expert.

Meanwhile, out of the total amount Beximco made a payment for Tk 5.20 crore to ICB till October 5, 1999 and pledged to pay the rest outstanding amount by October 31, 1999. A post-dated cheque has also been issued in favour of ICB to draw the balance amount on the last date of the current month.

At the last board meeting on October 5, 1999 Justice Qudus Chowdhury gave his legal opinion which was different from his earlier opinion at the inquiry stage.

DG level meeting begins Oct 25 Issue of undemarcated border to be raised

By Mizan Ali and Sheikh Nazrul Islam

The issue of still undemarcated 6.5 km border and 35.5 km demarcated border where pillars could not be marked will come up at the forthcoming DG level meeting between Bangladesh, Rifles and Indian BSF in Dhaka, highly placed official sources said yesterday.

The undemarcated land border includes 1.54 km along Barobari, 1.2 km along Muhurichar and the rest along Lathi Tila, officials said.

The two countries share 4156 km land border. Of this, 6.5 km are yet to be demarcated and pillars could not be marked in 35.5 km since the signing of Indo-Bangladesh Treaty in 1974.

The four-day DG level meeting is scheduled to begin on October 25. This will be part of the twice-a-year regular meetings between top officials of BDR and BSF.

The meeting is being held against the backdrop of increasing border clashes, killing of Bangladeshis by BSF and 'push-in' of Indian citizens into Bangladesh by BSF, creating tension in some border areas.

Twenty-six Bangladeshis were killed in BSF firing in the last 10 months up to October 4, according to a home ministry report.

Besides, 957 people have been pushed into Bangladesh by BSF through different border areas over the last 20 months. Officials termed this 'a second wave of push-in' by BSF.

Earlier, during 1992-95, BSF pushed in 14,505 people into Bangladesh. But BDR with the help of people of bordering areas sent them back.

The issue of border demarcation and marking of pillars were also raised at the last DG level BDR-BSF meeting in Delhi in March this year and a DG level meeting between land records departments of the two countries.

"The issues could not be settled as per the decisions of the meetings," said one official requesting anonymity.

Earlier, it was decided that by May this year, demarcation of 6.5 km land border will be completed and pillars will be fixed along 35.5 km marked borders. But the decisions were never complied with by India and the process is on for over 25 years," he added.

Some top officials of the home ministry and the foreign ministry told The Daily Star that the neighbouring country always raised various pleas to delay the process.

JS body discusses 38 audit objections of Railway

The Public Accounts Committee of the Parliament yesterday discussed 38 audit objections reports involving about Tk 5 crore of Bangladesh Railway of the 1987-88 financial year placed by the Comptroller and Auditor General, reports UNB.

A number of decisions were adopted to resolve the objections in the meeting after elaborate discussion. The meeting also discussed the income and expenditure of the railway, maintenance of railway property, development of passenger service and handing over of some train services to the private sector.

Besides, the meeting laid stress on special survey of the railway lands.

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The opposition leaders at a press conference at the local press club this morning urged the Chittagong City Awami League not to create any untoward incident by holding counter programme in the name of staging mass rally at the same venue at same time on October 21.

The opposition leaders also called upon the police administration not to make any attempt to foil the opposition's mass rally at the scheduled venue at Laldighi Maidan. Otherwise, they warned that a tougher agitation programme would be taken up.

Chittagong City BNP president Mir Md Nasir Uddin read out the written statement in the conference which was attended by Jamaate Islami City Ameer principal Moulana Abu Taher, City JP president Jahangir Alam and Islami Oikya Jotte city president Mufti Moulana Izharul Islam.

The opposition alliance announced a two-day agitation programme, including a protest rally at Laldighi Maidan at 4 pm tomorrow to protest what they called 'evil design' by the ruling Awami League to create an untoward incident.

Parliament elects president in Indonesia today

JAKARTA, Oct 19: Thousands of supporters and opponents of presidential hopeful Megawati Sukarnoputri clogged Jakarta's streets today as Indonesia's parliament moved closer to choosing a head of state, reports AP.

The 700-member People's Consultative Assembly will decide tomorrow who will lead Indonesia for the next five years.

Hundreds of riot police and troops blocked a crowd of more than 5,000 anti-Megawati supporters from marching on the parliament building. There were no immediate reports of clashes or arrests.

Many in the crowd near the legislature said the daughter of Sukarno, the nation's first president, was unsuitable for the top job. Some criticized her policies and said she did not have the ability to solve massive economic and social problems.

Details on page-9

Trawler capsizes: 8 fishermen missing in Bay

CHITTAGONG, Oct 19: Eight fishermen were missing at a trawler capsized in the Bay early today with 24 fishermen and crews aboard, reports UNB.

Crew of two foreign ships in the outer-anchorage rescued 20 fishermen of the trawler FB Sagar.

Port Radio Control sources said Greek flag-carrying oil tanker spires rescued 12 while Panamanian MV Marry Noor another four.

The rest eight were missing till filing of this report.