

AL to propose 2 names for caretaker chief
Says Jalil

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League (AL) General Secretary Abdul Jalil has called for resolving the pre-election standoff through dialogue, saying that they will propose two names for the chief advisor of the caretaker government and the chief election commissioner, which will be acceptable to all including the ruling BNP.

"We've given some space to the BNP-led coalition government for holding dialogue...and we are waiting for government initiative

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2 outlaws killed in 'shootout' with Rab

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Two regional leaders of the outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party ML Lal Pataka faction were killed during a 'shootout' between their cohorts and the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab).

The incident took place at Natunpara of Dhulauri union under Santhia upazila early Saturday morning. The dead were identified as Haiful Islam and Hazrat Ali of the same village.

Rab12 received a tip off and cordoned off the Natunpara brickyard early morning yesterday to capture the outlaws, Rab said.

The wanted criminals opened

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Solve crisis, save RMG sector

Speakers urge at The Daily Star-Junior Chamber roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday called upon all stakeholders to immediately solve the prevailing crisis regarding minimum wage structure in the readymade garment (RMG) sector and look into other hidden causes that are responsible for the stalemate.

The minimum wage is one of the causes of violence in the sector but many other issues —workers right, overtime, regular increment, bonus, incentives and other facilities -- need to be resolved for bringing back normalcy in the thriving garment sector, they said.

The speakers underscored the need for an amicable solution of the problems in the greater interest of the sector.

The Junior Chamber International (JCI) Bangladesh chapter organised the roundtable on 'Problems in the RMG sector, recent issues and possible solutions' at the Brac centre with joint collaboration of The Daily Star.

The Daily Star Editor Mahfuz Anam moderated the seminar while garment factory owners, Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) leaders, representatives of workers, buyers and donors participated in the

discussion.

The seminar witnessed a strong debate between the representatives of workers and owners on the question of minimum wage for the garment workers.

Annisul Huq, former president of BGMEA and a member of the government formed wage commission for garment sector, told the discussion that the prevailing conflict between workers and owners on the question of minimum wage would be solved within a week.

"We are going to have a win-win situation on minimum wage within a week," he said without giving details about the understanding between the conflicting groups.

Earlier both the workers and owners rejected the minimum wage structure declared by the government wage commission. The workers said the minimum wage was much less than their demand while the owners termed it 'too high and unacceptable'.

The workers' representatives demanded wage hike in the garment sector for the 'very survival' of the poorly paid workers.

With the unusual rise in the prices of essentials, the garment workers cannot survive with the poor amount they get, they said, adding that the sector may face another spell of unrest if their

demands are not met.

Annisul Huq expressed fear that around 20 to 30 per cent factories might face closure if the minimum wage structure is implemented without considering the other relevant issues.

The cutting and making (CM) charge has declined almost by 50 per cent in the recent years, he said, adding that the wage structure should be formulated considering the ability of the owners.

Nazma Akhter, a worker leader and representative of the workers in the wage commission, reiterated their demand for Tk 3,000 as the minimum wage for the garment sector.

Urging the buyers to increase the CM charge and save the sector from ruination, she said the workers are also ready to launch movement for price hike of the garment items.

"We do not want to go for rampage but we want to survive. Please let us lead a life as just human beings," said another representative of workers.

Mamunur Rashid of City Bank NA said the garment factory owners do not present the actual picture of their earning and profit. Although the owners make huge

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French paper runs Laden's death report
US intelligence fails to confirm

REUTERS, AFP, Paris/ Washington

A French regional newspaper quoted a French secret service report yesterday as saying that Saudi Arabia is convinced that al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden died of typhoid in Pakistan last month. However, the French Defence Ministry has not confirmed the report. The ministry has also decided to probe the leak of classified document.

US intelligence agencies also "can't confirm" the French newspaper report, a US official said Saturday.

"I can't confirm that account," said the government official, who spoke to AFP on the condition that neither his name nor his affiliation would be revealed.

L'Est Republicain printed what it said was a copy of the report, dated September 21, and said it was shown to President Jacques

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Shop owners reject govt's load-shedding plan for malls

UNB, Dhaka

The shop owners yesterday rejected a call of State Minister for Power Anwarul Kabir Talukder to accept limited load-shedding in the evening at the shopping centres.

"We won't accept any power cut during peak time of business, particularly in the month of Ramadan... we do whole year's business in this month," said Helaluddin Helal, president of Dhaka City Shop Owners' Association (DCSOA), at a meeting with the minister at Desa (Dhaka Electric Supply Authority) head office.

"We've been facing load shedding even in the day time. Our level

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Bol chief takes 'save image' vow again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Energy Adviser and Board of Investment (BoI) Executive Chairman Mahmudur Rahman yesterday reiterated his vow to resist those who have 'distorted' the progressive image of the country.

He also pledged to start a country-wide campaign to counter the "anti-state propaganda" being carried out by certain quarters.

Rahman was speaking at a seminar titled "Sangsadiya Ganatantra-Nirbachon" by Sammilita Peshajibi Parishad at the Jatiya Press Club.

Terming the defamation case filed against the five eminent citizens of the country recently a 'personal war' against those who have tarnished his image and that

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A horse-drawn carriage and a few rickshaws make their way on waterlogged Nazimuddin Road in the capital yesterday as torrential rain over the last four days left the city almost paralysed.

Thai king to pick new PM from list of four

Junta allows Thaksin to return despite graft probe

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's king will be asked Wednesday to confirm a new prime minister to replace overthrown premier Thaksin Shinawatra, military sources said.

The country's new military rulers Sunday drew up a four-man shortlist that includes former World Trade Organisation head Supachai Panitchpakdi, the military sources said.

King Bhumibol Adulyadej will be asked to confirm one of the men, who also include the current Bank of Thailand governor Pridiyathorn Devakula and the presidents of

Thailand's two top courts, Charnchai Likhitchittha and Akkharathorn Chularat, the source said.

Supachai, the most internationally recognised of the four men, is currently the chairman of the UN Conference on Trade and Development.

Junta officials met Saturday for almost three hours to come up with the shortlist and to draw up an interim constitution they said would pave the way for elections due to be held in October next year.

"The selection of a new prime minister is an urgent task on the agenda and a crucial issue for the

junta that we cannot speed up," junta spokesman Major General Thaweeep Netniyan told reporters after the meeting.

"The junta is confident that people will be satisfied with our choice of new prime minister," he added declining to name publicly those on the list.

The generals had promised to appoint a new civilian premier within two weeks of the military takeover.

So far the junta has imposed martial law, banned political activities and public gatherings, annulled the constitution and

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Political situation to worsen if Justice Hasan takes over

Top opposition leaders say

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Top opposition leaders yesterday said the political situation of the country will be even tougher if the alliance government hands over power to a caretaker government led by former Chief Justice KM Hasan.

"A justice, who feels embarrassed to deal with the Bangabandhu killing case because one of his relatives is involved in the killing, cannot be neutral even when he is the chief of caretaker government," said Awami League (AL) Presidium Member Tofail Ahmed at

the closing ceremony of Batexpo 2006.

Speaking at the programme, leaders of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) apprehended that the country's garment industry will face a hard time after 2008 when the USA and European Union withdraw the WTO safeguards from China.

The government and opposition political parties should take every step necessary to make the garment sector competitive for the future, they said.

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DG shipping's rejoinder, our reply

The Department of Shipping commented on two news items published in The Daily Star on September 17 and 18 under the title 'Glitch in ship alert system at sea ports' and 'Sea port alert system remains down'.

The Director General of Shipping Captain AKM Shafiqullah claimed the port security system was functioning in compliance with the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code). There were no reasons to believe that the port was insecure, he added.

The so-called failure of the ISPS system was only a 'rumour' which originated from the disconnection of mobile phones integrated in the security system, he said.

Our reply

The Daily Star in its report did not say the ISPS was not functioning. It

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Helicopter with 24 people aboard missing in Nepal

REUTERS, Kathmandu

A private helicopter carrying 24 people, including a junior minister and at least seven foreigners, was missing in a remote region of eastern Nepal on Saturday, a conservation group and authorities said.

The WWF global environmental group, which had organised the trip to the Taplejung district, 300 km from the capital Kathmandu, said the helicopter was carrying two Americans, a Finnish, a Canadian and an Australian national when it disappeared.

It said two Russians were part of

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32 killed as kerosene tanker blown up

AP, AFP, Baghdad

A bomb blew up a kerosene tanker truck in Baghdad's Sadr City neighbourhood yesterday, killing at least 32 people, police said.

Another 38 people were wounded by the 10 am blast in the sprawling Shia slum. People frantically carried survivors from the narrow muddy street to ambulances, and hauled away bodies in blankets.

The bomb was hidden in a barrel near the tanker truck, where scores of people were waiting to buy fuel, said police Col Saad Abdul-Sada.

There were more people on hand than usual as families sought to stock up on fuel for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, he said.

Seventeen women were among the dead, Abdul-Sada said, adding that casualties were expected to rise.

Sadr City is home to more than two million people and a stronghold of the Mahdi army a Shia militia loyal to radical cleric Muqtada al-

Sadr.

Just 24 hours earlier, an al-Qaeda led group had warned of attacks during Ramadan, which for Sunnis began on Saturday. Shias begin marking the month on Sunday.

Police said the bomb was made up of two barrels packed with explosives and that at least 34 people were wounded in the attack.

"The explosives were set off as people gathered to buy fuel from a petrol tanker which was standing at the service station," a police officer said.

The blast came as Iraqi state television carried an announcement from the prime minister that the leader of an al-Qaeda allied group, Sheikh Montasser al-Juburi of the Ansar al-Sunna, was arrested northeast of Baghdad. Two aides were also detained. Sadr City, the impoverished district home to nearly two million Shias, is often a

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A shopkeeper in Karwan Bazar kitchen market in the capital waits for customers yesterday as heavy rain prompts city dwellers to stay indoors.

Nuclear talks with Iran may start without US

Major powers mull slapping sanctions on Tehran

REUTERS, Berlin/ New York

France, Britain and Germany would be willing to begin talks with Iran even if it has not suspended its nuclear enrichment programme first, but Washington would not take part, a German magazine reported yesterday.

So far Iran has refused to suspend its uranium enrichment pro-

gram, which could refine uranium for atom bombs, saying its nuclear fuel ambitions are limited to fuelling power stations. Western countries suspect Tehran wants to produce weapons.

Citing unnamed German diplomatic sources, weekly Der Spiegel said the goal of this new strategy would be to lure Tehran to the

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