

AL calls hartal tomorrow to protest attack

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition Awami League has called a countrywide dawn-to-dust hartal tomorrow protesting the armed attack on party chief Sheikh Hasina's motorcade at Kolaroa in Satkhira.

AL Presidium member Abdus Samad Azad announced the programme at a hurriedly called press conference at the party's central office at Bangabandhu Avenue in the city yesterday afternoon.

At the press conference, AL leaders strongly condemned and protested the attack. They alleged that ruling party cadres led by Rafiqul Mazhar, elder brother of BNP lawmaker in Kolaroa, launched the attack to kill Hasina.

Samad Azad said the decision to call hartal was taken at an hour-long emergency meeting of senior leaders at the party's central office after receipt of the news of attack.

"We have already informed all party units across the country and urged the leaders and workers to make the hartal a success," he said.

Samad Azad came down heavily on the BNP-led four-party alliance government and said it will have to bear the responsibility for the attack. "Such attacks on our party chief and other leaders and workers are on since the present government came

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I am not scared of attacks on my life: Hasina

UNB, Magura

Opposition leader Sheikh Hasina has said her political opponents want to eliminate her to silence the voice of repressed people.

"I've got information that they want to eliminate me in August-September," she told reporters at Magura Circuit House after escaping an attack on her car allegedly by the ruling party activists at Kolaroa Bazar in Satkhira district yesterday.

"I am not scared of attacks on my life... I will remain with my people and stand by them at the time of their distress," she said.

Hasina complained that the government reduced her security to help the killers and conspirators to eliminate her.

She told the journalists that her car came under gun and bomb attack at Kolaroa Upazila Bazar at around 11:50am on her way from Satkhira to Jessore. From Khulina she went to Satkhira to see rape victim Mahfuza at Satkhira hospital.

The Awami League chief said she was attacked near the village where Mahfuza was tortured by the BNP activists on August 26.

Attack on thana 60 BNP, JCD men sued in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Police have filed a case against 60 BNP and JCD activists for their involvement in the attack on Rajosthali police station on Thursday.

Seven policemen, including a sub-inspector, were injured in the attack.

The ruling party activists attacked the police station protesting the arrest of JCD leader Mohammad Hassan.

Rajosthali police arrested Hassan, vice-president of JCD thana unit, at noon following a complaint filed by one Marium Begum.

Hearing the news, about 100 BNP and JCD men attacked the police station in a bid to snatch Hassan from the custody. They also damaged furniture and doors of the building and disconnected telephone of Upazila Nirbahi Office (UNO).

Police arrested two JCD activists -- Zafar and Amin -- from the spot.

| | Sun Rises | Sun Sets |
|--------|-----------|----------|
| Aug 31 | | 6-18 pm |
| Sept 1 | 5-40 am | |

| Prayer Timings | | |
|----------------|-------|--------|
| August 31 | | |
| | Azan | Jamaat |
| Fajr | 4-30 | 5-00 |
| Zohr | 12-45 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 5-00 | 5-15 |
| Maghrib | 6-23 | 6-28 |
| Esha | 8-15 | 8-45 |

Source: Islamic Foundation

Hasina's motorcade attacked in Kolaroa

BNP cadres also swoop on journalists



Sheikh Hasina

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Ruling party armed cadres in Satkhira yesterday attacked opposition leader Sheikh Hasina's motorcade and besieged her car for 10 minutes throwing shoes and brickbats on it. They also fired shots in the air.

Hasina escaped unhurt. Police escorts travelling with the leader of the opposition in parliament got off their vehicles promptly and ringed her car to ensure her safety.

The Awami League (AL) chief's motorcade came under attack at Kolaroa, some 18 kilometres off Satkhira district headquarters, at about noon.

The attackers dragged AL candidate in the last parliamentary election from Kolaroa and Satkhira district AL Convener Sheikh Mujibur Rahman out of his car and ripped his punjabi. Police rescued him. Although police made safe

passage for Hasina's motorcade after 10 minutes, 24 local journalists could not escape the wrath of the attackers. They chased the newsmen up to the local press club, assaulted some of them and took away their cameras. They even beat the journalists inside the office of the officer-in-charge of Kolaroa police station where they (journalists) took shelter later.

Hasina was going to Jessore through Kolaroa after visiting rape victim Mahfuza Khatun at Satkhira Sadar Hospital. The attackers fired four shots in the air and forced her car to stop on the road in front of the residence of BNP lawmaker Habibur Islam Habib by putting up a road barricade.

Witnesses and journalists covering Hasina's programme in Satkhira said local BNP cadres allegedly loyal to Habib openly brandished

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Indefinite halt to food transport from Sunday

REAZ AHMAD

Already plagued by a wheat procurement scam, the food ministry is facing a new challenge in transportation of foodgrain across the country from tomorrow.

Bangladesh Foodgrain Transportation Contractors' Federation goes on an indefinite strike from tomorrow protesting the 4.5 percent VAT (value added tax) on them, imposed in July this year.

Food officials said they are worried because of the timing of the strike that will halt transportation of foodgrain through road-rail and

waterways.

The strike call came when two ships carrying about 49,500 MT of WFP wheat are scheduled to anchor at Chittagong port in first week of next month.

One of the ships will reach the port on September 1 with 26,000 MT of Australian wheat and the other on September 6 with 23,500 MT of Canadian wheat.

If the wheat consignments can not be unloaded and carried to different silos in time, the government will have to bear huge demurrage.

Besides, immediate unloading

and transportation of the WFP wheat is now more important in view of procurement of low-grade imported wheat under this year's internal wheat procurement programme, sources in the ministry said.

As WFP (World Food Programme) has already declined to allow its ships to anchor at Mongla Port due to 'delay in unloading' and 'post-CIF (cost, insurance and freight) loss,' both the ships will anchor at Chittagong port.

Last week, the government tried to convince WFP officials in Dhaka

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Wrecks of sunken ships Ship movement in and around Ctg port risky

NURUL ALAM, Chittagong

Wrecks of sunken ships at the outer anchorage of Chittagong port and at different spots in the Karnaphuli river pose a threat to movement of ships to and from the port, sources said.

Ship operators find movement of their vessels risky because of the unsalvaged wrecks. The port handles over 1500 cargo vessels annually, mostly of foreign.

When contacted, Member

(operation) of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) Mohsin Sarkar said, "Movement of ships is quite risky at the outer anchorage where wrecks of three big sunken vessels still remain unsalvaged."

He went on, "We fear that cargo ships moving to and from the port might face accident any time unless the wrecks are removed to make plying of ships hazard-free."

He however mentioned that markings were made at the spots with sunken ship wrecks to avert

accidents. But the markings are frequently drifted away due to tidal wave, storm etc.

In reply to a question, he said a plan is likely to be taken up for salvaging those wrecks.

The three wrecked vessels at the outer anchorage are MV Fazilat, Fairteck and Seaten Sixty Three. Wrecks of two of those are lying beyond the port limit, Sarkar said.

The CPA had repeatedly issued notices to owners of the wrecked

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Tale of some 'sent-back' camel jockeys



PHOTO: STAR

Bedona Begum bursts into tears when she sees her son Alam after seven years at the BNWLA office at Lalmatia in the city yesterday. Alam had been trafficked to UAE to be employed as camel jockey.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twelve-year-old Mamun did not find his parents yet, though he returned home to Bangladesh from United Arab Emirates (UAE) on June 19.

Mamun was trafficked to the Middle Eastern country, seven years ago, and employed as a camel jockey.

But the traffickers sent him back home, as he grew up and is no longer fit for the job.

The Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA) sheltered him at its Lalmatia centre.

The BNWLA could not trace his parents, as Mamun cannot remember his birthplace.

Despite his nightmarish experience with his master Rashed-bin-Ahul in Abu Dhabi, Mamun longs to go back to UEA that offered a 'better living'.

Mamun is one of the 11 tortured camel-jockeys, with some suffering from trauma, and now sheltered by the BNWLA. They were sent back home by their masters, as they are no longer fit for the job.

Eight-year-old Mintu alias Sohel, son of Fazar Ali of Dhola, Trishal,

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

STILL BEYOND THE REACH OF LAW: The Eastern Housing Limited, a private real estate builder, has filled a water body with earth to develop its 'Banaree Project' in the city's Rampura area. Rajuk has failed to tighten its control over mushrooming housing projects that have consumed thousands of acres on the eastern fringe of the capital.

Devious developers flout law, fill up low lands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Private developers have filled up acres of low-lying land on the city's eastern fringe, flouting a recent government directive and relevant laws.

Several hundred acres of lowland have already been filled up with many trawlers and engine boats carrying earth to the areas of the Banaree-Aftabnagar project of Eastern Housing Limited and Bashundhara project of East West Property Development (Pvt) Limited, local people said.

The developers have reclaimed these areas to expand their projects without obtaining Rajuk approval.

Rajuk Chairman Iqbaluddin Chowdhury admitted that developers engaged in "illegal and unlawful moves."

Local people also alleged that the developers had employed different means to acquire lands from private owners.

Environmentalists and town planners have, meanwhile, expressed concern over such indiscriminate filling of lowlands and cautioned that this

would result in ecological disaster and massive flooding of the city.

The Banaree-Aftabnagar project area at Rampura in the city is marked as an 'earthquake faultline' and a vital storm-water retention point in the Dhaka Master Plan.

Top Rajuk officials said geophysical condition of the area was not 'favourable for vertical expansion.' Hundreds of structures along the Begunbari-Jirani canal are already vulnerable to earthquake owing to the Rampura faultline.

Experts fear the structures could collapse in case of an earthquake measuring six on the Richter scale.

Also, claim Rajuk officials, private developers are expanding their housing projects in complete disregard for the Dhaka Master Plan and the Flood Action Plan (FAP), exposing the city to serious flooding.

Implementation of the Banaree-Aftabnagar project would undermine the effectiveness of the Begunbari canal that drains out about a third of the

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DENGUE ALERT

Sixty -six more hospitalised in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sixty-six dengue-infected people were admitted to different city hospitals and clinics yesterday.

Forty patients were admitted to the Suhrawardy Hospital, six to the Mitford Hospital and 26 to different private clinics.

With yesterday's count, the number of dengue patients so far hospitalised has stood at 3,563, said an official report.

Doctors, nurses and laboratory technicians at two dengue wards of the Suhrawardy Hospital said they were working under tremendous pressure.

"We have to examine and confirm at least 30 to 40 slides a day. The workload is too much for us," said

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Planned strike at garment units called off

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Garments Workers Oikya Parishad, a combine of 12 labour organisations, has called off its planned strike at all garments units on September 1.

According to a BGMEA press release, the strike was withdrawn following a fruitful discussion and signing of an agreement between the BGMEA and leader of the Oikya Parishad yesterday.

BGMEA acting president Quazi Moniruzzaman and leaders of the Oikya Parishad signed the agreement on behalf of their respective sides.

UNB adds: As per the agreement, BGMEA will take necessary initiatives to completely implement the wage award announced by the Minimum Wages Board in 1994.

As the Wage Board is empowered to fix the wages of the workers and employees of readymade garments, BGMEA will request the government to form a board in next three months in this regard.

BGMEA and BGSOP also reached a consensus on constituting a

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Delay in dropping tender raises fuel crisis fear

ABDULLAH-AL MAHMUD, Ctg

A fuel crisis may surface at least for the next two months, as international tender for fuel import from July to December was not finalised in time.

The Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) has sought suggestions from the energy ministry to cope with the possible crisis, especially of diesel and jet fuel, said sources.

According to a ministerial suggestion, the BPC requested the lowest bidders of the last tender to supply fuel with urgency.

But at the directive of the ministry on August 22, the Energy International got a supply order for 15,000 metric tons of jet fuel and 5,000 metric tons of kerosene, the sources said.

The BPC has opened a letter of credit with a bank in the port city on Sunday for supply.

The BPC tendered for import of refined fuel oil worth around Tk 1,500 crore on May 16 this year.

In the group A of the tender for the supply of 1,210 lakh barrels of jet fuel, the Axon-Mobil joint venture of Extep became the lowest bidder quoting US\$ 27.66 a barrel, while the Energy International quoted 21 cents more a barrel.

But the tender was cancelled and the BPC was directed to tender again at a meeting of the purchase committee on August 17.

Accordingly, a tender announcement was published in different dailies on August 21 with September 30 as the deadline for submission of tender documents.

The import of fuel oil under the fresh tender may not be possible before October, the sources said.

The ERL, the lone refinery in the country, has been directed to continue the production of jet fuel.

However, the ERL will be able to produce only one third of the demand that stands at 12,500 metric tons a day.

Meanwhile, BPC officials expressed concern over the OSD (officer on special duty) order for BPC Acting Chairman Babul Chakrobarty and transfer of BPC Secretary AH Khan to Sylhet.

The officials think the orders issued by the establishment ministry Sunday night are punitive measures for the controversial consignment of jet fuel.

SAPTA meeting delayed again at Pak request

RAZIUR RAHMAN

The final meeting of the fourth round negotiations of SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA), scheduled for September 2-4 in Kathmandu, has been postponed again at the request of Pakistan, commerce ministry sources said.

Most of the SAARC countries took preparations to participate in the meeting to endorse a list of commodities for duty benefit among the seven SAARC countries. A four-member Bangladesh delegation was supposed to attend the meeting.

It is for the second time that the meeting has been postponed within a span of four months at the request of the same country. The meeting was earlier scheduled for

May 10-12.

A commerce ministry official said yesterday the ministry came to know about the decision in a letter from the SAARC Secretariat on Tuesday.

Pakistan said it could not take adequate preparations for the meeting and requested for shifting it to the last week of December. However, no date has been fixed.

All the seven SAARC countries have already exchanged their 'wish lists'. In its 'wish list', Bangladesh has sought duty benefit for more than 100 items for export to each of the six other countries.

India has sought duty benefit for 369 items, Pakistan for 3064 items, Nepal for 1631 items, Sri Lanka for 248 items, Bhutan 156 for items and Maldives for 243 items to export to Bangladesh.

ETV plans to file writ

STAR REPORT

The management of now defunct Ekushey Television may file a writ petition against the government for "enforcing" the court verdict on it.

"We will first consult our attorneys and seek their advice to proceed further," an official of ETV told The Daily Star yesterday seeking anonymity.

The ETV management is frustrated the way the government "forced" it to shut its terrestrial and satellite transmission following the court verdict, he said.

At 10:50 pm on Thursday, ETV went off air through a formal announcement on its satellite band. Earlier, at about 5:00 pm on that day, BTV shut down ETV's terrestrial channel.

The ETV authorities had a plan to continue transmission on satellite band following the Supreme Court verdict, which upheld the High Court verdict declaring ETV's license illegal.

ETV had earlier applied to the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (BTRC) for licenses for both its terrestrial and satellite channels.

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