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PM ready for dialogue on one-point demand

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday announced that she was ready to sit for dialogue with the Opposition with any agenda including its one-point demand.

"I am ready to discuss any issue if she (Khaleda Zia) desires, even her one-point demand (resignation of the government). I am willing to sit for dialogue anytime anywhere as she likes. My politics does not go by ego," a lively Hasina told a group of newsmen at the Jatiya Sangsad corridor.

But the Opposition will have to fix its agenda for such a dialogue, she said.

The prime minister was approached by waiting newsmen as she emerged from a meeting with her party deputies at the conference room of the parliament.

"We are always ready for dia-

logue because we do not believe in politics of confrontation. We want our pro-people programmes to continue," she said.

"The place for dialogue can be the parliament or even my house."

The prime minister also replied to questions about next general election and election of local government bodies including city corporations, current opposition agitation, postponed Saarc Summit, performances of her government and the Opposition and the just concluded meeting of ruling party MPs she presided.

The two-hour meeting of the Awami League Parliamentary Party (ALPP) was held soon after the Jatiya Sangsad session was adjourned at 11:35 am.

Asked about her plan for the next general election, the PM reminded that she earlier of-

ferred holding of the election in 2000. She regretted that the offer was then rejected by Khaleda Zia, also the BNP chief.

"She missed the train ... Time and tide wait for none ... Can she swallow her words if we repeat the offer? Let her count the tides now, we'll go for the election in time," Hasina said jokingly.

About the disputed city corporation polls, she said, "All local body elections will be held to continue the democratic process in the country. We are always for election because we believe in democracy and people's power. No confrontational situation now exists in the country, but the opposition parties are trying to create this."

The prime minister criticised the opposition-called hartals saying, they do not have any issue to go for such pro-

grammes. "They can come back to parliament and raise any issue. I am ready to reply them. They have been given enough opportunities to speak on the floor of the House. But still they have opted for the path of confrontation."

Hasina questioned how could the Opposition justify its on-going hartal despite postponement of the process for city corporation polls. She condemned "acts of violence like hurling bombs on vehicles, burning cars and rickshaws and killing people in the name of hartal."

The Opposition's earlier hartals against the Ganges water sharing treaty with India, CHT peace accord and the proposed transhipment facility to India were also illogical, she said.

She ridiculed the Opposition

80 hurt in sporadic clashes on first day Two killed in city during hartal



WHO IS THE OTHER MAN? Plainclothes bandishing shotgunners were seen moving around in the city's 'major trouble spots' during hartal hours yesterday. Here, one of them (R) put 'police' on his chest. But who is the other man? When asked, DC DB MA Hannan defended it saying, this is not restricted by law.

Star Report

A ward level BNP leader and a young housewife were killed and at least 50 people including two policemen were injured in sporadic incidents of violence in the city during the country-wide dawn to dusk hartal yesterday.

Another 30 people including five policemen were injured in gunfight between activists of the Awami League and the BNP in Bhola.

Road communication across the country remained snapped and business houses, educational institutions, private offices, shops and stock exchanges remained closed due to the hartal.

Transactions in banks were limited.

Train and launch services were affected partially, officials said.

The BNP-led opposition alliance called the hartal to protest cancellation of public holiday on 'the National Revolution and Solidarity Day' (November 7). It also called a dawn to dusk hartal across the country today to 'resist' submission of nomination papers for election of three city corporations.

In the city, gunshots were exchanged and bombs were exploded in several areas during clashes between pro-hartal and anti-hartal activists, police and witnesses said.

Two people were beaten by a mob near Golap Shah Mazar on suspicion of throwing homemade bombs. Police said they took the injured - Anwar Hossain Swapan, 22 and Yunus, 18 - to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

During the hartal hours yesterday, a limited number of state owned buses and private minibuses plied under police protection plied on major city roads. The number of passengers was less than usual. Rickshaws and pushcarts plied in most of the city areas.

Babul Hossain, 32, general secretary of Shayampur unit of BNP, was gunned down at about 5:45 pm near his house at Merajanagar while he was going by a motor cycle along with a friend. His friend alleged that anti-hartal elements fired the shot that hit Babul. He was rushed to DMCH where doctors pro-

New MDs of four banks

By Monjur Mahmud

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday approved appointment of managing directors of Sonali Bank, Agrani Bank, Rupali Bank and Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank (RAKUB).

She also approved appointment of two deputy managing directors, one of Sonali Bank and the other of Rupali Bank.

Md Hossain Acting MD of Sonali Bank, MA Yusuf DMD of Agrani Bank, Yasin Ali DMD of Rupali Bank and AKM Sajedur Rahman Acting MD of RAKUB have been appointed managing directors of these banks.

Yusuf Ali Hawladar General Manager of Sonali Bank and Yunus Ali Hawladar General Manager of Rupali Bank have been appointed deputy managing directors of these banks.

Their names were recommended by an eight-member panel after they were interviewed by the Promotion Committee of the Finance Ministry on October 16, sources said.

NAM summit venue now at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar

The government has finally decided to build the conference hall for the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar instead of Osmani Udyan, report agencies.

Briefing newsmen at the foreign office yesterday, Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad said five venues were suggested and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina selected Sher-e-Bangla Nagar (beside Chandrima Udyan) for construction of the summit hall.

He said China would extend financial assistance and provide other technical and logistic support for its construction.

A team of Chinese experts is expected to arrive soon, he added.

When a journalist welcomed the government's decision saying, "good sense has prevailed upon the government," the foreign minister said: "We have always good sense since we really want to serve the people and ensure development."

Abdus Samad Azad also expressed his optimism about Bangladesh's success in election to the post of Secretary General of the 54-member Commonwealth.

Former Foreign Secretary Ambassador Farooq Sobhan is contesting the coveted office. Voting will take place during a three-day Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in the South African city of Durban, beginning November 12.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina leaves here November 11 to lead Bangladesh delegation at the CHOGM.

In reply to a question, he said Bangladesh was enjoying majority support from the member states of the Commonwealth for the Secretary-General post.

Asked about India's position, Azad said though late, the neighbouring country gave in-

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Prayer Timings

November 8		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-10	5-40
Zohr	12-45	1-30
Asr	3-55	4-10
Maghrib	5-25	5-30
Esha	7-15	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

Appointment of 8 lecturers on ad hoc basis VC's 'unilateral decision' sparks resentment among JU teachers

By JU Correspondent

Appointments are being given to non-deserving candidates on political consideration, alleged another senior teacher of the university requesting anonymity.

As per the University Act of 1973, the VC has special power to appoint teachers on ad-hoc basis if any department needs teacher immediately, and maintaining all the procedure seems quite a lengthy process, only then the VC can apply this power.

The newly-appointed eight lecturers are Mrs Pinaki Sinha and Fakrudin Ali Ahmed (Botany), Khondoker Kamrunnesa and Shwadhin Sen (Archaeology), Mohammad Tareq and Hafizur Rahman (Environmental Science), Abdullah Kafae (International Relations) and Badiar Alam (Bio-chemistry and Molecular Biology).

Sources said, a female lecturer was appointed following recommendation from the chairman of Botany department, who is her husband. She was rejected twice earlier. The chairman of the department is a members of the selection body.

As per rules, authorities have to replace a member of the selection body if his relative appears before the body for interview.

Two lecturers were appointed on ad-hoc basis in Archaeology department though applications were invited for the two posts and the candidates were issued interview cards to appear before the selection committee on November 9.

Another lecturer has been appointed in the International Relations department though he did not complete his graduation and Masters degree in International Relations. His application was rejected in an earlier occasion after the university authorities found in a probe that he was involved in anti-social activities, the sources claimed. This time, his

Opposition plans 'tougher' action programme

By Staff Correspondent

Leaders of the BNP-led opposition alliance yesterday said tougher action programmes will be announced today to intensify the current movement for fall of the Awami League government.

The government has mounted repression on opposition leaders and activists as it has started facing a mass movement. But it will not be able to suppress the movement through torture and arrests, they said at a press briefing at the official residence of the Leader of the Opposition after yesterday's hartal.

They vowed to resist the city corporation and upazila polls and said opposition parties will not participate in any election with the AL government in power and Chief Election Commissioner Abu Hena in office.

Opposition activists will not return home till fall of the government. Its fall is imminent, BNP leader M Shamsul Islam said.

He said the government has

Diwali turns disaster Market blaze kills 45 in India

NEW DELHI, Nov 7: Fires gutted shops selling firecrackers in four cities in northern India during the major Hindu festival of Diwali, killing 55 people, police said today, reports AP.

At least 45 people were killed as the blaze spread through a crowded market in Sonapat in Haryana state Saturday night, 50 kilometers northwest of New Delhi, United News of India news agency reported.

Twenty-five bodies were recovered Sunday morning from a shop selling plastic goods after people apparently took shelter there and closed the metal shutters behind them, said Sonapat police sub-inspector Sant Ram.

He said the victims, who included two owners of the shop, died of asphyxiation as the smoke filled the building, which also was stacked with plastic goods, dishware and firecrackers. Seventeen shops were gutted in the blaze, he said.

Thirteen people were hospitalized with burn injuries in Sonapat hospitals and many others were taken to hospitals in New Delhi, officials at the police control room said.

One policeman was killed and another suffered serious burns when trying to rescue people.

Several concrete walls collapsed as fireworks exploded. Rescue workers dug through the debris with their bare hands, looking for bodies of the victims.

Press Trust of India news agency quoted police as saying an electrical short circuit in one of the shops may have caused the blaze.

Similar fires in the city of Amritsar in Punjab killed three people, while a blaze gutted shops in Gaziabad district in Uttar Pradesh, killing seven people, the report said.

Diwali marks the victory of the Hindu god Rama over the demon king Ravana in Hindu mythology. The holiday is celebrated with fireworks, lighting of lamps and feasting.

In Amritsar, the fire gutted 70 shops and panic-stricken

Young man shot dead in city

By Staff Correspondent

A young man was shot dead by his rivals in front of his house at Ulan under Khilgaon thana yesterday morning, family source said.

The dead was identified as Maksudul Huq, 20.

It is not a political killing and has no link with the hartal, his mother Taslima Mansur said. Of the five children, Fanku was the only son of the family.

The gunmen shot him in his head point blank, hospital sources said quoting witnesses.

Victim's mother blamed seven young men, including Palash, Sattar, Ripon, Zakir and Iqbal of the area for the killing.

Fanku, a former student of Tejgaon College, was shot at about 10:30 am on way to his residence at Ulan Road, his mother said.

Doctors declared Fanku dead soon after his admission to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), his family and hospital sources said.

"Fanku had some bad habits including taking of drugs," said one of the relatives.

The group which killed him today had also stabbed him in his abdomen about three months back," Fanku's mother said.

Local people refused to make any comment about the deceased.

When contacted, Khilgaon police confirmed the killing of Fanku but could not give details.

Dozens of dredgers collecting sand from Meghna 'illegally' Villagers in 5 unions of Munshiganj fear erosion

By Mustak Hossain back from Gazaria

Indiscriminate collection of sand from the Meghna bed by contractors in an unauthorised and unplanned way has made villagers in five unions of Munshiganj district worried about their future.

Thousands of villagers in Baluchara, Nayanagar, Gazaria, Kazipura and Ispanirchar unions fear that their lands and homesteads will be eroded by the river if this continues.

During a recent visit to the area, some local people told this correspondent that at least one hundred locally made dredgers were engaged by the contractors for collection of sand from the riverbed, in violation of conditions in their permits. Use of dredger is not allowed and contractors are supposed to collect sand manually, they claimed.

This correspondent saw at least 55 dredgers collecting sand from the river bed and more than one hundred trawlers carrying those to banks, to be carried by trucks to *balu mohals* for sale.

The daily collection of sand is about 30 lakh cft, sources concerned said. Besides massive erosion of banks, such indiscriminate collection of sand may cause change in the river course, they said.

They even collect sand all the night, and from near the banks, violating terms of the permits," said Jugol Chandra Barman of Nayanagar village, who shifted his house thrice due to erosion caused by collection of sand. His house will vanish into the river if only a few yards more are eroded.

The permits allow them to collect sand only during day time from the bed, at least 700 feet from both the banks," he claimed.

As per law, sand can be collected during day time from only the bed when a river dries up.

Mohammad Ahsanullah, local Union Parishad Chairman said, "I lodged a complaint with the local administration to stop such indiscriminate collection of sand immediately, but to no result. The contractors are also digging earth from areas close the banks, threatening erosion." There is no monitoring, he alleged.

The government is losing about Tk two crore revenue per month because of this indiscriminate sand collection, sources claimed.

Some fishermen alleged that they could not fish due to operation of dredgers and movement of trawlers round the clock.

When contacted an official of Bangladesh Geological Survey

Sporadic cracker blasts mark hartal in Ctg

From Staff Correspondent

CHITTAGONG, Nov 7: Sporadic cracker blasts marked the first day of two-day hartal in the port city today. No casualty was reported.

A rickshaw was set ablaze by pickets in front of BNP office at Nur Ahmed road at noon. The pickets exploded crackers there while police lobbed two tear gas shells to disperse them. Both the groups chased each other for some time. The situation was later brought under control, police said.

The opposition activists held rallies and processions at different points of the city during the hartal.

The ruling Awami League and Jubo League also held an anti-hartal rally in front of New Market crossing in the



Fishermen (R) of five unions in Munshiganj allege they cannot go fishing these days due to indiscriminate dredging (L) and movement of trawlers round the clock in the Meghna.