

Jalil warns govt against ignoring people's crises

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil yesterday warned the BNP-Jamaat ruling alliance saying that the day is not far away when agitations like those in Kansat and Shanir Akhra will be transformed into a mass upsurge to topple the government even before its tenure expires on October 28.

"When people take to streets, no autocratic ruler can cling on to power. This government too will not be able to stay in power," said Jalil, adding that the government has been overlooking the people's problems by turning a blind eye to the ongoing power, water and gas crises, and spiralling prices of essentials.

The AL lawmaker was speaking at 'Meet the Reporters' at the Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU) auditorium on 'The next parliamentary election and present perspective'.

"The government never looked into these crises during the last four and a half years into power."

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Cabinet united about fuel price hike

Says Saifur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman yesterday said petroleum prices will certainly be hiked since there is no opposition in the cabinet to increasing fuel prices.

But, he said, a decision in this regard is delayed as the government is considering introducing a safety net for the poor to minimise the effect of the price hike on them.

Asked if there is any opposition in the cabinet to a further rise in oil prices, Saifur said: "No, it's not correct. However, the fact is they [cabinet colleagues] do politics, but I don't."

The minister made the comments while talking to reporters after a meeting with World Bank Vice President Prful C Patel at his residence in the capital.

Referring to his recent visit to

India, Saifur said prices of petroleum products in India are much higher than in Bangladesh and the prices are going to be raised again in that country.

Before increasing fuel prices certain sectors like agriculture and irrigation need to be given some protection. Besides, the poor who use kerosene need to be protected, the minister said.

"We need to put a safety net in place so that the poor can be saved from the impact of oil price hike. We are trying to come up with a package that will include the price hike along with a safety net. That's why the delay is," the minister explained.

Asked when oil prices will be raised, Saifur said: "I cannot say exactly when it will be done—but the earlier the better. Every day we are losing and the economy is getting weaker."

MEETING WITH PATEL

WB Vice President Patel met the minister before launching the bank's new country assistance strategy for FY 2006-09, which was approved by the WB executive board in March. It was launched officially yesterday evening at a local hotel.

Patel told the reporters that they had discussed how the strategy could be implemented even during the election time. The bank will provide Bangladesh with around \$3 billion during the period under the new assistance strategy.

Asked about the proposed law to give immunity to the WB, Patel said: "We have confidence in the government of Bangladesh. This is an issue relating to the law of the country...I have the confidence that the issue will be resolved within the law of the country."

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Kamal, B Chy for electing honest people

UNB, Narsingdi

Jatiya Oikya Mancha President Dr Kamal Hossain and Bikalpa Dhara chief AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury have called for electing honest people to next parliament.

They gave the call at wayside rallies while leading a long march from Dhaka to Sylhet yesterday to garner public support against what they said misuse of the four-party alliance government.

Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB), Jatiya Oikya Mancha and Bangladesh Tarikat Federation jointly organised the long march that began in the morning from Muktagang in the capital.

Addressing a wayside rally at Bhehanagar in Narsingdi, Dr Kamal urged people to come out of the "politics of sickness, religion and bomb terrorism" and elect honest and competent people to next parliament.

"Resist injustice and give verdict against the four-party alliance in the next general elections," he told the crowd.

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CPD Executive Director Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya speaks at the regional dialogue on "National Election 2007: Civil Society Initiative for Accountable Development" at Jessore yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



Students at Stamford University's Dhanmondi campus during a demonstration against exorbitant fees and demanding a number of essential facilities throw shoes at Vice-chancellor Hannan Firoze yesterday as he arrives with police escort.

PHOTO: STAR

30 hurt in Jubo League, police clash in Bogra

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

At least 30 people including eight policemen were injured in a clash between Jubo League, Chhatra League and police in Bogra yesterday.

Awami League (AL) led 14-party called a dawn-to-dusk hartal tomorrow protesting against the police excesses on AL's front organisations.

The injured include Rezaul Ashraf Zinnah and Tapan Chandra Mohanto, president and general secretary of Nandigram Jubo League and police Sub-inspector Noor Hossain.

Police picked up 12 leaders and activists of Jubo League including Jubo League Bogra unit President Monjurul Alam Mohan, General Secretary Sagar Kumar Roy and Organising Secretary Kamrul Morshed Apel.

Witnesses said the clash

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Mega water project uncertain if deals not signed by this month

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD, Ctg

Implementation of the 45 million litre per day (MLD)-capacity Madunaghat Water Supply Project for the port city would be uncertain if the government fails to sign two agreements this month with the Italian government which is to provide financial assistance for the Tk 135 crore project.

Sources said the agreements have to be signed before expiry of the Performance Guarantee (PG) submitted by the Italian construction firm concerned on May 31.

Back in 1999, the Italian government offered Tk 106 crore soft loan in lira for the project with an interest of only 0.5 per cent.

The Ecnec (Executive

Committee of National Economic Council) approved the much-talked-about project in 1999 immediately after the Italian government confirmed its assistance. The project cost was then estimated at Tk 88 crore 23.03 lakh.

Tenders were then floated in different newspapers in Italy and TME SpA (Thermo Mechanica Ecologia) and Technoconsult came up as the lowest bidder for construction work (Contract-A) and consultancy services (Contract-B) in the bidding held in July 2001.

The cabinet purchase committee approved the price offers—euro 10.1825 million and 7 lakh 42.30 thousand—in September 2003.

But the long delay in awarding work order for the project due to

non-signing of necessary agreements between the Italian and Bangladesh governments prompted TME SpA to appeal for enhancement of the offered price to euro 11.80 million on grounds of price hike of required materials in the international market.

The cabinet purchase committee then approved the increased price and the Ecnec approved the revised PP (Project Proforma) in January last year, raising project cost to Tk 135 crore 2.58 lakh.

A high-powered Italian mission visited Bangladesh in October last year, and after discussions with the authorities submitted a draft loan agreement.

Another mission led by Italian

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SC hears CEC's appeal against HC verdict on voter list today

UNB, Dhaka

The Supreme Court is likely to hear today the chief election commissioner's appeal against the High Court judgment on the voter list, which drew a sharp criticism since the publication of draft roll a few days back.

On January 4, the High Court in its judgment had asked the Election Commission to update the voter list based on the existing one.

The HC judgment came following two writ petitions challenging the validity of the "unilateral" decision of CEC Justice MA Aziz to prepare a fresh electoral roll ahead of next general election.

The voter registration began on January 1 and the draft list was published on May 3, showing a total of over 9.13 crore voters.

Newspaper reports say and

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Lanka at war with Tigers

Says Nordic truce monitor

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka's military and the island's Tamil Tiger rebels are locked in a low intensity war despite a ceasefire that still technically holds on paper, the head of the unarmed Nordic truce monitors said yesterday.

"You could in some definition say we already have a war. We don't have a peace agreement, we have a ceasefire agreement. So there is a war ongoing. It is a low intensity war. You can say that," said Major General Ulf Henricsson, head of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission.

Henricsson's comments came after the government bombed Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) territory in the island's north on Thursday after the rebels attacked a navy flotilla and killed 17

sailors in the worst military clash since the 2002 ceasefire.

He dismissed a threat by the Tigers that warned his monitors to stay off navy vessels or face the consequences in any future attacks, saying his 60-strong team would continue to do their job.

"I make my own decision on this matter, and I think their warning, as they call it, is more or less a threat and (the naval attack was) a clear violation of the ceasefire agreement," he added.

Thursday's clash followed on the heels of a suspected rebel assassination attempt on Sri Lanka's army commander in April, which was followed by aerial bombing of Tiger positions in the east, and by a series of deadly ambushes on the military.

It also comes after a rash of

extrajudicial killings of Tamil civilians, some of which Henricsson believes troops have been involved in.

Earlier the United States condemned an attack on a Sri Lankan naval vessel by separatist Tamil Tigers, warning the violence risked returning the South Asian island nation to civil war.

"We are deeply concerned about the escalating violence by the Tamil Tigers, which has put Sri Lanka at risk of a return to war," said a statement by Richard Boucher, assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian Affairs.

"We urge the government of Sri

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5 killed, 40 injured in road crash

BDNEWS, Comilla

Five people died and 40 others were injured in a road accident on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Daudkandi yesterday.

Police and witnesses said the accident occurred when a Dhaka-bound passenger bus of Anirban Paribahan from Comilla collided head on with a Ramganj-bound

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European offer must recognise nuke right

Insists Iran

AFP, Tehran

Iran yesterday warned that new European incentives to find a deal over its atomic programme would only be of interest if the offer recognised the country's right to uranium enrichment.

"Any incentive that does not include Iran's right to nuclear technology and the ways to secure it will not have any attraction for the Iranian people and government," the IRNA agency quoted Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki as telling reporters in Indonesia.

He also warned the Europeans "not to make the same mistake" they did last August when they came up with a list of incentives that also asked Iran to give up uranium

enrichment.

"We hope that our case will be dealt in a way that Iran's right to peaceful nuclear technology will be recognised... It is then that Iran will provide its utmost cooperation," he said in Bali, where he is attending D-8 Summit with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

European Union efforts since 2003 to win guarantees that Iran is not making nuclear weapons have foundered, with Iran pushing ahead since April on enriching uranium.

This sensitive process is used to make nuclear reactor fuel but in highly enriched form the uranium

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Prayer Timing		
May 14		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	4-10	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-36	6-40
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation