

14-party vows

FROM PAGE 1
untoward incidents taking place. Tougher programmes including hartals, barricades and indefinite sit-ins in the capital will follow if the reforms are not made, they said.

Today, leaders, activists, loyalists and supporters of the opposition combine will gather at Russell Square and in front of Agargaon weather office in processions at 11:00am before marching towards the EC Secretariat.

Leader of the Opposition and AL President Sheikh Hasina had earlier on Friday announced the programme of laying siege to the EC Secretariat and election offices across the country to force the BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government to meet the demand for reforms in caretaker government and the EC.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) imposed the ban on gatherings and rallies around the EC Secretariat for 19 hours from Tuesday midnight.

State Minister for Home Affairs Lutfozzaman Babar has asked both the opposition and the law enforcers to exercise tolerance during the programme to avert untoward incidents. He urged the opposition to refrain from pelting brickbats at law enforcers.

When contacted, Workers' Party President and 14-party leader Rashed Khan Menon said the government imposes ban whenever the opposition announces peaceful programmes. They would violate the ban today, and the government would have to take all responsibilities for any untoward incidents.

Hasanul Haque Inu, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal president, alleged that the coalition government is misusing laws to impose ban to save its 'loyal' EC. Inu, a senior leader of the 14-party, also said they would violate the ban today.

Police officials said they have been directed by the home minister to take all steps to prevent the opposition programme around the EC Secretariat.

Sources said yesterday police were raiding opposition leaders' houses in different areas of the capital to arrest or harass them. But details could not be known.

"We have instructions to raid houses of senior opposition leaders to foil tomorrow's (today's) programme," a police official said preferring anonymity. "We will take position and put up heavy barbed wire fences from tonight (last night) at all the points in the restricted areas to prevent the opposition's march towards the EC Secretariat."

AREAS UNDER THE BAN
According to a DMP press release the streets under the ban are that from Agargaon-Rokeya Sarani intersection to Shishu Mela-

NCBs

FROM PAGE 16
18 crore and Rupali Bank Tk3 crore against Tk35 crore.

These banks have recovered Tk 25 crore in other classified loans against a target of Tk 660 crore. Of this, Sonali Bank recovered Tk 10 crore against a target of Tk 400 crore. Janata Tk 5 crore against Tk 150 crore, Agran Tk 9 crore against Tk 250 crore and Rupali Tk 1 crore against a target of Tk 60 crore.

With 9.68 percent credit growth, Agran Bank has already crossed the limit in the last six months while the credit growth of Sonali Bank was 1.13 percent, Janata Bank 2.96 percent and Rupali Bank 1.75 percent.

Meeting sources said that the NCBs also failed to meet other targets of their MoUs such as reduction in operation expenses, capital shortfall and the amount of classified loans.

Among the four NCBs, three were able to meet their goal of not allowing their credit growth to exceed 5 percent mark in a year.

Both polls, reforms

FROM PAGE 1
Association Bangladesh (OCAB) at Somarganj Hotel.

Hasina said: "There will be elections and reforms too, but there cannot be a free and fair election under Justice KM Hasan as he is not a neutral man—he was the international affairs secretary of the BNP."

The opposition leaders said there are options within the constitution to find a non-party, neutral caretaker chief and cited various alternatives provided in the constitution. In this context, she cited article 58 of the constitution.

"We are not afraid of any third force. Election must be held after reforms," she told a questioner.

OCAB President Shamim Ahmad presided over the press meet and Kadir kollo, its general secretary, made the introductory statement.

Hajina questioned why the government will not accept the reforms relating to caretaker government and the Election Commission if it wants fair elections.

"We're prepared for election, but election must be free and fair," she told a questioner when asked if she started preparation for the forthcoming general election.

About the stalled process of government-opposition dialogue on reforms, she alleged the government has shut down the door of dialogue by not responding to the opposition's latest letter. However, she questioned government's sincerity about the outcome of the dialogue as the BNP dropped the name of its secretary general from the panel of negotiators.

Asked about Ershad, Hasina said Ershad is an autocrat and the BNP called him "killer" of Ziaur Rahman, but they are trying to induct him into the alliance "to win the election

at any cost.

In reply to a question about the prime minister's allegation that the opposition wants to foil the election, Hasina made a counter-attack, saying that it is the four-party alliance that will foil the polls if they sense that they have no chance of winning the polls.

Speaking on corruption, Hasina said: "although the BNP-Jamaat government waged war on corruption but Bangladesh became 'champion in corruption' repeatedly during their tenure."

The prime minister is often accused of siphoning off thousands of crores of taka abroad," she told the journalists representing foreign media.

Ctg Port

FROM PAGE 1
not participate in the boycott programme. The QC Shipping Line, another feeder vessel operators, had already resumed operation on Sunday.

SC Lim, convener of CFTC, from Singapore led the delegation of the feeder vessel operators at the meeting also attended by the leaders of BGMEA and the Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FBCI).

"The crisis has been resolved and the feeder operators agreed to start loading and unloading of goods at the port," Quamrul Islam told The Daily Star after the meeting.

Our correspondent in Chittagong wrote, as the suspension programme continued, two feeder vessels left the port jetty after offloading containers yesterday without taking any container or export cargo.

The vessels were likely to stay in the outer anchorage area waiting for the decision of the meeting.

BDB won't

FROM PAGE 16
Mirpur Road intersection, from Dhamondi Road-27-Mirpur Road to Dhamondi Government Boys' High School and from the school to Indira Road and Rokeya Sarani intersection, from Shishu Mela-Mirpur Road intersection to old Mohammadpur police station, and from Asiad Avenue to eastern end of Dhamondi Road-27.

Around 5,000 police, BDR and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel will be deployed in these areas to maintain law and order, police said.

Meanwhile, different English medium schools at different parts of the city will remain closed for today.

OPPOSITION'S MEETING

The 14-party at a meeting at the AL central office yesterday decided to defy police barricades. Alleging that the prime minister's recent speeches against electoral reforms have escalated the present political crisis, the meeting said if the democratic process in the country is hampered, she (PM) will be fully responsible for it.

The meeting, chaired by city unit Coordinator of the combine Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya, also decided to mobilise people from different parts of the capital to make the siege programme a success. Senior opposition leaders will lead procession towards the EC Secretariat.

Obaidul Quader, Dilip Barua and Qamrul Ahsan, among others, attended yesterday's meeting.

Meanwhile, the combine's plan to realise its demands include laying siege to the PMO on September 12 and a grand rally on September 18. More agitation programmes will follow, sources mentioned.

Abdul Jalil, coordinator of the 14-party, said they would go for all kinds of democratic programmes including indefinite hartals, road, rail and river route barricades and indefinite sit-ins in the capital to compel the government to accept electoral reform demands.

NUF MARCH TOWARDS EC SECRETARIAT

National Unity Front (NUF), a newly formed alliance of several political parties, will also march towards the EC secretariat today demanding resignation of the CEC and three other election commissioners. Senior NUF leaders will lead the march starting at 10:00am from BDB's office at Moghbazar.

Criminal killed

FROM PAGE 16
Some 200 police personnel from Rajshahi, Natore and Naogaon took part in the anti-outlaw drive under the command of Natore Superintendent of Police Golam Kibria since midnight, he said.

The raid covered Bagmara, Puthia, Atrai and Naldanga of Rajshahi, Naogaon and Natore districts.

At around 4:30am at Baruihati, police challenged a gang of nine suspected terrorists riding on three motorbikes headed for Sikkadi Bazar in Bagmara.

The terrorists ignored the police signal and tried to flee. As police caught up with them, the outlaws opened fire on police and police returned fire, said a police report.

Police later recovered the body left behind by the outlaws, two motorbikes, one local shutter gun and a bullet from the scene.

However, during the drive, police arrested around 20 suspects linked with PBGP. The arrestees include Awami League adherents Lutfia Hossain and Abdul Jabbar (both are accused in Pakhi murder case of 2004), Rony of Puthia upazila, Felu of Mirpur under Atrai upazila in Kushtia, Mamun, Bakul, Zahangir Sardar, Zahidul and Jamir Uddin of Bagmara.

Fuel dealers

FROM PAGE 1
tank-lorry owners association, adding "if necessary, we will enforce the strike across the country in phases." He was addressing a joint press conference in Dhaka yesterday. Expressing solidarity, tank-lorry owners at Bhairab depots in Chandpur also did not lift oil, he added.

He said the petroleum supplier companies under the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) now provide only 17 lakh litres of petroleum including 28 lakh litres of diesel, 3 lakh litres of octane and 1 lakh litres of petrol in Dhaka division per day, resulting in a shortage of around 40 percent.

Kabul also rejected the BPC's claim that no rationing has been imposed over distribution of diesel.

Meanwhile, several hundred owners and workers of tank-lorry and fuel pumps staged a demonstration and brought out processions yesterday in front of Meghna and Jamuna depots at Fatullah as well as Padma and Meghna depots at Godnai under the village headmen's demands.

Insiders in the fuel-oil trade indicated that there would be a dearth of supply during the stoppage, especially from today.

However, the BPC in a press release on Monday said the actual sale of diesel in the country during August 2006 is recorded to be 189,105 metric tonnes as against the sale of 179,524 metric tonnes in August 2005, showing an increase by 5.34 percent.

During the second half of August 2006, sale of diesel was 132,580 metric tonnes against the sale of 101,729 metric tonnes during the corresponding period of August 2005, showing an increase of 30.33 percent. Even during last week, sale of diesel was higher by 3,403 metric tonnes over sale during the same period of last year, the release said adding that no rationing has been imposed over distribution of diesel.

The stock position of all petroleum products in the country including diesel is satisfactory, the BPC statement added.

The vessels were likely to stay in the outer anchorage area waiting for the decision of the meeting.

The stock position of all petroleum products in the country including diesel is satisfactory, the BPC statement added.

Productivity higher

FROM PAGE 1

bureaucratic hassles while less productive firms cannot do it.

The analysis used data from a survey conducted in between November 2004 and September 2005 on 575 firms in food, leather and footwear, pharmaceuticals, ready-made garment and textiles categories.

"Our positive effect of corruption on firm productivity suggests that indeed the industries and locations with more productive firms are more targeted by the government officials, thus the opportunities for bribe-seeking behaviour are larger and firms end up paying more bribes," it says.

Mir Nasir Hossain, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), however, disagrees with the World Bank's findings.

He observed that bribery does not have anything to do with the size of a company and it is not true that bribe can help increase productivity. Bribe does not in fact relate to productivity, he added.

As per the survey, the firms identified corruption, customs clearance, power outages, getting business licence and operating permits, frequent changes in government regulations and bureaucratic tangles as the major obstacles to productivity.

Besides, perceptions data show that the presence of crime in industries and locations hurts firm productivity.

Faced with recurring power outages, more than 80 percent of the firms in all industries own a generator, the report finds.

It says, "A firm belonging to an industry and location with one percent more power outages than other industry-location cells, has more than eight percent lower productivity."

"Overall, we can confidently conclude that the constraints to TFP (Total Factor Productivity) growth posed by poor electricity supply in Bangladesh are extremely severe," notes the report.

The findings also suggest that access to short-term finance like the one provided by an overdraft facility

or a line of credit to address working capital and day-to-day business needs has a positive impact on productivity while the access to long-term finance has negative effect.

These surprising findings may reflect inefficiencies of the banking sector in Bangladesh and deserve further analysis beyond the scope of this paper," the report says.

The study found that in relation to large-sized firms with more than 500 workers, firms of smaller sizes are more productive. Medium-sized firms (10-50 workers) are the most productive. On average, they are 32 percent more productive than the extremely large ones.

"Thus, in Bangladesh the larger firms are not the most productive. In fact, firms that are too large may suffer from inefficiencies in terms of coordination, management and supervision resulting from poor corporate management and a lack of qualified middle managers."

The findings suggest that foreign-owned companies in Bangladesh (10 percent of sample) have an edge over the domestically owned ones in terms of having better technology as well as better access to distribution and marketing channels and networks.

Khondkar Ibrahim Khaled, managing director of Pubali Bank Ltd, said it is not productivity, rather profitability that depends on bribe.

Citing an example, he said that evading tax substantially while spending a small amount in bribe for the custom officials often helps a company to improve its profitability.

He however agreed that companies might gain more from the short-term financial facility. Productivity from long-term loans could be severely hampered if a company borrows money from the nationalised commercial banks and the sponsors divert funds. In that case, efficiency of the bank concerned comes in question, he explained.

The FBCCI president too was of the opinion that interest rate in long-term loans should be changed. Previously, it was 11 percent but now it is 14 percent that may adversely affect the industries, he noted.

High-level

FROM PAGE 16

assurances, sources said.

The company claimed that the subway would be constructed on cut and paste basis in the government acquired land without causing any major resettlement. Besides, the company will bear the cost of resettlement, however small, required for implementing the project.

For excavation purposes, the company has selected less important roads to avoid traffic disturbances during the construction. The Bangladesh army would provide logistic support to the company in the construction process and traffic management, according to the proposal.

The route map of the metro rail was drawn in a way so that 80 percent of the city dwellers can have access to the transport system within one kilometre walking distance. The double line metro rail would be interlinked and people will be able to commute from one place to other at a minimum cost.

According to the environmental assessment report, the metro rail system would bring immense benefit to the capital by lessening traffic density on roads, reducing road accidents, abating air pollution and noise level and extend the life of roads.

It would also help people to settle down at the suburban areas to the relief of the heavy pressure of population on the capital.

It is expected to discuss the revolt

Indian agencies

FROM PAGE 16

fears of more attacks across the country, particularly in New Delhi and Mumbai, and at airports after British police last month said they foiled a plot to bomb trans-Atlantic flights.

"Concern about the increasing activities of externally inspired and directed terrorist outfits in the country is justified," Singh told an internal security meeting.

"Intelligence agencies warn of a further intensification of violent activities," he told the meeting, attended by chief ministers of states and top federal security officials.

The attacks could be carried out by suicide bombers and also target Indian army camps and other vital installations such as nuclear plants, he said.

At the same time, he said there was an urgent need to counter the sense of alienation among India's roughly 140 million minority Muslims and ensure that efforts to stamp out Islamist militancy do not victimise the entire community.

Singh also announced the formation of a special panel of ministers, which would include the federal interior minister and chief ministers of select states, to monitor the spread of Maoist violence and coordinate efforts to counter it.

Iraq extends state

FROM PAGE 16

al-Maliki said another southern province, Dhi Qar, would follow in September.

"I recognise that at the end of the day, security in this country must be a prime responsibility for the Iraqi government and the Iraqi security services," Saleh said.

Handing over control from the coalition to Iraqi