

CA still has time

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a congenial atmosphere for a free and fair election," Hasina said.

The AL chief was speaking at a meeting with leaders of thana units of the city AL and central leaders of all front organisations of the party at her Dhanmondi office.

A meeting of the AL Central Working Committee was also being held there with Hasina in the chair till the filing this report.

Hasina said the president has also become the CA violating the constitution in a bid to concentrate power in his hands. She also reiterated her accusation that Iajuddin has taken a stand against the people and is pushing the country into a state of uncertainty.

She urged the president to show 'minimum neutrality' as he also heads the non-partisan CG. "We have given time twice to show your neutrality but you have not taken any steps to do that," she said.

Hasina went on, "Though we placed our demands 11 days ago, the Election Commission has not been reconstituted, voter list is yet to be revised and necessary changes both in the civil and police administration still to be made."

Election could be held only after reconstitution of the EC and revision of voter lists, she stressed.

The AL chief asked her party leaders and workers to remain alert as, she feared, agents of BNP-Jamaat might enter gatherings of 14-party for destructive activities to shift the blame on it (14-party). "The enemies are conspiring in many ways to push the country into a deep crisis," she said, urging her partymen to observe the blockade peacefully.

Hasina also instructed the party leaders to make a list of those who have not been included in the voter list.

She wondered that BNP

Huji man

FROM PAGE 1
Hazera Khatun by police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) men. The magistrate recorded his statement for two hours when Naieem confessed his involvement with the banned militant outfit.

Naieem said he was introduced to Sharif Shamsul Alam Bipul in Sylhet in 2004. They later went to the house of Huji leader Mufti Hannan in Dhaka and worked out the blueprint for the grenade attacks in Sylhet and Sunamganj.

He said they were given five grenades. Keeping those with Bipul in Sylhet he went to his village home at Syedpur in Jagannathpur upazila of Sunamganj.

He said they met again a week later and drew a plan to carry out the grenade attacks. At his village house, an Imam of a local mosque asked him to carry out an attack on a shrine in Habiganj saying there was a fraud saint there.

He contacted Bipul and they decided not to deviate from their plan to attack the AL rally. However, they later gave a grenade to the Imam who exploded it at the Urs in the shrine.

In his confessional statement, Naieem also said after the grenade attack on the British high commissioner to Bangladesh on May 21, 2001, Bipul told him that they needed to divert the people's attention from the incident.

"You prepare to carry out the attack on Suranjit's rally," Naieem said in his statement quoting Bipul.

Naieem claimed he asked Bipul for a helping hand in the attack on Suranjit. They later recruited Nazur Rahman Nazu, a student of Syedpur madrasa, and gave him two grenades. They told Nazu that the objective was to kill the AL leader in the interest of the Muslims.

Nazu hurled one grenade at the rally killing one AL activist. He failed to hurl the other grenade.

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Chairperson Khaleda Zia and her son Tarique Rahman are speaking about the CG in a tone of administration.

In an apparent challenge to Khaleda, the AL chief said if the people get a chance to exercise their democratic rights properly, they would give her a good lesson through ballot.

AL leaders Syeda Zohora Tajuddin, Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury, Tofail Ahmed, Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Suranjit Sengupta, Obaidul Quader, among others, were present at the meeting.

Friction evident as Bush faces Democrats

AFP, Washington

US President George W Bush was due to meet the future Senate majority leader yesterday after the Republican rout in Congressional elections, but the new spirit of compromise was already being tested over the war in Iraq.

A day after lunching with top House Democrat Nancy Pelosi, Bush was scheduled to meet Friday with her Senate counterpart Harry Reid in hopes of fashioning the basis for bipartisanship for his last two years in the White House.

But discord was already in the air as Democrats, coming off of their victory over the Republicans in Tuesday's midterm elections, made clear they wanted changes in many policy areas, especially in the US troop presence in Iraq.

The White House, meanwhile, pushed back with its own unbending agenda, including asking the lame-duck Senate to extend the job of controversial US ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton.

Bush vowed to work with triumphant Democrats in a show of post-election bipartisanship just after his meeting with Pelosi, the 66-year-old Democrat set to become the first woman speaker of the House of Representatives in early January.

"The elections are now behind us, and the congresswoman's party won, but the challenges still remain," said Bush.

"We're going to work together to address those challenges in a constructive way. We won't agree on every issue. But we do agree that we love America equally, that we're concerned about the future of this country."

But in a sign the new spirit of cooperation may be only skin deep, senior Democratic Representative John Murtha said the resignation of Bush's stalwart Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld on Wednesday was not enough to ameliorate party differences over the war in Iraq.

"All right, you fired the secretary of defence. But that's not a change in policy," Murtha, who will vie with minority whip Steny Hoyer to be the House majority leader in January, said on CNN television.

"What we have to do is give a deadline to the Iraqis," Murtha said, adding that he favoured opening an investigation into how Bush's White House entered and managed the war in Iraq.

And Democratic Senator Byron Dorgan warned that Democrats are bound by voters to pursue reforms affecting jobs, wages, health care, and energy policy.

Prof Yunus

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neutrality, he said before leaving for Canada to attend the Global Microcredit Summit 2006 at the World Trade and Convention Centre in Halifax.

"All political parties have to restrain themselves to achieve the ultimate goal, which is a free and fair election. Political parties will have to participate in the election by showing discernment," he added.

"Criticism should be objective and 10 days is not enough to judge a government as biased," he told the reporters.

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Prof Taher

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payments exacerbating our worries," she said adding, "They helped Salehi get bail and illegally allowed him to sit for the masters examinations and the vice-chancellor himself sat with him and had iftar."

The late professor's family sought the dues to the RU authorities on March 18 but the family is still waiting for it even though the university provisions allow teachers', officials' and employees' families to get the dues within one month of any accidental or natural deaths.

Taher's son Sanjid Alvi Ahmed said, "It's nothing but political harassment."

The family members expressed their deep concerns over the trial of the case as the killers have not been put on trial yet due to political reasons even though a caretaker government is running the country now.

"Is the killer (Salehi) so influential that the trial could not be started in nine months?" Sultana asked. Sultana, citing the good relations that prevailed between Taher and President and Chief Adviser Prof Iajuddin Ahmed, urged the chief adviser to take necessary steps for holding the trial without any further delays.

She also spoke of her hardships with a son and a daughter. Alvi studies in Dhaka University and does a part-time job to help the family. Daughter Segufta is a second-year student of Brac University, "I am at a loss trying to meet family expenses," she added.

RU Vice-chancellor Atfah Hossain was unavailable on telephones. RU Registrar Abdus Salam, however, said Taher's family was responsible for the delays in payments. "They need necessary clearances from concerned departments and the library," he added.

He said the RU authorities already gave Taher's 12 months' salary and the insurance money to the family.

Prof S Taher Ahmed of Geology and Mining Department was killed allegedly by his colleague and cadres of Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir on February 3.

'Swindler' killed

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the guise of gold buyers and had a deal with Siddique at the house of one Afzal at Sardarpara of the village.

The Rab members bought gold from Siddique and paid Tk 100,000. As they were coming out of the house, Siddique at gunpoint asked them to return the gold.

When the Rab members gave their identity, Siddiq shot Mohammad Ali in the leg.

The Rab members also opened fire, leaving Siddique dead on the spot and injuring some of his accomplices. But the injured cohorts of Siddique managed to flee the spot.

Rab recovered two firearms and seven bullets from the scene.

Boucher

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Government Iajuddin Ahmed at Bangabhaban at 11:00am today.

The US official will meet BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at Hawa Bhaban at 4:00pm, Awami League President Sheikh Hasina at Sudha Sadan at 2:30pm and Foreign Secretary Hemayetuddin at 12:00 noon. He will attend a luncheon with the professionals.

Boucher will also address a press conference at the American club at 5:00pm today. He leaves for Kolkata tomorrow evening.

Boucher's meetings with government and political leaders will focus on coming general elections as well as Dhaka-Washington bilateral issues.

EC reconstitution

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two weeks have already passed. It is impossible to reconstitute the Election Commission within the next 75 days," Moudud said at a discussion meeting at Osmani auditorium in the capital.

"For this reason, all political parties should be prepared for the election and help the Election Commission rather than demanding its reconstitution," he added.

Moudud also said the Awami League should withdraw its anti-EC agitation programmes for safeguarding democracy and the constitution of the country.

"The demands for removal of chief Election Commissioner [CEC] MA Aziz and other election commissioners are not logical as the caretaker government cannot remove them. The main duty of the caretaker government is to help the Election Commission for holding the election fairly," he said.

Speaking at the programme, Justice Abdur Rouf said the CEC and other election commissioners do not have the power to engineer the election as around 8-9 lakh presiding officers and polling officers are working at the field level.

"It is very regrettable that political parties have announced war against the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners," he said, urging all political parties not to create "anarchy" in the name of reconstitution of the EC.

Zia Parishad organised the discussion meeting styled "Non-party Caretaker Government and Nine National Elections" where former vice-chancellor of Jahangirnagar University Prof Jahangir Uddin Ahmed and Zia Parishad Chairman Prof Iqbal Hasan Mahmud also spoke.

Storm gathers

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with leanings to BNP-Jamaat politics both in civil and police administrations.

To make the programme of blockade a complete success by bringing the entire country to a standstill from tomorrow, the coalition held a series of meetings with its city unit leaders and district leaders in the last couple of days.

"We will withdraw the blockade as soon as the Election Commission is reconstituted following the removal of current commissioners including the CEC," a close aide to AL Chief Sheikh Hasina told The Daily Star yesterday.

Different teams comprising central leaders of AL and its allies are currently visiting different districts of the country to give directions to local leaders and activists to enforce the blockade with maximum strength.

The central leaders are also instructing district and upazila level leaders to stage a massive show of strength in their respective areas by taking to the streets.

Foreign diplomats have also been meeting over the last few days the rival sides of the political divide in an attempt to bring about an amicable settlement to the current political impasse.

HASINA'S MEETINGS
AL President Sheikh Hasina last night held two important meetings with AL central working committee (ALCWC) and with the leaders of Dhaka's all thana units and all front organisations of the party.

She directed them to bring the capital to a complete standstill to compel the CG to meet the 11-point demand.

14-PARTY MEETINGS

The central committee and the Dhaka city committee of 14-party coalition yesterday held separate preparatory meetings. Both the meetings concluded that President Iajuddin Ahmed is liable to be impeached for violation of oath and for his 'unconstitutional' remark that the present form of government has become a presidential form of government.

The central committee of 14-party met at its Coordinator Abdul Jalil's residence while the city unit met at Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) office.

Both the meetings demanded that Iajuddin meets the 11-point demand within 24-hours to create a congenial atmosphere for holding free and fair polls and to prevent the scheduled programme of country-wide blockade.

"The rule of people instead of the president's will be established on the streets from November 12 (tomorrow) if the president fails to meet our demands by tomorrow (today)," JSD President Hasanul Haque Inu said while addressing the city 14-party meeting.

Both the meetings directed the coalition activists to take all out preparations to make the blockade a complete success.

AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil told The Daily Star yesterday, "The government will not be able to make us cower with the threat of declaring a state of emergency, the blockade will continue until the demands are met."

The coalition also held a series of rallies in different parts of the capital in the last couple of days vowing to resist any election without reconstitution of the EC. Front organisations

Tremor jolts

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It was the second earthquake in November and the 15th in this year, they added.

Our Sylhet correspondent reported that a mild tremor jolted Sylhet region at 7:22pm and lasted for about 10 seconds.

Though Sylhet region is considered as one of the most earthquake prone zones of the country, there is no arrangement for measuring tremor here. A seismic observatory was set up in sylhet three years ago. But due to bureaucratic tangles, the seismograph machine could not be set up at the centre even in the last three years.

Akbar

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He said probably the president was trying to say that the current form of government is like that of a 'presidential form'. His comments might not have been made in legal or technical terms.

Baridhara in the capital where around 3,000 activists from BNP and other parties formally joined the LDP.

Chairman of Mehedi group MM Khaled Saifullah led the newcomers to the LDP.

"The president and chief adviser to the caretaker government is yet to prove his neutrality. From his activities, it seems Prof Iajuddin is still the president of BNP," Oli said.

Leaders and activists of the LDP along with other political parties will take to the street after November 12 if the demands for ensuring free and fair elections are not met, the LDP leader said.

LDP would not indulge in any activities that create public inconvenience, he said.

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of AL and its allies -- Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), National Awami Party and 11-party -- also held several programmes including an attempt to lay a siege to the EC to press home the demands.

The coalition will hold its final preparatory meeting, ahead of embarking on the programme, at AL's central office and will demonstrate in the city's Pallabi area today.

The 14-party coalition plans to bring tens of thousands of people into the area surrounding Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital tomorrow. They will perform patriotic songs, hold rallies and bring out a number of marches. The entire area from Mukhtangan to Gulistan Square via Noor Hossain Square and Bangabandhu Avenue will be filled with supporters and activists of the coalition, said Mofazzel Hossain Chowdhury Maya, coordinator of the city unit of the coalition.

In addition to this, the coalition will create blockades in every thana of the capital. Each thana unit leader has been asked to mobilise thousands of people to bring respective areas to a complete standstill, added Maya, who is also the general secretary of Dhaka city unit AL.

He said they will also talk to transport workers to ensure that no vehicle can operate on the streets. "We will also sit with different professional bodies to make the blockade a complete success."

DIPLOMATIC MANOEUVRING

In the last several days, different foreign diplomats held meetings with different political parties to bring about a consensus over reconstitution of the EC. The US ambassador, Australian and Canadian high commissioners, delegations of the European Union and the Commonwealth Secretariat, and many other foreign diplomats met the AL president, BNP chairperson and leaders of other political parties to discuss the current political situation.

All the foreign envoys urged the political parties to avoid street violence. Many of them also requested the AL chief to allow more time for the CG to meet the demands placed by 14-party coalition. But, AL told the envoys that they gave enough time for implementing the demands.

Meanwhile, US Assistant Secretary of State of the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs Richard A Boucher is scheduled to meet the AL president at 2:30pm today. Sources said the US envoy might request the AL chief to give the CG more time for meeting the demands. Many political leaders believe Boucher could play a vital role in resolving the current political stalemate.

Tk 1.73cr forex

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"We scanned the suitcase thrice, but failed to detect the currencies as those were kept inside a scanning-proof layer inside the suitcase," Ashoke told The Daily Star.

He said he found 25 shirts but could not trace the currency with the scanning machine. However, the scanner detected a layer inside the suitcase prompting the customs officials to break through the layer.

"Finally I reconfirmed the information from my source and found the currency," Ashoke said.

The currency was being smuggled out of the country using technology that could evade scanning, he added.

Customs sources said a syndicate is behind the smuggling, as the passport number of the passenger could not be found in any documents in the airport. According to the airlines, Karnaphuli Travels collected the ticket from them.

The customs officials said they could only identify the name of the passenger by checking the boarding card and we confirmed the passenger's boarding card from the luggage tag. He was flying Qatar Airlines flight-345 bound for Doha, but his final destination was Dubai.

The flight was first scheduled to take off at 8:30am, but it was rescheduled to 9:47am.

Customs sources said the passenger boarded the aircraft but got down sensing trouble and left the airport quietly.

Bangabhaban

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president's speech. **THE BANGABHABAN STATEMENT**

The president's statement on the form of government in his speech addressed to secretaries on Thursday was not presented correctly in a few media. The president did not say anything about changing the form of government.

As per the constitution, the president is now carrying out the responsibilities of the chief adviser to the non-party caretaker government.

After the responsibility of the head of government was bestowed upon him, the president in his speech only mentioned the form of government.

Explanations of the statement were not reflected literally in a section of the media.

The president is committed to perform the responsibilities of the constitution as bestowed upon him properly.

18 nations sign

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emise its vast network, including the trans-Siberia railway connecting to Korea, in support of the TAR.

His country was one of the signatories.

Despite the enthusiasm among many countries, the slow progress over the past five decades indicates the challenges still ahead.

The TAR network would connect trans-Asian railway networks with Russia and Mongolia in the north, Malaysia in the south, South Korea in the east and Turkey in the west.

But one stumbling block is North Korea. South Korea would have to traverse its territory to gain access to the Russian or Chinese rail networks.

Work has been completed on laying track across the heavily fortified inter-Korean frontier. But planned test runs were cancelled in May amid tensions over other issues.

Continent-wide problems include switching between different-gauge tracks, where to stop, how to handle sometimes tricky quarantine and immigration paperwork, and how to safely ferry cargo and people across many borders.

But Asia, home to 60 per cent of the world's population and generating 26 per cent of the world's economic output, deserves better transport, UNESCAP chief Kim has said.

It boasts 13 of the world's top 20 container seaports but has fewer than 100 "dry ports" -- inland container depots. Europe, by contrast, has 200 and the United States 370.

Working women

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tution of the EC. The arrestees were released on bail later.

Speakers at the rally demanded withdrawal of the police officials responsible for the incident and stern action against them.

They also reiterated their demand for removal of CEC MA Aziz, other election commissioners and reorganising the civil administration for holding a credible election. They also demanded an end to repression on women as a tool of 'political tyranny'.

Bangladesh Mahila Parishad General Secretary Ahesha Khanam said President and CA Iajuddin Ahmed is quite indifferent to the people's demand. She regretted that the president says the country now has a presidential form of government.

The CA is supposed to perform his duties in a non-partisan way and to assist all the other advisers. But the arrest of activists of Peshajibi Nari Samaj proved his partisan activities, speakers said.

The situation in the country is quite critical and neutrality of the caretaker government is yet to be proved, said journalist Nasimun Ara Huq.

Prof Mahfuza Khanam led the sit-in programme while Dr Dipu Moni read out the memorandum that they submitted to the CA on Thursday and the other that could not be submitted to the CEC.

Those who spoke included Prof Zarin Rahman Khan, Dr Mahmuda Islam, sculptor Ferdousy Priyabhashini and artiste Sara Zaker while Dr Hamida Hossain, Barrister Sara Hossain, Prof Sultana Shafi, artiste Mita Haque and Prof Rehnuma Ahmed expressed solidarity with the programme of the organisation.

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