

# Street face-off

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Main opposition AL has already directed its grassroots level leaders and activists to get prepared and formed action committees across the country to launch the last spell of agitation to press home its demands for reforms if the dialogue fails.

In a bid to counter the opposition alliance, the ruling BNP is now preparing for showdown in the streets after leaving office on October 27.

BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan yesterday at his official residence told leaders and activists from his constituency Narsingdi-3 that the BNP will still remain "strong" during the time of caretaker government.

"BNP will stay in the streets with its programmes to face its opponents politically after handing over power to the caretaker government," BNP Standing Committee Member Dr Khandakar Mosharrar Hossain told The Daily Star last night.

The BNP also plans to hold a grand rally in the capital before handing over power "to inspire" party leaders and activists mentally, sources said.

BNP Chairperson and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has already directed the party high command to gear up the grassroots level leaders and activists to face the opposition politically.

Today the party holds a joint meeting of the leaders of its front organisations and lawmakers from the constituencies in the capital to discuss the party's preparations for the coming days.

Mannan Bhuiyan, also LGRD minister, is expected to give directives in this regard from the meeting to be attended by BNP's joint secretaries general, organising secretary of Dhaka division unit, and president and secretary of Dhaka city unit.

BNP's youth organisation Juba Dal at an extended meeting on October 8 decided to remain active in the streets after October 27.

At a reunion of Jatiyatabadi

Chhatra Dal (JCD), students' wing of BNP, on October 9, the party's Senior Joint Secretary General Tarique Rahman vowed and urged JCD leaders and activists to resist any attempt to create anarchy by the opposition.

Soon after the reunion, JCD high-ups sat with the grassroots level leaders to discuss the overall situation.

"We will do everything to resist the opposition activists if they really come out with oars and poles," JCD General Secretary Shafiq Bari Babu told The Daily Star yesterday.

Our leaders and activists will remain alert from October 27 besides making preparations for the next parliamentary election, he added.

The JCD, which was highly active in the streets in facing opposition movements during the BNP government's 1991-1996 tenure, is planning to hold a grand rally this month in a bid to show its strength.

Ruling alliance partners Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote are also preparing for showdown in the streets with political programmes.

Meanwhile, AL Acting General Secretary Obaidul Quader said, "The agitation in the streets will continue along with the dialogue. We have no alternative but to take to the streets to press home our demands if the talks fail to break the deadlock."

"The possibility of resolving the political impasse through the dialogue is thinning gradually as the prime minister and Tarique Rahman have launched countrywide campaign against the reform proposals," he told The Daily Star last night, apparently expressing doubts over the success of the dialogue that began on October 5 and will resume on October 16.

# Criminal killed in gunfight with cops

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A criminal was killed during a half-hour long gunfight between his accomplices and the Detective Branch (DB) of police Wednesday night at Jashaikhali village in Jhenidah sadar.

The dead is Moshir Rahman, 35, son of Abdur Rahman of Durbakundo village under Kotchandpur upazila.

Moshir, accused in four murder cases, was arrested at around 3:00pm on Wednesday from Chuadanga bus stand in Jhenidah, police said.

After conducting interrogation, DB took him along to Jashaikhali village at around 3:00am to recover hidden arms and capture other members of his gang.

As they reached near Jashaikhali, Moshir's accomplices opened fire on the law enforcers prompting the DB to return fire.

Moshir was caught in "crossfire" and died on the spot while attempting to flee DB's custody, claimed police.

Gulshanara, sub-inspector of Jhenidah Sadar Police Station, said 20 shots have been fired during the shootout.

Police recovered a firearm and three bullets from the spot.

# Hasina

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solving the political impasse," Hasina told newsmen at Zia International Airport prior to her departure for the US.

The Awami League (AL) president alleged that the government has ruled last five years using muscle-power and wants to use that power in the dialogue process in a bid to foil the elections.

Earlier on Tuesday, Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman told reporters that the ongoing dialogue between BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan and AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil is nothing but time-killing.

Talking to reporters at the airport, Hasina said, "We want to go ahead with the dialogue process with patience as we want a peaceful solution to the stalemate. Now it seems that the government has a plot in this regard."

The AL chief said they placed reform proposals to ensure a free and fair election in the country under a non-partisan and neutral caretaker administration.

She urged people to remain alert so that the four-party coalition could neither rig the next elections nor steal votes. Hasina also urged all to resist the poll-rigging move by the BNP-Jamaat.

"We want a peaceful solution and we are waiting to see what the government does," she said adding, "We have immense patience in any time of crisis. If we wanted confrontation, the nation would have witnessed a civil war after the August 21, 2004 carnage."

Referring to a recently conducted survey, she said it revealed that the ruling four-party alliance would not get more than 80 seats in the next polls and that is why they do not want to implement the opposition's reforms proposal.

"We want to inform people that we haven't placed any proposal regarding electoral reforms that is impossible to implement," the AL chief said.

Sheikh Hasina, accompanied by AL presidium member Kazi Zafarullah MP and Tanjim Ahmed Sohel Taj MP, left Dhaka on a weeklong visit to the United States for better treatment for her hearing. Her hearing suffered following the August 21, 2004 grenade attacks. She is also supposed to take the opportunity of visiting her son and daughter-in-law who are living in the US.

Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Tofail Ahmed, Suranjeet Sengupta, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Motia Chowdhury, Obaidul Quader, Abdur Rahman were present at the airport among others.

Meanwhile, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil left for Singapore last night for medical check-ups.

During Hasina and Jalil's absence, senior presidium member Zillur Rahman and Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader will work as the acting president and general secretary of the party.

# Govt has no plan

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the railway sector under the banner of Railway Sramik Karmachari Sangram Parishad called the strike on Wednesday to protest the government's 'intention' to turn the railway sector into a corporate body.

A three-year-long study will start next year to reform the railway sector that is losing over Tk 100 crore annually, Huda said.

The implementation process will, however, start in 2011.

"We have pointed out that the railway sector is a thrust sector and the donors are interested to invest here," the minister said, adding that the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Japan Development Corporation would provide fund to execute the mega plans that will require around Tk 6,300 crore.

Huda said he had a successful meeting with the railway workers and employees on October 9 and 10 when he assured them that the government has no plan to turn the sector into a corporation.

The next government will take decision on implementing the railway reform project, he said.

# Barapukuria coal-fired project

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for the plant, the authorities installed 24 deep-tube-well pumps with 35 to 40KW horsepower sinking 350 to 420 feet pipes at West Sherpur village near the Power Plant, according to the project outline.

To produce power, each of the two 125 MW units of the power plant demand 550 tons of water per hour by running eight pumps round-the-clock, plant sources said.

The second unit of the plant also emits black smoke and creates noise pollution in the area.

Locals of Sherpur, Dudipukur, Jarua danga, Tunipara, Ramvadrapur, Chakbir, Muzidpur, Bagra, Sultanpur, Hossainpur, Telipara, Pachempura, Rampura and Yusufpur villages alleged that the water levels fell since the plant went into operation in February this year.

Locals and power plant officials agree that excessive pumping of water is the reason for the depletion of the underground water level in the 15 villages for the last 8 to 10 months.

People of these villages used underground water by sinking hand tubewell pipes to the depth of 60 to 65 feet a year ago. But now, they need to sink pipes to a depth of 150 to 200 feet to reach the underground water table, said the locals.

Nurzahan, a housewife of Yusufpur village, said as the local hand tubewells have gone dry, she has to go two kilometres from her house every day to bring safe water.

Mukti, a trader of Barapukuria, said affected people of the villages informed the plant authorities about the depleting underground water level five months ago, but till date nobody took any initiative to resolve the matter.

"To meet the current crisis, we need to spend between Tk 9,000 and Tk 12,000 to sink extra pipes for one deeper hand tubewell in each of the affected villages," he added.

During a spot visit, a Daily Star correspondent noted that about 98 per cent installed tubewells have become dry in Barapukuria area whereas these tubewells were functioning earlier this year.

There has been very inadequate rainfall in the region for the last six months and so the chances of natural replenishment of the underground and surface water remain very slim, officials of the Department of Agriculture Extension observed.

Most people of the affected villages are now depending on the discharge

canal of the plant that drains the used water into the Tilaamari river.

The local people said instead of draining this water into the Tilaamari river, the plant authorities should consider scientifically channelling the water to the villages for irrigation as a compensation.

The plant officials, however, said the water is polluted with chemicals. "The drain's water is unfit for irrigation purposes, even for consumption by livestock and humans," said an official.

The unplanned use of water is harming nature in many other ways that may not be directly observable, said local Union Parishad Chairman Anwar Hossain.

Many villages complained of increasing cases of diseases in the eyes, teeth, skin and stomach and loss of hair and jaundice.

A power expert who has been involved in several power projects said the use of water is based on plant design. Inefficient and cheap equipment use more water than cost-effective machinery.

"Generally, the contractor is required to conduct a ground water reservoir usage modelling and then design the plant based on the results. The CMC should have obtained permission for ground water extraction by submitting water modelling results. Bangladesh Department of Environment, World Bank, and other relevant water resources authority have guidelines that should not have been violated," said the expert.

"There is also guidelines for water quality discharge. Depending on the effluent discharge, they should have constructed wastewater treatment plant at the site and channelise the waste-water through that plant," he said.

"Another thing to look at is the heat-rate of the plant. If they have supplied cheap boiler, it will use more coal per unit of electricity produced," he pointed out.

A letter was sent to Petrobangla on the underground water situation of the area, Barapukuria Power Plant Project Director Shamsur Rahman told The Daily Star.

When asked what remedial measures the authorities took, he said several letters were written to the CMC that built and designed the plant but it has not taken any steps.

The Department of Environment has given clearance to the power plant, he said.

Meanwhile, the prime minister yesterday laid the foundation of the Plant Genetic Resources (PGR) Centre in Gazipur and Transmitter commissioning project of 1000-kilowatt medium wave in Dhamrai.

She also inaugurated the National Institute of Biotechnology at Ganakbari in Savar.

# Girl shot dead

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house after Ramzan rejected their call.

Ratna, Ramzan's 15 year-old school going daughter, stood in the way of the gang and resisted them. The infuriated gang members shot and killed the girl on the spot before fleeing the scene.

Police recovered the body yesterday morning and sent it to Kushtia General Hospital for autopsy.

# Turkish Pamuk

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The 54-year-old writer is Turkey's best-known author at home and abroad, but also a political rebel whose pronouncements on his country's history have put its respect for freedom of expression under the international spotlight.

"In his home country, Pamuk has a reputation as a social commentator even though he sees himself principally a fiction writer with no political agenda," the Nobel jury noted.

Turkey's decades-old striving to become European – characterized by clashes between Islam and secularism, tradition and modernity – along with the painful impact of an aggressive westernization after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, permeate Pamuk's writing.

Pamuk was the first author in the Muslim world to publicly condemn the 1989 fatwa against Salman Rushdie, and he took a stand for his Turkish colleague Yasar Kemal when the latter was put on trial in 1995.

Pamuk himself faced prosecution after telling a Swiss newspaper that 30,000 Kurds and one million Armenians had been killed in Turkey.

The charges against him sparked widespread international protest, and were subsequently dropped.

Pamuk is the first Turk to win the prestigious prize, and had been rumoured as one of the frontrunners to win this year.

A chain-smoker, he mostly shuns the public eye, writing for long hours in an Istanbul flat overlooking the bridge over the Bosphorus linking Europe and Asia.

Born in 1952 into a prosperous, secular family, Pamuk was intent on becoming a painter in his youth. He studied architecture at Istanbul Technical University but later turned to writing and studied journalism in Istanbul.

He published his prize-winning first novel, "Cevdet Bey and His Sons", in 1982, a family chronicle in which he describes the shift from a traditional Ottoman family environment to a more Western lifestyle.

His second novel, "The House of Silence", came out in Turkey in 1983, but it was his third book, "The White Castle", published two years later, that gave him an international reputation.

Structured as a historical novel set in 17th century Istanbul, "its content is primarily a story about how our ego

The CMC officials declined to make any comment to The Daily Star.

The CMC built the 250 MW plant with two 125 MW units, at a record high price of US\$ 257 million under a Chinese Supplier's Credit. In contrast, the 450 MW Meghnaghat plant needed \$170 million as designing, engineering, installation and procurement costs.

The over-priced plant that benefited only the CMC consortium and its local representative Hosaf Group, however, failed to perform as per the contract. The plant started partial operation after months of delay and kept on tripping repeatedly. The second unit of the plant has remained shut for quite sometime due to technical glitches.

The power plant requires 2,500 tonnes of coal every day, produced by the mine that was also developed by the CMC at a staggering price of Tk 1,600 crore.

# BNP cadres

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hijacked the microbus bus carrying the copies of the Jugantor on Barisal-Dhaka highway in Gournadi bus stand area in the early morning.

The beat up driver Ruhul Amin and lineman Farid Hossain and confined them to a bus counter.

Two hours later, Gournadi police recovered the microbus and found the burnt copies near a petrol pump on Gournadi-Agoljihara-Poisarhat road.

Journalist leaders expressed strong resentment at the vandalism by the ruling party cadres and demanded immediate action against the culprits.

Meanwhile, the Gouranadi police station refused to register any case in this connection.

Swajan Samabesh, a forum of Jugantor readers, organised a rally in the afternoon condemning the incident. Leaders and members of journalists' organisations and cultural and social activists also joined the protest.

Meanwhile, the prime minister yesterday laid the foundation of the Plant Genetic Resources (PGR) Centre in Gazipur and Transmitter commissioning project of 1000-kilowatt medium wave in Dhamrai.

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# Port channel

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of the outer bar area around 9:00pm on Wednesday. A rescue team led by a high official of the Marine Department of Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) with the help of four CPA tug boats – Dishari 8, Kandari 6, 7 and 10, had been trying to salvage the vessel since that evening.

The repeated attempts to salvage the wrecked vessel were failing due to its mast being buried under heavy silt brought in by strong currents, sources in the rescue team said. The CPA sought help from Bangladesh Navy to recover the ship and the latter joined the rescue operation yesterday afternoon, they said.

However, the recovery of the ship might take some time and private salvaging firms may be brought in if required, the sources added. The owner of the vessel was also asked to make efforts alongside the rescue teams of the CPA and Bangladesh Navy in order to salvage the wrecked vessel, they said.

Early yesterday morning, a number of people on sampans looted some of the ship's equipment when the CPA rescue team left the spot for a while.

Meanwhile, CPA and Mercantile Marine Department (MMD) formed two separate probe committees into the vessel capsized. The CPA formed a three-member committee led by its Harbour Master Zafar Ullah while MMD formed its committee led by National Surveyor Captain Jasim Uddin.

Both the committees are to submit their reports within a week, sources said. It may be mentioned, another lighter vessel MV Titu-10, rescued all the 13 crew members immediate after the MV Shah Badar-1 sank.

# All eyes on China

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week, would get backing from China and Russia -- traditional allies of the North that have veto power on the Council.

China has been unusually forceful in its criticism of the North over the test. While it has said it would support some "punitive" measures, however, the sanctions proposed by the United States are wide-ranging in scope.

"There are still areas of disagreement," said the US ambassador to the United Nations, John Bolton. Despite a US desire to act quickly, lingering disputes could delay any Council vote.

China said Wu Dawei, its top negotiator on North Korea, would be part of the delegation sent to Washington and Moscow to address the crisis but again refused to publicly reveal its position on the US-proposed sanctions.

"We are consulting with other parties and hope the consultation will be conducive towards pushing forward the diplomatic efforts," foreign ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said.

The 15-nation Council was to meet later in the day on the resolution, which includes a tough requirement for the international inspection of cargo in and out of North Korea.

Washington fears that the North, known to have supplied missiles to nations hostile to the United States, might make sensitive nuclear technology or other weaponry available to anti-US groups and governments.

Japan announced its own unilateral sanctions on Pyongyang, including a ban on all North Korean imports, which drew swift condemnation and a sharp warning from the communist regime if Tokyo put them into effect.

"We will take strong countermeasures," Song Il-Ho, the North's ambassador in charge of normalising relations with Tokyo, told Japan's Kyodo News.

"The specific contents will become clear if you keep watching. We never speak empty words," he said. The new Japanese sanctions await final approval from the cabinet on Friday.

North Korea said Wednesday that full-scale sanctions by the Security Council would be tantamount to a "declaration of war."

Pyongyang says its nuclear weapons programme is needed to deter an attack by the United States, which lumped the North in with Iran and pre-war Iraq as an "axis of evil."

It said Monday's test was an attempt to get the United States back to the bargaining table, an apparent call for one-to-one talks instead of the stalled six-nation negotiations on its nuclear ambitions.

But US President George W. Bush, who is also trying to stop Islamic Iran from developing an atom bomb, ruled out direct talks with the North, one of the most impoverished and isolated nations in the world.

The six-way talks -- between North and South Korea, the United States, China, Japan and Russia -- led to a pledge last year that the North would abandon its weapons programme in exchange for aid and security guarantees.

But Pyongyang abandoned that deal and boycotted further talks two months later after the United States slapped sanctions on a Macau bank that it said was laundering money for the North Korean regime.

Those sanctions are generally believed to have had a serious impact on the finances of the hermit state, which has repeatedly insisted it would not return to the talks until they are lifted.

# 9/11 revisits

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He said there was no sign of terrorism. "Sadly an accident like this cost two people their lives. But I don't know that there's any greater significance."

Officials said fighter jets were sent soaring above unspecified US cities immediately after the crash but there was no change in the national alert level.

In New York, helicopters flew overhead as a crowd watched from streets below packed with emergency vehicles. Police closed off traffic to at least a six-block area around the site.

Nine civilians were injured, including two who were transported to hospital, and 14 firefighters and two police officers also suffered minor injuries, according to Debbie Hersman, a National Transportation Safety Board member.

The four-year-old Cirrus SR20 was registered to Lidle, who obtained a private pilot's license in February 2006, Hersman said.

Its engine and propeller were inside the apartment it struck while most of the rest of the aircraft was scattered all over the street below, she said.

"The crash occurred in a 40th floor apartment," said Hersman, who visited there late Wednesday. "There's incredible fire damage in the apartment, paint is peeling from the walls, there is a wall-sized hole where one of the windows used to be," she said.

Lidle's death dismayed players and fans of New York's Yankees, perennially one of pro baseball's top teams.

Meanwhile South Korea, which says the world must take its position into account when the international community takes action on the North, said it wanted a firm US commitment of nuclear protection in security talks next week.

Before those annual talks, South Korean President Roh Moo-Hyun was due to hold a summit in Beijing on Friday with Chinese President Hu Jintao.

There are around 29,500 US troops alongside around 650,000 South Korean forces in the South, who face off against 1.2 million North Korean soldiers across one of the most heavily militarised borders in the world.

Pyongyang on Thursday again claimed that the United States was making plans along with Seoul for an invasion.

# SC Bar urges

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have other than rejecting the post. There has already been an intense debate over the issue," he observed.

Reading out a statement, Bar president of the country's top court said the BNP-Jamaat alliance had made Justice Hasan controversial by providing special privileges. Then the former top judge himself had exposed his partisan character by visiting Comilla shrines along with BNP leaders, he noted.

Justice Mahmudul Amin Chowdhury had put forward a proposal for extending the retirement age of the Supreme Court judges. After sitting on the proposal for a long time, the government had upped the age limit by two years instead of the proposed three years so that Hasan turn out to be the last retired chief justice, Amir-UI alleged.

He said Justice Hasan had once been the international affairs secretary of the BNP. He was one of the four lawyers that the party had sent abroad as ambassadors to compensate for not nominating them as candidates in parliamentary election.

The thirteenth amendment to the constitution was on presumption that a retired chief justice will naturally be neutral, but the BNP government had ignored the spirit of good practice and started appointing judges on political considerations, he said.

Asked what if KM Hasan does not pay heed to their appeal, Amir-UI said, "We are hopeful he will listen to our plea, as this will be the attitude of a judge."

He added, "We won't put any pressure on him. But we believe if he does not pay heed to our appeal, the spirit of having a neutral chief of the caretaker government will be undermined."

The SCBA may also consider meeting Hasan for making the request in person, he added.

In a separate press release yesterday, the SCBA appealed to Chief Justice Syed JR Mudassar Husain to ask Judge Foisal Mahmud Fayzee not to attend the lawyers' traditional courtesy call on the chief justice on October 15.

Fayzee had been given permanent appointment without settling the dispute regarding his LLB certificate and age.

SCBA Vice-President Abdul Mannan Khan, Acting Secretary Motahar Hossain Shaju, former president Mahbubey Alam, former secretary Enayetur Rahim and other lawyer leaders were present at the press conference.

"This is a terrible and shocking tragedy that has stunned the entire Yankees organisation," said Yankees owner George Steinbrenner.

"Right now I'm really in a state of shock as I'm sure the entire Major League Baseball family is," said Yankees slugger Jason Giambi.

Despite the crash there were no real questions about why the airplane was in the area. A Federal Aviation Administration spokeswoman said private aircraft have the right to fly up the East or Hudson rivers.

"They were flying by visual flight rules in that corridor and (the plane) was not in contact with a tower," FAA spokeswoman Diane Sticialle said.

Visual flight rules allow pilots to rely on their eyes to navigate instead of instruments.

Lidle reportedly bought the 2002 four-seat aircraft for 187,000 dollars and was enthusiastic about its salient safety feature, a parachute that can float the plane to the ground in an emergency.

"The whole plane has a parachute on it," the pitcher told The New York Times in an interview last month.

"Ninety-nine percent of pilots that go up never have engine failure, and the one percent that do usually land it. But if you're up in the air and something goes wrong, you pull that parachute, and the whole plane goes down slowly."