

We will seek more seats at talks with PM

Ershad tells rally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad yesterday claimed the talks between the newly floated Jatiya Oikyafront and the ruling Awami League-led 14-party alliance had no outcome.

The government did not agree to any of the Oikyafront's seven-point demand during the dialogue, he added.

"We will also sit for a dialogue with the government, but there will be no demand. Rather, in favour of Jatiya Party, we will seek more seats to contest the upcoming general election," Ershad said while addressing a public gathering at Guthail High School and College ground in Islampur upazila.

"We don't like the politics of vengeance. If we could hold the state power, there would be no anarchy, violence, disappearance and killings and people would get back good days again," the JP chief said.

Pointing to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, Ershad said, "You are awarded imprisonment as you have been found guilty, whereas I spent six years in jail without being convicted. We want a free, fair and credible

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Wreaths placed at the busts of four national leaders marking the Jail Killing Day at the memorial museum of old central jail in the capital yesterday. Awami League and different social, cultural and political organisations paid their tributes.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Woman dies

FROM PAGE 16

Hasina's family of five received critical burn injuries in the fire that broke out on the ground floor of the building in Manikganjpara around 7:00am on Friday when someone attempted to light a gas stove.

The other victims are Hasina's husband Arab Ali, 60, her son Abdullah, 35, daughter-in-law Ripa, 20, and her one-and-a-half-year-old granddaughter Ayesha. All of them are undergoing treatment at the burn unit.

Three of them are in critical condition with between 32 to 88 percent burns on their bodies, Partha said.

Meanwhile, police arrested the owner of the house, Abdul Hamid, on Friday after Shaheen Alam, a relative of the victims, filed a case against him over the incident, said Rejaul Haque, officer-in-charge of Ashulia Police Station.

Before his arrest, Hamid told investigators and reporters that the gas connection to the two-storey building was unauthorised and that he paid a hefty sum to "a group of people" for the gas connection.

Several residents of the building also alleged that gas pipes were being used illegally by their landlord and were faulty.

Mokshedur Rahman, deputy general manager of Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Co. Ltd.'s Office in Savar, could not be reached for a comment.

DHAKA DIVISION

AL, BNP brace for multiple contenders

STAR REPORT

Apart from a few constituencies like Gopalganj-3 from where Awami League President Sheikh Hasina runs, most seats in the districts of Dhaka division have multiple hopefuls for AL tickets.

The BNP is also likely to face rivalries within the party.

Excluding Dhaka, the division now has 12 districts comprised of 50 constituencies in which around 116 AL leaders and around 108 BNP leaders are trying to get their party's nominations.

The newly formed Mymensingh division, which used to be in Dhaka, has 24 seats in Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Sherpur and Netrakona districts. Around 80 AL and 65 BNP leaders are competing there to for party tickets.

In Gopalganj, Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim are likely to contest from Gopalganj-3 and -2 constituencies. Two vital AL leaders Lt Col (ret) Muhammad Faruk Khan and Mukul Bose are prospective candidates of Gopalganj-1.

In Faridpur, at least nine AL and seven BNP candidates are trying to get their party's tickets for four constituencies. Potential AL candidates include Sajeda Chowdhury, Mosharraf Hossain Khandker, and Kazi Zafarullah.

In Madaripur, five AL men and eight BNP men are trying to get nominations in three seats. The AL candidates include Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan and AL central leader Bahuddin Nasim.

In Shariatpur, there are at least seven AL men and as many BNP men

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CONSTITUENCIES IN DHAKA DISTRICT

AL aspirants' campaign runs at full throttle

STAR REPORT

Multiple ruling Awami League ticket aspirants are campaigning in full swing in most of the constituencies in Dhaka district.

The BNP camp, however, is almost silent as the party is busy with other issues, including release of its Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

The AL has around 75 aspirants and the BNP around 50 in the 20 constituencies of the district. Of the constituencies, 15 are in the metropolitan areas, while the rest are in Savar, Keraniganj, and Dohar upazilas.

In the last election, AL shared five seats in the district with its alliance partners. The lawmakers elected from those constituencies are Salma Islam (Dhaka-1), Sayed Abu Hossain (Dhaka-4), Kazi Firoz Rashid (Dhaka-6) of Jatiya Party, Rashed Khan Menon (Dhaka-8) of Workers Party of Bangladesh (WBP) and SM Abul Kalam Azad (Dhaka-17) of Bangladesh Nationalist Front (BNF).

Besides, AL leader Haji Mohammad Salim contested and won the polls as an independent from Dhaka-7.

However, this time AL leaders want nomination of party people in Dhaka instead of alliance partners and are conducting vigorous campaigns in the constituencies.

For example, AL presidium member and former minister Abdul Mannan Khan, Beximco Group Vice-Chairman Salman F Rahman, and Dhaka Zilla Parishad Chairman Mahbubur Rahman are prospective candidates of AL in Dhaka-1.

Former AL lawmaker Sanjida Khanom and Sheikh Hasina's former personal assistant Awlad Hossain are trying to get party ticket in Dhaka-4.

AL incumbents are also facing challenges for tickets from within.

Food Minister Qumrul Islam is the present lawmaker of Dhaka-2. But, Keraniganj upazila chairman and upazila unit AL convener Shahin Ahmed is a strong candidate there.

Two AL leaders -- Haji Mohammad Selim and Mostofa Jalal Mohiuddin -- are conducting vigorous campaigns to get the ticket for Dhaka-7.

Dhaka-13 MP and Joint General Secretary Jahangir Kabir Nanak and Dhaka City North unit General Secretary Sadek Khan are competing for nomination there.

Incumbent Aslamul Haque Aslam, AL woman reserve seat MP Sabina Akter Tuhin, Darussalam thana AL President ABM Mazar Anam and city AL vice-president Azizur Rahman Bachchu are campaigning for ticket in Dhaka-14.

Kamal Ahmed Majumder, the incumbent lawmaker of Dhaka-15, may face challenges from Swetchhasheba League leader Gazi Mejbaut Haque and Jubo League leaders Mainul Hossain Khan Nikil and SM Zahid.

Similarly, multiple candidates are campaigning in Dhaka-16, -19 and -20 constituencies.

"There is no doubt that we will work together to ensure victory of the 'Boat'. But I call upon the party high-ups to nominate those who keep in touch with the grassroots," said Shahin Ahmed, a nomination-seeker of Dhaka-2.

However, some AL leaders are likely to face no intra-party rivals. They are Nasrul Hamid of Dhaka-3, Barrister Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh of Dhaka-10, AKM Rahmatullah of Dhaka-11, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan of

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US to reinstate Iran sanctions

FROM PAGE 16

Washington's European allies, are resisting joining its effort to economically strangle the Tehran regime.

Britain, France, Germany and the European Union strongly condemned the US move, as they did when Washington withdrew in May from the Iran nuclear deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

"The JCPOA is a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture and of multilateral diplomacy," they said.

"It is crucial for the security of Europe, the region, and the entire world. The JCPOA is working and delivering on its goal."

Pompeo said the US would grant exemptions to eight countries that have pledged to or have already cut back on purchases of petroleum from Iran, which has long depended on crude exports to power its economy.

He did not name the eight countries, but they are believed to include India, Japan, South Korea, and possibly China.

Iran's northern neighbor Turkey said it was one of the eight.

"We know Turkey is among the countries that will be given an exemption but we do not have the details," Energy Minister Fatih Donmez said, according to state-run news agency Anadolu.

Pompeo said the countries agreed that the payments for the oil would go into escrow accounts that Iran will only be able to tap for "humanitarian trade, or bilateral trade in non-sanctioned goods and services."

"Maximum pressure means maximum pressure," Pompeo said.

To punish Iranian banks, US Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin said SWIFT -- which enables secure bank-to-bank communications and transactions -- will also face sanctions if it provides services to blacklisted Iranian financial institutions.

The US blacklist includes most major Iranian banks.

That could make it extremely difficult for Iran to do business with other countries.

"SWIFT is no different than any other entity," Mnuchin said.

The US wants the Shia clerical regime to withdraw from war-ravaged Syria, where it is a critical

ally of President Bashar al-Assad, and to end longstanding support to regional militant movements Hezbollah and Hamas.

It also wants Iran to stop backing Yemen's Huthi rebels, who are facing a US-supported air campaign led by Saudi Arabia.

"It's important to keep our eyes on the prize when it comes to Iranian revenues, whether they be derived from oil or any other sort of sanctionable transaction. The goal is to target and tie up these revenues to change Iran's calculus," said Behnam Ben Taleblu of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

"SWIFT now must make a choice," he said: refuse to deal with Iran banks on the US blacklist, or face sanctions itself.

But experts don't expect Iran's leaders to immediately throw in the towel.

"It's basically magical thinking," said Ali Vaez of the International Crisis Group.

"The Iranians have been able to continue their support to regional proxies and allies for 40 years despite economic pressure."

Exams deferred for Qawmi event

FROM PAGE 1

organised the event to hail the passage of a bill making the Dawra-e-Hadith degree equivalent to master's in Islamic studies and Arabic.

As rescheduled, the tests of Junior School Certificate and Junior Dakhil Certificate will now be held on November 9.

Organisers are expecting a gathering of around 10 lakh people at today's rally, said Maulana Farid Uddin Masoud, a leader of the platform, after inspecting the venue yesterday.

Mainuddin Ruhi, a joint secretary of Hefajat, said 15,000 leaders and activists of the organisation would come from Chattogram for the meeting and they already hired 250 buses for this.

"We have set the rally date after discussing it with the government," he told The Daily Star.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police has imposed restrictions on traffic movement for today while some schools announced closure because of the rally, beginning at 10:00am.

The government decision to shift the exams drew criticism from educationalists and guardians as it would put extra pressure on examinees, who now have to sit for three tough tests in a row -- math on Thursday, English on Friday and science on Saturday next.

Some also denounced it as a compromise with the Qawmi group.

The platform backed by controversial Islamist organisation Hefajat is arranging the rally at a time when the 90-day countdown for the next general election already began.

On May 5, 2013, Hefajat activists got involved in deadly clashes with law enforcers and ruling party men, turning Motijheel and Paltan areas virtually into battlefields to press its 13-point demand.

They went on the rampage setting fire to hundreds of shops, vehicles and police checkpoints, which led law enforcers to swing into action to flush them out in a raid after midnight.

After the incident, 83 cases were filed against 3,416 people, and many

of its senior leaders went undercover fearing arrest.

However, things would drastically change in the days to come. The Qawmi madrasa-based group got close to the AL and the government, getting benefits, according to a number of its leaders.

Hefajat now remains almost silent over its 13-point demand as, insiders say, the government has convinced it to refrain from taking to the streets.

'UNNECESSARY'

The education ministry yesterday shifted the JSC and JDC exams citing "unavoidable circumstances".

But Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid told this newspaper, "We have deferred the JSC and JDC exams keeping in mind the rally."

He added students would suffer before and after the exams today as it has been known that several lakh people would join the meeting. "That's why we have taken the decision."

November 4 (today) was fixed for English test of regular students and English first paper of irregular students of JSC and Arabic second paper of JDC.

Guardians and educationists said deferring public examinations were "unnecessary". The rally should have been rescheduled instead of a public exam in which 26.70 lakh students are taking part.

"Why students have to be victimised because of a rally?" questions Mahmud Hossain, a guardian of a JSC candidate from Mirpur.

'COMPROMISE'

Dhaka University Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury said postponement of exams for the rally delivers a "message that the government is compromising with and giving discount to the Qawmi group."

He said the group was successful to bring changes to textbooks by mounting pressure on the government though that went against the spirit of Liberation War.

The group also succeeded to have the government recognition of Dawra-e-Hadith, which, he said, "is not viable for the society."

Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam termed the government decision "unfortunate."

Both the educationists think a public exam after class-VIII is "not necessary at all" as this is a burden for students. And rescheduling exam means even more pressure, they added.

Rasheda K Choudhury, executive director of Campaign for Popular Education, said it is a rare instance that public exams were shifted for a rally. "Students have the right to sit for their exams without any suffering."

She feared further upsetting of academic activities as many political programmes will take place ahead of upcoming general polls.

In a statement, Bangladesh Chhatra Union said deferring exam will hit hard the students.

The education ministry's step was irresponsible and the government showed its political bankruptcy by allowing a rally during a public exam, it added.

Meanwhile, Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee shifted its today's discussion on "Constitution Day" to November 8 while organisers of Dhaka Literary Festival also deferred their press conference to tomorrow.

TRAFFIC RESTRICTION

The DMP on Friday asked all heavy and light vehicles to avoid Suhrawardy Udyan area and adjacent places today. The roads from Shahbagh intersection to Matsya Bhaban will remain off limits to traffic from dawn till the end of the rally.

Besides, there could be traffic diversions in areas including Banglamotor, Shahbagh, Katabon, Nilkhet, Palashi, Bakshi Bazar, Chankhar Pool, Gulistan, Paltan and Kakrail.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader earlier on several occasions said no rallies or processions would be allowed anywhere in the city on weekdays.

In January, Quader, also general secretary of ruling Awami League, even directed the Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority to formulate a policy in this regard.

Dhaka delectably different

FROM PAGE 1

In the upcoming election, the AL wants to retain its supremacy in the division while the BNP seeks to bounce back with a message that AL's "lack of good governance" during the last 10 years led to "widespread corruption". Both the parties have strongholds in some districts of the division.

Like in other parts of the country, AL nomination seekers in Dhaka division are vigorously campaigning in their areas. They are also regularly holding meetings with the grassroots and supporters to consolidate their position in their constituencies.

Senior leaders of the AL have recently campaigned in the capital that has 15 of the 20 seats in Dhaka district.

The AL could be facing potential rebel candidate problem in the division.

For instance, AL leader Rahamat Ali was elected MP six times from Gazipur-3. He may not run this time due to old age but his son Jamil Hasan Durjoy has been preparing to run for the last one year, said Shafiqur Rahman, president of Swetchhasheba League of Sripur upazila.

Durjoy claimed that the AL chief Sheikh Hasina had hinted he would get the ticket in Gazipur-3 considering his father's contribution in development of the area.

However, Gazipur district AL General Secretary Iqbal Hossain Sabuj is also campaigning in Gazipur-3. He said he had sought party tickets in several previous elections but was

DHAKA DIVISION				
1991	1996	2001	2008	2014
AL-27	AL-59	AL-30	AL-87	AL-77
BNP-56	BNP-30	BNP-56		
JP-4	JP-1		JP-5	JP-11
Jamaat-1		KSJL-1	WPB-1	WPB-1
Bakshal-2				BNF-1
		Independent-3	Independent-1	Independent-4
The division had 90 constituency in 1999, 1996 & 2001 elections				
The number of seats rose to 94 in 2008 & 2014 elections				

denied.

He hoped this time he would get it.

The situation in the BNP camp seems the opposite. The party aspirants are not active in their constituencies although some of them are campaigning and preparing for the polls.

Moreover, BNP grassroots leaders said the political situation was not conducive to carrying out political activities. Many of them are accused in criminal cases and have been arrested. In some areas, the party men are inactive fearing police harassment, said local BNP leaders.

"We cannot organise any programme due to police harassment," said Mazharul Islam, general secretary of Kishoreganj BNP. He said 12 cases were filed against 6,000 party men in the district in the last seven years.

Local BNP leaders, however, believe the situation would change after the announcement of the election schedule as the party itself would formally announce its decision on running.

Fazlul Huq Milon, organising secre-

tary of BNP Dhaka division, said, "We are yet to decide whether we will participate in the election. However, we have full preparation to contest."

He said, "Our candidates are fixed as the party was in power several times. Candidates are not an issue for us. We will win all seats in the division if we join the polls."

The BNP too has multiple people, albeit discreetly, vying for party tickets in each constituency.

BNP leader Fazlul Huq acknowledged that the BNP had multiple ticket aspirants in almost every constituency. "Yet, this will not be a problem for us. After the party decides to run, it will not take time to finalise the candidates."

The number of parliamentary constituencies has been reduced to 70 from 94 as a new division was formed splitting Dhaka in 2015.

The newly formed Mymensingh division consists of Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Sherpur and Netrakona districts and has 24 seats.