

Tail-up Jamaat

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expressed solidarity with those parties to drum up support for its cause.

On December 3 at the secretary general's meeting of the alliance at the BNP's Naya Paltan office, Jamaat brought up its plan to enforce a dawn-to-dusk hartal the following day. At that time the majority of the alliance instantly extended their support to Jamaat.

But the BNP took ten hours to announce that it was on Jamaat's side.

The December 4 hartal proved that Jamaat is alone capable of holding any programme successfully at any time," said Jashim Uddin Sarker, legal affairs secretary of Jamaat.

That was the first such move taken by Jamaat in the last four years.

Jamat was making moves in its own way, Jashim said.

Jamaat activists across the country were prepared for today's eight-hour roadblock intended to show their strength, some party leaders said.

Whenever Jamaat took to the streets or held any protest, it was strongly resisted or harassed by the law enforcers, said Shaikh Shawkat Hossain Nilu, chief of the National Peoples Party (NPP).

Egyptian military

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sparked days of violence. But it said a solution to the political crisis should not contradict "legitimacy and the rules of democracy".

The spokesman said the military's duty was to protect national interests and secure vital state institutions. "The armed forces ... realise their responsibility to preserve the higher interests of the country and to secure and protect vital targets, public institutions and the interests of innocent citizens," the statement said.

"The armed forces affirm that dialogue is the best and only way to reach consensus," it added. "The opposite of that will bring us to a dark tunnel that will result in catastrophe and that is something we will not allow."

The military's attempt to defuse the political crisis came as the spiritual leader of Morsi's party, the fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood, also urged Egyptians to disown violence, saying that working through the ballot box was the best way to lift the country out of its turmoil.

Brotherhood "supreme guide" Mohammed Badie said on Saturday morning that the group's supporters did not initiate the violent clashes outside the presidential palace in which at least seven people died and 700 were injured.

Morsi has called for a meeting with his opponents to discuss the crisis. The opposition has rejected

But Jamaat in a programme held by the alliance can easily raise its demand for the release of its detained leaders, a Liberal Democratic Party leader said, whishing not to be named. Jamaat has all support from the small parties and so it is using them to get BNP's backing for a hardline stance, he added.

Talking to The Daily Star, a number of leaders of the BNP-led 18-party alliance echoed this view.

Jamaat at the alliance's chairman-level meeting on December 6 also requested BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia to take a hardline stance against the government, said Islamic Party Chairman Abdul Momin who was present there.

"In response, Khaleda Zia expressed her sympathy for Jamaat and said they would go for tougher programmes like hartal and blockade if the government did not meet their demands."

Many parties in the alliance thought that the opposition should launch a protest programme now, said the NPP chief Nilu.

The BNP however, was not yet ready for such action, he said, and it had support from the Liberal Democratic Party and the Bangladesh Jatiya Party in this case.

Padma funding

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in the ACC's draft enquiry report on corruption allegations.

In the statement, Goldstein said, "The World Bank provided extensive information to the ACC to support such an investigation. Following its first visit to Bangladesh, the External Panel of independent anti-corruption experts encouraged the ACC to launch a full and fair investigation based on available evidence and in full accordance with Bangladeshi law."

"During its second visit to Bangladesh last week, the panel noted several unresolved issues and further encouraged the ACC to follow available evidence in determining the scope of its investigation. The panel will issue a statement when the ACC completes its review and takes a final decision on the scope of the investigation," she said.

Goldstein later talked to reporters coming out of a programme at the LGED auditorium in the capital.

Replying to a query on the "unresolved issues" mentioned in the statement, she said, "I think the issue that is being discussed is the applicability of certain Bangladeshi laws and how this would influence the scope of the investigation, and that is really the issue that I think the ACC is dealing with and of course we leave it to them entirely."

"It is their responsibility to work in accordance with the laws of Bangladesh and to determine what is the appropriate scope of the investigation into corruption evidence under Padma bridge."

In his instant reaction, Muhith told reporters in Sylhet that the WB's latest statement is "totally unjust" as discussions are still on with the global lender over the ACC enquiry into the corruption allegations in the project, said the official.

But the whole thing got stuck following a stalemate in talks between the ACC and the WB panel over the ACC enquiry into the corruption allegations in the project, said the official.

"I just don't like it," he said after laying the foundation stone of a primary school building in Sylhet.

"A team of WB experts visited Dhaka for the second time. It held meetings with the ACC and me too. They obviously expect something from the discussions and we also expect something good," said the finance minister.

But it was not a right thing on the part of the WB Dhaka office to issue such a statement at this moment, said Muhith.

The ACC chairman said, "We are reviewing the draft enquiry report on the basis of discussions with the external panel. I don't understand why the World Bank issued the statement at this stage."

Replying to another question, Rahman said, "We have heard their views. We will consider those while reviewing the draft report."

ACC sources said though the WB provided sufficient evidence against Abul Hossain, the ACC did not

include his name in its draft report leading to a stalemate in talks between the commission and the external panel.

ACC panel lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star that the commission can implicate Syed Abul Hossain in the first information report, if it has got any specific allegations against him.

Khurshid said he didn't know whether there is any corruption allegation against Abul, as he didn't see the inquiry report.

The WB on November 13 sent a third report to the ACC on corruption evidence containing detailed evidence of corruption against certain public officials as well as others.

The WB prepared the third report based on information received from the Canadian government and other sources, said a high official asking not to be named.

The third report mentioned the names of those against whom corruption allegations had been raised in an earlier report, but the latest one contained more evidence, the official said.

Wishing anonymity, a finance ministry official said the WB and the project's co-financiers were ready to start the bridge project this month, subject to the WB panel's positive signal about the ACC enquiry.

The WB panel's visit was rescheduled early, instead of late this month, as the project's co-financiers were eager to start the project sooner.

But the whole thing got stuck following a stalemate in talks between the ACC and the WB panel over the ACC enquiry into the corruption allegations in the project, said the official.

On December 2, Muhith told reporters that the project's implementation will begin soon after the investigation gets started.

He said the WB panel wanted to see action, which means launching of an investigation, filing of case and submission of chargesheet.

The co-financiers held a meeting in Manila from November 28 to 30 to discuss the revised implementation arrangement for the bridge project, said sources.

According to the revised arrangement, the donor having the biggest share in the financing of a specific package would lead that component. A committee headed by the lead donor of that component will oversee the entire implementation process that includes inviting tender, selection of bidders and evaluation of the bids. The government will finally approve it.

The co-financiers would have finalised the revised implementation arrangement this month on discussion with the government, had the external panel given a positive signal about the ACC

enquiry, said the sources.

The WB cancelled its \$1.2 billion funding on June 29, saying it had proof of a "corruption conspiracy" involving Bangladeshi officials, executives of a Canadian firm and some individuals.

The global lender on September 21 decided to revive the loan after the Bangladesh government agreed to the WB's terms and conditions, including proper probe into the corruption allegations in the project.

Transport strike

FROM PAGE 20
police on the highways.

The strike will be enforced on Dhaka to Gazipur, Mymensingh, Netrakona, Kishoreganj and Tangail routes, Osman Ali Khan, general secretary of the workers' federation, told The Daily Star.

The demands include taking steps to stop extortion and harassment by police, freeing the office of district transport workers' union and owners' association (Kaliakoir branch) from occupants and lowering prices of all types of fuel including CNG.

To drum up support for the strike, the transport workers yesterday brought out protest processions on Dhaka-Tangail and Dhaka-Mymensingh highways, reports UNB.

Later, the federation leaders at a meeting held on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway threatened that the 48-hour strike would be observed in all routes in Dhaka division if the demands were not met before December 10.

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In a statement last night, BNP declared vehicles of diplomats and embassies out of the purview of the blockade, along with those for medical and emergency services.

Sources in police and Rab said the additional forces would remain standby at all strategic points and the entrances to the capital, like Mohakhali, Jatrabari, Nayabazar, Gabtoli and Mirpur areas.

Li Col Ziaul Ahsan, director of Intelligence wing of Rab, said they had deployed around 3,000 additional personnel in the city.

The party's standing committee member Rafiqul Islam Mia and Joint Secretary General Aman Ullah Aman will enforce the blockade at Gabtoli-Aminbazar point; while another standing committee member Goyseswar Chandra Roy at Postogola-Jatrabari-Sayedabad point; Shahjahan Omar, Azizul Bari Helam and SM Jahangir at Uttara; and Abdulla Al Noman and Sadeque Hossain Khoka at Nayabazar entrance.

Witnesses said Jamaat-Shibir men torched a private car and vandalised another car and a microbus in Bijoynagar around 1:00pm and set a bus ablaze at Malibagh intersection around 6:00pm.

Shamsul Islam, a pedestrian who witnessed the violence in Bijoynagar area, said some 20 to 25 youths had all on a sudden swooped on the vehicles plying on road. They left the scene within five minutes.

He said locals and employment

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