



Police arresting BNP leader Mir Nasir Uddin, sitting on the rickshaw on the left, in connection with bringing out a procession of Peshajibi Parishad violating a ban on demonstrations in Chittagong city.

PHOTO:
FOCUS BANGLA

Controlling drones

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The project called Beauty Technology, means wearers can blink, wink or press their fingernails on certain surfaces to control these mechanised objects.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Tiny sensors are added to powered eyeshadow, applied to the top and bottom eyelids.

False eyelashes made from metal are then attached to the eye by stickers coated in conductive ink.

When a wearer blinks or winks for longer than half a second, the sensors connect with the metallised eyelashes and conductive ink to complete a low-voltage circuit wirelessly using radio-frequencies.

When connected, this circuit powers an actuator, or small motor.

Opening the eye breaks the connection and shuts the motor off.

Vega demonstrated this at the Interactive Tabletops and Surfaces conference at St Andrews University earlier this month.

She explained, "Beauty Technology are wearable devices that act as removable and hidden electronics attached to body surfaces. Common beauty products are easy to attach and remove, are designed ergonomically for human bodies, are widely available and their main goal is to enhance physical appearance."

Vega has used the technology to power drones and lights fitted inside removable tattoos on the skin, but adds: it could also be used with any motorised product that only needs a small amount of power to work.

Vega said, "We faced the issue that though the ink we were using is a safe material to have around the body, it is not specifically approved for use on the skin. Even more, for using it as eyeliner as this product is soluble to water, the humidity of the eyes and skin could cause issues for the wearer. Thus, we created stickers that look like makeup, they are conductive and easy to remove from skin."

Beauty Technology Nails are false plastic or acrylic nails fitted with Radio-frequency Identification tags, small magnets or conductive polish.

BNP agrees finally, tension eases

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Islam Alamgir, addressing a press conference at Khaleda's Gulshan office, said the rally would be held at Suhrawardy Udyan.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, however, may not announce any tougher agitation programmes from the rally if police do not interrupt them. She might issue an ultimatum to the government to accept the opposition demand by November 7.

A senior BNP leader told The Daily Star yesterday that the 18-party opposition combine will continue its efforts to gear up agitation at the district-level to keep activists ready for a movement in the coming days.

Also yesterday, the two political rivals were given permission for rallies at two separate venues in Chittagong today -- the ruling Awami League at the Central Shaheed Minar premises and the BNP at Kajir Deury.

In many districts, ruling Awami League and BNP-led opposition men have taken massive preparations for a face-off on the streets today, triggering fear of violence.

The opposition has been publicising that October 25 would be the last day of the current government and urging their supporters to take to the streets on the day.

In fact, the tenure of the current government will expire on January 24, the day parliament will complete its five-year tenure.

The current session of the Jatiya Sangsad was supposed to be prorogued on October 24. The opposition parties set October 24 as a deadline

for the government to amend the constitution to restore the non-partisan caretaker government system.

To counter the opposition's threat, the government on Tuesday decided that parliament's current session will continue till November 7.

The opposition parties did not change the deadline and announced that they would hold countrywide rallies today.

The BNP-led alliance on October 10 applied for a rally either at Suhrawardy Udyan or Paltan Maidan or in front of the BNP's Nayapaltan office at to intensify the street agitations for a non-partisan election-time administration.

But nine days later, DMP imposed an indefinite ban on all political meetings, rallies and processions in the capital to be effective from the morning of October 20.

Infuriated, the opposition has been maintaining that it would hold its planned rally in front of its central office defying the police ban.

A BNP delegation yesterday noon went to the DMP headquarters and sought permission for Nayapaltan.

Finally around 6:00pm, the DMP granted permission for the rally at Suhrawardy Udyan on 13-point strict conditions.

As per the conditions, opposition supporters cannot join the rally with processions and they can gather at the venue two hours before the beginning of the rally which must end by 5:00pm. They cannot gather in any areas outside the venue.

Notified of the permission in the evening,

the same BNP delegation again rushed to the DMP headquarters and informed the police that they would not hold the rally at Suhrawardy Udyan.

"We want to hold the rally at Nayapaltan considering the security of the party chief and the rally as well," Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, joint secretary general of the BNP, told The Daily Star at 8:50pm yesterday.

But later speaking at the press conference on behalf of the 18-party alliance, Fakhrul said, "We have taken the decision to hold the rally at Suhrawardy Udyan for the sake of peace and negotiation. We hope the government will ensure security of the rally goers and the venue."

"We also hope that tomorrow the ruling party men will keep themselves away from gathering at different points of the city."

"We clearly want to say that if the ruling party and the law enforcement forces obstruct the rally and create anarchy, the government will be responsible for the consequences."

According to a BNP source, the opposition did not like to get locked into clashes as the current parliament session would continue till November 7. So, as it has time, getting involved in a conflict would not be a good decision right now.

Moreover, there is a possibility of talks between the AL and BNP to resolve the political standoff over the polls-time government, the party insiders said.

DMP Commissioner Benazir Ahmed said he hoped the BNP would hold the rally peacefully.

"We hoped that their rally would be peaceful as per their promise. But if any quarters violate the law, damage public and private properties and put lives in danger, law enforcers will resist them and bring them to book," he added.

In another development, the Dhaka city AL yesterday evening announced that it would not hold its planned rally in the capital today, showing respect to the police ban.

Earlier in the day, the unit leaders at a meeting announced that they would take to the streets today to foil "anarchy by opposition men."

Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, general secretary of the city AL, told reporters that the DMP did not grant them permission for the rally today.

However, the ruling AL has directed its leaders and workers to take all out preparations across the country to thwart "any unlawful acts by the opposition".

At the same time, AL men have also been directed to remain present at mosques in the capital so that Jamaat-Shibir could not launch any subversive activities from the religious institutions.

Besides, AL allies in the 14-party have also been directed to remain alert across the country. Sources said 14-party men will join AL men if any emergency is created.

HM Ershad's Jatiya Party, a component of the grand alliance, will be off the scene today, according to the party insiders.

Shooting

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the country.

Intelligence suggests that the BNP and the radical Islamist group Hefajat-e Islam are yet to be organised enough to pose a threat.

Several top Hefajat leaders are at odds over sharing the money they got from different quarters for the May 5 rally in the capital. Besides, a recent blast at its Naye-e-ameer Mufti Izharul Islam's madrasa in Chittagong sent waves of panic among its men, the additional home secretary told this newspaper.

Meanwhile, detectives yesterday held a security demonstration in and outside the secretariat to ensure flawless security there.

Over the past few days, law enforcers have intensified surveillance at mosques, madrasas, student dormitories and community centres to prevent any storing of arms and ammunition by "any bad elements".

Talking to The Daily Star about Rab's preparation to avert any untoward situation, its Director General Mokhlesur Rahman said: "Our members will take steps according to the gravity of the situation and they will not allow the situation to deteriorate."

Meantime, Home Minister Muhiuddin Khan Alamgir yesterday said the law enforcement agencies would never allow or tolerate any rally or gathering aimed at creating lawlessness and chaos.

"If people's democratic rights are robbed in the name of rallies, the law enforcement agencies will not tolerate it and prevent it at any cost to maintain law and order," he said, after inaugurating a complex for Rab-8 headquarters in Barisal.

Primark extends

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while the terms of a long-term compensation deal are worked out.

The discount fashion brand, which has 258 stores across Europe, had made two earlier payments to the 550 staff of the factory inside Raza Plaza that supplied it.

But it said it the third payment would be given to wider victims of the April 24 disaster on the outskirts of Dhaka, many of whom were left with terrible injuries.

"Primark will guarantee a further three months salary to the 3,600 or so victims of Rana Plaza to alleviate their immediate hardship, many of whom worked in the supply chain of other brands," a spokesman said.

The company is "confident" that it will be able to start paying long-term compensation to the 550 employees of its supplier New Wave Bottoms by early 2014, he added.

Primark is a subsidiary of British food company Associated British Foods but has its headquarters in Ireland.

It has stores in Spain, the Netherlands, Portugal, Germany, Belgium and Austria as well as Britain and Ireland.

Six months on from the disaster, former workers at the complex have complained that many other retailers have failed to provide any compensation.

British charity ActionAid yesterday said it had surveyed more than 2,000 of the survivors and their families and found that 94 percent had not received any benefits from their employers, including sick pay or compensation.

Primark called on other brands who were supplied by the Rana Plaza factories, including Walmart, Mango and Benetton, to pay further short-term aid to the victims until a permanent deal is worked out.

A two-day meeting of major brands in Geneva last month -- aimed at reaching a compensation deal for the Raza Plaza collapse and other Bangladeshi factory disasters -- ended in failure, according to organisers.

Polls-time cabinet

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basis of percentage of votes with a view to having a congenial atmosphere and a level playing field for all in the next parliamentary election," an AL lawmaker told The Daily Star, preferring anonymity.

AL insiders said if the BNP finally agrees to join the all-party polls-time government, its representatives would be given important portfolios.

The ruling AL seeks to move forward with this plan though the BNP has already rejected Hasina's proposal and come up with a counter offer.

Hasina plans to bring crucial ministries such as the home, LGRD and cooperatives, defence and finance under the Election Commission's jurisdiction to avoid any dispute on whether to keep them under the control of AL or BNP ministers, said the sources.

After holding discussions within the party, AL General Secretary Syed Ashrafur Islam would soon talk to acting BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, said ruling party insiders.

IT WAS HASINA'S IDEA

Leaders of the AL and its allies in the grand alliance said they had no clue to the contents of the proposal before the prime minister unveiled it in her address to the nation on October 18.

They said she might have consulted with some of her close associates, a few ministers and advisers about it, keeping in the dark most of her cabinet colleagues, members of the AL Central Working Committee and alliance leaders.

"We did not know anything about it. The prime minister might have decided not to discuss it with us, thinking that we would accept any proposal that goes in line with the constitution," Bimal Biswas, politburo member of Workers Party, a key ally of the AL, told The Daily Star.

A JP leader echoed him.

Talking to The Daily Star, three senior AL leaders said they didn't have any clear idea about it but they were told on several occasions that the government would ensure participation of all parties in the upcoming election.



Considerably fewer vehicles were seen on the streets of the capital yesterday as many city dwellers stayed indoors fearing violence and torching of vehicles ahead of the 18-party opposition alliance rally in the capital today. The photo of the roundabout was taken at the eastern end of Manik Mia Avenue.

PHOTO:
STAR

People's nerves on edge

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An eerie calm descended on the city as residents, anxious about what might happen, stayed indoors. Most of the thoroughfares were marked by a thin presence of traffic.

From tea stalls to bus stops, everywhere people talked about the political programmes set for today. Some were discussing whether it would be unsafe to come out home while others expressed concern about the country's political situation in the days to come.

"We are concerned about our security because of the tense situation occasioned by BNP and Awami League," a commuter was seen telling another at Farmgate bus stop.

"Thank God it's Friday tomorrow," said another.

Cabbies, rickshaw-pullers and drivers of CNG-run three-wheelers said they could not get passengers as they get on other days.

Jafar Munshi, who drives a CNG-run auto-rickshaw, noted that his earnings had dropped significantly since the Eid but they were even worse yesterday.

"Having worked from morning to 3:30pm now, I could not even earn the deposit money of Tk 800," said Jafar of Patuakhali, who has been doing the job for more than two decades.

"The present circumstances are really bad. We

can sense something ominous tomorrow."

Many journalists received phone calls from people who asked what could happen today and if leaving home would be unsafe. Many people left their workplaces a little early yesterday.

The law enforcers also seemed baffled.

One of the policemen on duty at the International Crimes Tribunal said to a reporter of this newspaper, "You are a journalist and you know better than us. Please tell me what will happen tomorrow. What will happen to the country in future?"

His questions went unanswered.