

Rajshahi BNP men joining AL to 'avoid harassment'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Leaders and activists of BNP in Rajshahi keep joining the ruling Awami League to "avoid harassment" by law enforcers.

Mokhlesur Rahman, organising secretary of Jatiyatabadi Krishak Dal, joined the AL on Thursday by handing over wreaths to State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam at a function held at Solua Degree College ground in Charkhat.

More than 200 other BNP men and some supporters of Jamaat have also joined the AL there.

Rahman is an accused in three criminal cases including two cases filed for torching a polling centre at Solua Degree College on the eve of January 5 polls and attacking the polling centre the following day.

"Law will take its own course if he is an accused. He was welcomed to the party after all grassroots leaders gave their consent," State Minister Shahriar Alam told The Daily Star.

In May, Habibur Rahman, a councillor for Ward-3 of Rajshahi City Corporation, joined the AL a couple of days after his release from jail in connection with several criminal cases.

A few senior BNP leaders and family members of some ward councillors said 22 out of total 30 male ward councillors of RCC support BNP and 16 of them are accused in Shiddhartha murder case.

"They are under pressure to join Awami League. Once they join the party, police will never harass them," said wife of a councillor requesting anonymity.

Rajshahi city AL General Secretary Dablu Sarker claimed that they had no plan to include accused in criminal cases in the party.

Truck seized with 1.78 lakh yaba pills

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion seized around 1.78 lakh yaba tablets from a truck and arrested its driver from Savar, on the outskirts of capital, on Saturday night.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-4 stopped the Rajshahi-bound truck coming from Cox's Bazar in front of Bangladesh Public Administration Training Centre gate around 11:30pm and carried out a search, Maj Maksudul Alam, assistant director (legal and media wing) of Rab, told The Daily Star.

The team recovered some 981 polythene bags carrying the yaba pills, which were kept under the driving seat, the Rab official said.

The value of the pills was estimated at Tk 5.34 crore, he added.

The detainee, Isha Khan, 32, of Chapainawabganj, is a member of an organised drug-smuggling syndicate, Maksudul claimed.

The vehicle was seized.

During primary interrogation, Isha confessed that a drug trader of Cox's Bazar gave him the tablets to hand over those to a person at Shahab Bazar in Rajshahi, the Rab official said.

Almost all the yaba consignments are being smuggled into the country through Teknaf border with Myanmar and spread across the country by drug smugglers with the help of some dishonest members of law enforcement agencies.

On June 20, the elite force arrested an assistant sub-inspector of Special Branch of police and his driver along with 6.8 lakh pills in Feni while those were being taken to Dhaka from Cox's Bazar.



Fazli, considered the king of all mangoes, is being sold in Rajshahi markets on Thursday. Arrival of this particular variety in the market signals the end of mango season in two weeks. However, the fruit is likely to be available till early August as growers this year have preserved a huge quantity in cold storages. PHOTO: STAR

Greek voters 'reject bailout offer'

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Reacting to the result, Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis called it "a big yes to a democratic Europe".

He said Greece would be "positive" in negotiations with its creditors.

"The mandate from the Greek people is for the government to defend its own proposal and its own positions," government spokesman Gabriel Sakellaridis said as results began to come in yesterday. "The real negotiations must start from tonight."

'NEW POPULAR MANDATE'

Euclid Tsakalotos, Greece's deputy foreign minister, told Star TV that two developments would allow Greece to pursue "a solution that is financially viable".

"Firstly, the government now has a new popular mandate and the second is the latest [International Monetary Fund] report which says that the Greek debt is unsustainable."

Greece had been locked in negotiations with its creditors for months when the Greek government unexpectedly called a referendum on the terms it was being offered.

Banks have been shut and capital controls in place since last Monday, after the European Central Bank declined to give Greece more emergency funding.

Withdrawals at cash machines have been limited to €60 per day.

The partying by the "No" camp will go well into the night here and the government will be popping open the ouzo. Alexis Tsipras has called the eurozone's bluff - and it appears to have gone his way.

But the triumphalism won't last.

There is still a sizeable chunk of the Greek nation deeply unhappy with what has happened. And the government will have to unite a divided country.

More than that, a deal with the eurozone has to be struck fast.

Greek banks are running critically low and will need another injection of emergency funds from the European Central Bank.

Given the bad blood of the past two weeks - Greece's Finance Minister, Yanis Varoufakis, calling the eurozone's strategy "terrorism" - it will be hard to get back around the negoti-

ating table. And with the banking crisis and tax revenues plummeting amidst the instability, Greece's economy has weakened again, making a deal even harder to reach.

The eurozone's tough rhetoric will continue. But Greece's government will have its answer prepared: we put your demands to a democratic test - and they were rejected.

Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis is due to meet senior Greek bankers later yesterday. State Minister Nikos Pappas, a close ally of Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, said it was "absolutely necessary" to restore liquidity to the banks now the referendum was over.

Italian Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni tweeted: "Now it is right to start trying for an agreement again. But there is no escape from the Greek labyrinth with a Europe that's weak and isn't growing."

Belgium's finance minister said the door remained open to restart talks with Greece "literally, within hours".

Eurozone finance ministers could again discuss measures "that can put

the Greek economy back on track and give the Greeks a perspective for the future," he told the VRT network.

French President Francois Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel are scheduled to meet in Paris on Monday to discuss the situation, Mr Hollande's office said.

Greece's latest bailout expired on Tuesday and Greece missed a €1.6bn (£1.1bn) payment to the IMF.

The European Commission - one of the "troika" of creditors along with the IMF and the European Central Bank - wanted Athens to raise taxes and slash welfare spending to meet its debt obligations.

Greece's Syriza-led government, which was elected in January on an anti-austerity platform, said it had been presented with an "ultimatum".

The Greek government's opponents and some Greek voters had complained that the question on the ballot paper was unclear. EU officials said it applied to the terms of an offer that was no longer on the table.

The projected turnout in yesterday's referendum was about 60 percent.

Between Scylla and Charybdis

AFP, Paris

Much like Odysseus faced with the mythological sea monsters Scylla and Charybdis, Greeks voting on an international bailout Sunday were forced to choose between two potentially hazardous scenarios.

Homer's hero had to choose between losing a few sailors from his ship to a six-headed sea monster, or having his whole ship sucked into a whirlpool and destroyed.

For Greek voters the dangers are less certain, ranging from a possible fall of government to an exit from the euro.

Here are some ways the referendum results could play out:

THE 'YES' SCENARIO
For the radical left Syriza government, which called on Greeks to vote 'No', a 'Yes' victory would be a rejection of their mandate.

But would it cause the government to fall?

Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis has said he would resign if the 'Yes' vote wins. However Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras has not said clearly what he would do.

If the government falls, two possibilities exist. The first is to form a national unity government based on the current parliament. This would be difficult given the extreme differences between the conservative opposition and Syriza.

Failing that, an early election would have to be called.

By law it cannot be held sooner than 30 days and the outcome is anything but certain. "Tsipras could win again," said Henrik Enderlein, head of the Jacques Delors Institute in Berlin.

For Greece, which has imposed capital controls because banks are short of liquidity, any extended period of uncertainty would be extremely difficult to manage. Athens, which did not repay 1.5 billion euros (\$1.7 billion) to the IMF last week, has a number of other payments to make before another 3.5

billion euros come due to the ECB on July 20.

"Even if the 'Yes' vote wins, Greece won't be in the clear," said Agnes Benassy-Quere of the Paris School of Economics.

The ECB has until now been propping up Greek banks with Emergency Liquidity Assistance (ELA) loans. If

Greece defaults on its payments, the ECB would find it difficult to continue providing them help, especially if no new bailout deal has been signed.

"It is an urgent situation, but politics works at a different pace than the economy," said Olivier Passet, an economist at the Xerfi consultancy.

He said getting final approval through the European parliaments that need to give their okay to any deal could take several weeks. The German Bundestag, which is now on summer recess, would need to be called back to give the government a negotiating mandate.

Passet said that "technical solutions need to be found in the interval" so the government can repay its debts and the economy kept afloat. He sees capital controls being lifted only in stages.

THE 'NO' SCENARIO
Many analysts believe that a 'No' victory would send Greece into uncharted waters. With the Greek economy at risk



of an upheaval, much depends on the reactions of the country's creditors.

"In case of a 'No', the situation will be more complicated," said Passet. "Tsipras will be strengthened, and the political crisis in Greece aggravated."

Tsipras has said a 'No' vote will strengthen Greece's hand in negotiations, but it is an open question whether Greece's creditors will reopen talks.

European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker seems to have excluded a new deal, having equated a 'No' vote to a "no to Europe".

Such a rupture would make it harder for the ECB to continue to prop up Greek banks. If it halts the aid, Greek banks will fail.

The Greek government could try to save banks by issuing a parallel currency to recapitalise them. Such IOUs could also be used to pay state workers, and quickly spread throughout the economy if access to euros stuck in bank accounts remains limited.

Police seizes Indian turtles

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Airport Armed Police Battalion (APBn) of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday evening seized Indian pond turtles that were being smuggled to Malaysia with a declaration of "vegetables".

The smugglers had packed the turtles in 53 plastic containers.

Following a tip-off, APBn members raided the airport's cargo village. They opened one of the containers and found nine turtles, Alamgir Hossain Shimul, senior assistant superintendent of APBn, told The Daily Star over the phone.

He said the containers were supposed to be sent to Malaysia by a company called Mamun International on a flight that was to leave at 8:30pm yesterday.

Police arrested Faysal Sheul, 25, security in-charge of the company.

All the containers were not opened but Alamgir, after interrogating Faysal, said there were over 400 turtles.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

In the international pet market, exotic tortoises and turtles have become popular. Forest officials say that wildlife traffickers have been using Dhaka as a route. They first smuggle in Indian tortoises and turtles by road and then send them to Southeast Asian countries.

Choice quite predictable

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Diptiman Sengupta, joint secretary of the coordination committee, said, "We have surveyed the 162 enclaves for the last two years since 2014. We found that no inhabitant of the Bangladeshi enclaves in India wanted to go to Bangladesh."

Sengupta said they were yet to include the statistics of 12 Indian enclaves in Kurigram. "We are working on it. Once finalised, we will submit the statistics to the Indian government."

Our Kolkata correspondent talked to a number of residents of Bangladeshi enclaves inside India to know why they would opt for Indian nationality.

The residents said they made the choice considering the future of the next generation.

"Our children have built relations with many Indians through marriage. And we do not want to leave our homesteads at all," said Paresh Chandra Barman, an inhabitant of the Bangladeshi enclave of Puaturkuti

inside India.

OFFICIAL SURVEY

A total of 75 survey teams, comprising five members each, will conduct a population and land survey in the 162 enclaves, and find out the inhabitants' choice of nationality.

Every team will have representatives from both countries, and a supervisor will monitor their activities.

The survey will continue till July 23, and the teams will submit reports to the authorities concerned of the two countries by the end of this month.

Fifty Indian teams will carry out survey in 111 Indian enclaves in Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Panchagarh and Nilphamari, while 25 Bangladeshi teams will conduct survey in 51 Bangladeshi enclaves in Cooch Behar district of West Bengal.

A joint delegation of Bangladesh and India will finalise the survey and decide on the matter of citizenship of the enclave dwellers. It will then prepare a list of Bangladeshi and Indian nationals, and send it to the authorities

Nahid says

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admitted to the colleges.

The minister came up with the official statement after the college admission system for 2015-2016 academic session went into disarray.

As of now, a total of 9,23,105 out of 11,56,224 valid applicants completed their admission process, he claimed.

The government for the first time this year initiated online admission to all colleges. It also decided that the boards would publish a list of the students, specifying the colleges where they are to be enrolled.

But due to a lack of preparation on the government's part, the entire system turned out to be a nightmare for more than 11 lakh applicants and their parents.

Finally, the ministry, after delaying the results for four times, published the first merit list with names of over 10.93 lakh students for admission into class XI at different colleges in the early hours of June 29.

But a large number of students complained of various mistakes in the list. A section of the students along with their parents hurtled towards the Dhaka Education Board to express their discontent with the list.

In the first list, the ministry failed to incorporate over 62,000 students for any college.

Yesterday, the minister said the college admission process would continue in three more phases until July 26 without any late fee. The first phase of admission was over as the students of the first list were enrolled in colleges. A second list will be published today.

Nahid also said the students, who did not get their preferred colleges in the first list or want to change their institutions, could apply until today and their admission dates are July 7 and 8.

In the third phase, he said, the students, who did not get themselves admitted even after being nominated in the first and second list or were not nominated in any of the two lists, could apply with five preferred colleges on July 9 and 10.

The ministry will publish a list on July 11, specifying their colleges for admission. The date of admission without any late fee would be July 12.

In the last phase, the students, who did not apply online at all and those who would not be able to get themselves enrolled in the third phase for some reasons, could apply from July 13 to 21.