

Mass arrests prompt AL

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government by arresting more than 15,000 people.

Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina will make her first appearance at a public rally after the August 21 carnage to announce fresh programmes from the grand rally.

"We have no way but to enforce hartial as we cannot hold peaceful programmes such as rallies and processions. The government is forcing us to enforce hartial," AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil told a press conference yesterday.

Jalil threatened to paralyse the country by enforcing indefinite general strikes if the government does not immediately stop wholesale arrests of opposition activists.

Hasina, also the AL president who is now in Singapore for treatment of her hearing problem, may return on Wednesday. "We are in constant touch with the party chief and she is being informed of the latest development here," a senior AL leader said, seeking anonymity.

An AL-enforced hartial, meanwhile, was enforced in six districts of greater Mymensingh and Tangail yesterday in protest against the arrest of its leaders and workers after a rally at Mymensingh circuit house ground on September 24.

AL sources said the police have been searching the houses and possible locations of the activists of AL and its front organisations to nab them. The political activists are being implicated in false cases after arrest, they alleged.

State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar refuted the allegation and told the BBC Bangla Service last night that the ongoing drive was a regular anticrime drive.

The AL general secretary however said the government being nervous of the huge participation in the September 22 no-confidence human chain from Gazipur to Narayanganj has launched the mass-arrest drive to create panic among the opposition adherents.

Double trouble

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(CMM), Dhaka yesterday sent 225 of the 316 people hauled up in the capital on Saturday to Dhaka Central Jail and released 91 others after fining them.

The hearing on the bail petitions for the 225 arrestees sent to jail will be held today or tomorrow. Of them, 34 were shown arrested under Section 54 (for suspicious movement) of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) and 167 under Sections 74 and 86 of the DMP Ordinance.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil claimed, since the crack down began, police arrested over 3,000 AL leaders and activists across the country to foil the opposition's string of anti-government programmes, particularly the October 3 grand rally.

The hartial AL enforced yesterday in six districts of greater Mymensingh protesting the mass arrest was observed peacefully.

However, State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar told the BBC Bangla Service last night that the drive is a part of the regular anti-crime activity, not one of a mass arrest.

A large crowd of poor people was seen in front of and around the Dhaka CMM Court Hajat (custody) yesterday morning with water containers and dried food in hand. Most of them claimed their relatives under arrest are innocent.

They also alleged police falsely implicated their kin in crimes like extortion, robbery, theft and even bomb explosions, though they are not named in the first information reports (FIRs) of cases concerned.

Sources confirmed that 103 people were arrested on various charges including extortion, theft, robbery and involvement in bomb explosions, though they were not mentioned in the FIRs.

During a visit to the Dhaka CMM Court premises yesterday The Daily Star found a group of brokers taking money from some poor people to manage bail for their arrested relatives. But the courts are rarely granting bail to people arrested in the ongoing drive.

Iqbal Hossain alleged police asked

The opposition camp will conclude its three-week simultaneous agitation programmes on October 3 by holding separate rallies in Dhaka and elsewhere.

The Workers Party of Bangladesh will hold a rally at Hadis Park in Khulna the same day, while the Communist Party of Bangladesh holds mass rallies in Dhaka and district headquarters on September 29 to strengthen the ongoing movement.

AL Presidium Member Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim told the The Daily Star yesterday, "We are not allowed to speak in parliament as the speaker is biased to the ruling coalition. We are not allowed to even hold peaceful programmes on the streets."

He said such a move by the government in its bid to quell the opposition would compel the opposition parties to take a hardline.

The central leaders of the main opposition in 15 separate teams are now in a four-day tour across the country to mobilise people to join the October 3 rally. The front organisations of AL are also taking preparation to make the rally a success.

On Saturday, the left-leaning 11-Party Alliance in a statement labelled the mass arrests as a sign of government's fall and said such police harassment would not stop mass movement against the government's misrule.

"The mass movement will be toughened in the coming days to force this failed government to quit," JSD President Hasanul Haq Inu told The Daily Star yesterday.

Jubo Sangram Parishad, an alliance of seven youth organisations backed by the opposition parties, will stage a grand rally in Chittagong on October 6. Two such rallies will be organised in Khulna and Rajshahi on October 9 and 12.

The programmes were announced yesterday from a joint rally held at Muktangon in Dhaka with Judo League Chairman Jahangir Kabir Nanok in the chair.

Robbers shoot 5 in Fatulla, Dhanmondi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Robbers yesterday in separate incidents shot five people in Dhanmondi and Fatulla in Narayanganj.

Five robbers entered a wholesale oil shop in Fatulla Bazar at around 12:30pm, shot its manager Selim, 25, and salesmen Maruf, 23 and made good with Tk 4 lakh.

Hearing gunshots, locals chased the robbers who opened fire on them, wounding Afzal Hossain Borat, 32, while a stray bullet hit pedestrian Shahjai, 30. The robbers also struck Royal Chowdhury by a pistol but that broke his arm.

However, locals held Rony, 25, Jahangir, 26, and Ashique, 25, beat up and handed them over to police, while two others -- Bappi and Farid - managed to escape.

The bullet-hilt are receiving treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

In Dhanmondi, robbers shot Ziaur Rahman Sumon, 30, owner of a cyber cafe, at his house in Hatripool at around 4:00am.

Eight robbers broke into the first-floor house and made an attempt to bind the residents at gunpoint.

Resisted, they beat up Sumon and shot him in his abdomen. He was admitted to the DMCH in critical condition.

His mother Mosharafa said, the robbers fled snatching away her gold ornaments and firing gunshots.

Basila

FROM PAGE 1
spells of erosion in the last 42 days and is now posing erosion threat to many more but the government is yet to do anything.

"Plying of vessels causes stronger current in the river that hits its banks and intensifies erosion. We will not allow plying of motorised vessels in the river in our neighbourhood till the government takes effective measures to save us," said Maulana Abu Taher, who was leading a group boarding an engine boat.

People of the area also said unplanned dredging of the river by sand traders changed its course and worsened the situation.

"Every day at least a couple of hundred vessels move through this river as developers carry sand and brick to fill up low-lying lands in Savar area and for construction work," said a local.

As the erosion continues, a pontoon of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) became vulnerable yesterday. When BIWTA officials came to take away the pontoon, agitating locals resisted them, witnesses said.

Shipping Minister Akbar Hossain had earlier directed the BIWTA to remove the illegal brick kiln opposite Basila, which the locals said mainly caused the erosion.

"I collected Tk 5,000 by mortgaging some saris to release my son on bail whom Pallabi police arrested on Thursday at Muslim Camp in Mirpur Section 11 and implicated in a bomb case," Munni Begum, mother of the victim, Anwar, 17.

"Anwar is the lone man and breadwinner of my family. He works at a weaving factory at Benarshi Palli in Mirpur," Munni said in a choked voice.

Shahida Begum, who stood in front of the Hajat with despair written on her face, said police hauled up her husband Anisur Rahman, a vegetable shopkeeper of Karwanbazar, at Mohakali last Saturday when he was returning home and deceitfully implicated him in a theft case.

She seemed bewildered at what to do to get her husband out on bail.

Sutrapur Police arrested Abdul Khalek, 25, worker of a furniture shop, at Jatrabari and Senti, 37, an iron-worker, at Sayedabad, though they did nothing wrong, claimed the victim's mother.

Though Saiful Islam has no political affiliation, Ramina police hauled him up from his Maghbazar house Friday afternoon and showed him arrested for robbery and mugging.

"He is not accused in any case or involved in politics. But police arrested him and implicated in robbery and mugging cases as our brother-in-law is a local AL leader," said Saiful's brother, Shahidul Islam.

On unplanned dredging of the river by sand traders, he said it can allow dredging by private sector only if it helps meet BIWTA's target.

Most of the erosion victims are poor and unable to rebuild their houses, said Siddique Mia, a victim.

Acute scarcity of food and drinking water is prevailing in the affected areas. The government is yet to start relief operation in the areas, locals alleged.

Deara Union Parishad Chairman Anwarul Islam said his union is the worst affected area the upazila and most of the villages have gone under water.

35 more villages

FROM PAGE 12
Onrush of waters from the Kabodak and Betrabati rivers inundated a number of villages in Kalaroa, Tala and Sadar upazilas forcing several thousand people to leave their homestead and take shelter in flood-free high places.

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"The investors cannot help but be discouraged by the quantum leap in violence that seems to have taken place and the impunity with which crimes are committed," the WB country director observed.

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On the WB's legal immunity issue, she said, like other United Nations bodies, the bank also enjoys this immunity in its 184 member countries. In a bitter note, she said, "Lack of knowledge about the issue creates such debate here. It's nothing extra-ordinary, nothing additional."

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