

Simultaneous anti-govt

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on September 18.
The AL shifted its Paltan Maidan grand rally of September 29 to October 3 where Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina will address.

The opposition movement is aimed at dislodging the fundamentalists-allied Khaleda Zia administration from power for what they say are the ruling coalition's failure to deliver and patronisation of Islamic extremism.

They also accused the ruling coalition of the August 21 grenade attacks on an AL rally on Bangabandhu Avenue in Dhaka that killed 200 people and wounded over 200 others.

Declaring the programmes from a press conference at the party's Dhanmondi office, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil said: "The parties that believe in democratic and non-communal politics have joined hands to force the present government from power and establish a secular government steeped in the Liberation War spirit."

He said the details of the agitation timetable would be announced later.

Replying to a question, Jalil said the AL would not participate in the upcoming Netrakona-2 by-polls.

"We are waging a movement for the fall of the government and will not participate in the polls under it."

The main opposition will, however, join parliament tomorrow for what Jalil said was to protest the assassination attempt on Hasina, also president of the AL.

The 11-party fixed the programmes after a meeting at the Gonj Forum office yesterday evening with Pankaj Bhattacharya in the chair. The left alliance meeting also extended support to the October 6 strike at all mills and factories called by Sramik Karmochari Oikya Parishad (SCOP).

The AL synchronised its agitation programmes with the 11-party alliance's after talks by telephone yesterday evening.

The opposition parties place emphasis on mass mobilisation for the one-point oust-government movement in the fresh programmes, political analysts say.

Other programmes of the three-week agitation are countrywide

BTTB plans

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civic flights. Police conducted massive search at Zia International Airport in the capital, Shahjalal Airport in Sylhet, Arts Faculty Building of Dhaka University and Senakalyan Bhaban in the wake of bomb threats by anonymous people.

Some newspaper offices also received bomb threats recently.

"We are concerned at this type of phone calls as the law enforcement agencies do not have any mechanism to retrieve callers' identity in case of any hoax call," said a top police official. The matter has been brought to the notice of the home ministry for necessary action, he added.

The home ministry asked the BTTB to introduce phones with caller ID.

Many strategic places and key installations such as airports, police stations, radio and television centres do not have caller ID phones.

Telephone subscribers could avoid unsolicited phone calls once the CLIP is introduced. Currently, private cell phone operators provide this facility.

BTTB officials said now they have such facility at different new exchanges. But some old exchanges lack the facility. French telecom equipment manufacturer Alcatel had installed those exchanges.

"It was difficult to upgrade those exchanges due to non-availability of required equipment. But later the company (Alcatel) agreed to provide necessary equipment," the BTTB chairman said.

Alcatel has reportedly stopped production of equipment necessary to upgrade old exchanges.

Telephone exchanges installed by Japanese NEC Corporation could not be equipped with caller ID due to lack of provisions for upgradation of software, the chairman said.

The BTTB now provides caller ID for new telephone connections under some specific exchanges mainly installed by Turkish equipment manufacturer Netas.

Blazing start

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reached 198-5 off 38 overs when rain stopped play in their Pool D fixture against Zimbabwe at Edgbaston, Birmingham.

All Champions Trophy matches come complete with a reserve day and if the game cannot be completed Friday it will carry on from where it ended on Saturday.

Today India, co-holders of the trophy after 2002's washed-out final against Sri Lanka in Colombo, begin the defence of their title against Kenya at the Rose Bowl in Southampton.

Nepali Maoists bomb

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close by Friday, accusing them of exploiting their workers.

"The government has not been able to provide enough security to the industries," Diwakar Golchha, vice-president of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry told AFP. "Almost all the 35 have closed."

The campaign by the pro-Maoist All Nepal Trade Union Federation against the businesses is the latest pressure tactic in the Maoists' drive to install communism.

The rebels, who already control vast areas of countryside, last month staged a week-long blockade of the capital Kathmandu that was mainly enforced through intimidation rather than roadblocks.

The Maoists' warnings are often obeyed out of fear of reprisals.

While the rebels allege the companies have unfair labour practices -- charges they deny -- they have singled out firms with Western or Indian investment and ones linked to Nepal's royal family.

India, the United States and Britain have been giving financial assistance and military aid to Nepal's government to help it quell the insurgency.

The closure of the companies came as Prime Minister Sher

Ayodhya re-run

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state assembly elections next month.

Some want the tomb of the general, Afszalkhan, removed because it lies near the fort of the Hindu warrior king he tried to murder, Shivaji, whom many people worship like a god.

"Afszalkhan is an insult to Hindus. We will climb the hill and demolish his tomb," Vyankatesh Abdeo, a leader of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), which started the campaign, told Reuters.

The campaign organisers say they will bring 30,000 people to the site because of the controversy.

Companies affected by the shutdown include energy, food, hotel and transport firms. Industry officials said some 25,000 workers were affected by the latest Maoist order.

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Feroze Mithiborwala, a convenor of the Muslim Youth of India.

"They are trying to build a momentum before elections. This shows that there is total bankruptcy of ideas for right-wing parties in the country."

The renewed controversy comes

as radical Hindu groups have run alarm bells over census data released this week that appeared to show a jump of almost 33 percent in the number of Muslims between 1991 and 2001.

Radical groups have long warned that higher Muslim birth rates could eventually threaten India's Hindu majority -- more than 80 percent of the population.

But the new figures were skewed by the inclusion of Jammu and Kashmir, India's only Muslim majority state, in the 2001 census after it was left out in 1991 because of separatist violence.

Census officials on Thursday revised the growth rate to just over 29 percent, when adjusted for Kashmir. The growth rate for Hindus was 20 percent over the same period.

India's long and varied history has left hundreds of places across the country where Hindu and Muslim holy sites stand side by side, sometimes triggering bloody conflicts.

In 1992, Hindu hardliners defied a court order and razed the 16th century Babri Masjid which they built on the birthplace of Lord Ram in Ayodhya.

That triggered India's worst religious bloodshed since independence, killing about 3,000.

Jubo League

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he died at around 9:00am yesterday, struggling for life for 20 days.

Sirajul Islam, younger brother of Azad, received his body from Dhaka Medical College Hospital after autopsy yesterday evening.

According to an official of the centre, Azad was operated upon three times since his admission.

"He was in critical condition since he suffered injuries and was losing consciousness frequently," said the victim's brother-in-law Mizanur Rahman.

Namaj-e-Janaza of the deceased was held in front of the AL central office on Bangabandhu Avenue where a large number of people assembled.

Awami League General Secretary Abdul Jalil visited the house of Azad in Baranagar area under Cantonment Police Station.

Azad left behind his wife and two sons.

Rab nabs Ctg

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Joint Secretary General of the ruling BNP Goyeshwar Chandra Roy was the chief guest at that joining ceremony, while BNP Chittagong (South) district President Ahmad Khalil Khan, BNP Chittagong (North) district General Secretary Shahjahan Siraj and the party's Chittagong city unit Joint-secretary Abu Sufian were special guests.

Satkania upazila BNP President AZM Moiul Haq Chowdhury presided.

Meanwhile, in another drive, Rab members arrested notorious Shibir cadre Md Ramzan alias Bhagina Ramzan with AK-47 assault gun from Narayanganj under Fatikchhari upazila at around 3:30pm.

Bhagina Ramzan is the second-in-command of Jamaat-Shibir backed Nasir Bahini, a criminal gang based in Fatikchhari.

The tomb has been there for hundreds of years. Why has it been raked up now?" asked

The general tried to assassinate Shivaji, but the king stabbed him instead and buried Afszalkhan where he fell.

A statue of Shivaji now also stands on the hill.

of the campaign against the tomb have not explained why they are moving to destroy it now after years of controversy.

But Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) -- an ally of the Shiv Sena -- hopes to make a comeback in next month's state elections after it was unexpectedly dumped from power in New Delhi in May.

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The closure of the companies came as Prime Minister Sher



Members of Kranti Shilpi Goshthi, a cultural organisation, simulate death in a human chain at the Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka yesterday to protest a spate of bomb and grenade attacks that sent jitters across Bangladesh.

Jakarta was warned

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Prime Minister John Howard insists Australia's 850 troops in and around Iraq will stay for the foreseeable future. Opposition leader Mark Latham wants to bring them home by Christmas.

In Canberra yesterday, Howard said those responsible could mount another attack.

"The intelligence agencies have warned that there is the possibility of another attack of this kind in Jakarta. The information they have available indicates that the number of operatives ... is sufficiently large to support the fear that there could be another attack," he told reporters.

Meanwhile, Canberra yesterday rammed up security measures fearing more attacks.

The strike left a large crater outside the embassy, tore off the glass fronts of surrounding office towers and left the twisted remains of motorcycles, cars and a truck strewn around the main road outside the embassy compound.

Police have pointed the finger specifically at Azahari Husin, a fugitive Malaysian bomb-making expert and JI member believed to have made the bombs used in the Marriott and Bali blasts.

TNT smugglers

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This time they were instructed to carry the explosives to one Gias at different places in Companyganj and Chhatak, but could not trace him. Locals said the man is a dealer in stone.

Meanwhile, Sylhet Kotwali police picked up two men, Azizur Rahman and Abdul Motaleb, yesterday afternoon from Shibganj in the city for interrogation in the case. A police source said the two have business connections with Bhalaganj stone quarry, the reported origin of the deadly explosives.

The boy also informed the BDR officials that, before him, two stone quarry labourers named Sahil and Dilip of Companyganj were also engaged in the racket.

But the two Indians had a different tale.

To the interrogators they said, on receiving the death news of a kin, they were coming to visit their relatives in Kaladeep village under Companyganj upazila, and claimed Kalaganj joined them while crossing the border.

Asked why they were the packers of explosives found in his umbrella, Suresh again passed the buck on Kalaganj saying the boy gave it to him to carry.

Sources said, in face of interrogation, Suresh and Chandan frequently locked horns with each other at Fakirtila BDR Camp in Chhatak. The pair also kept mum to number of queries, they added.

He also informed the BDR officials that, before him, two stone quarry labourers named Sahil and Dilip of Companyganj were also engaged in the racket.

He said if they could directly go to the attorney general's office, the process would be expedited.

Kazi Mostafazzur Rahman, deputy commissioner of customs, echoing the same view added they also faced the problem of transfer. "It becomes difficult for us to continue with a case if the customs official concerned is transferred and another person with little knowledge about the goods in question takes over the charge."

He said most writ petitions stem from the imports of sugar, cars, PVC floor covering, BP sheets and steel sheets.

The customs house collects Tk 25 crore to 30 crore a day on average, he said, adding the house realised the record revenue of Tk 9,645 crore in the last 2003-2004 fiscal, registering a rise of 8.52 percent from the fiscal 2002-2003.

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