

I can see conflict ahead

Says Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

The way the political situation in the country is evolving, it could lead to a serious confrontation on the streets unless the government takes responsibility to resolve all the disputes regarding the election, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said yesterday.

He made the comments in a views-exchange meeting with members of Overseas Correspondents Association, Bangladesh (OCAB), a platform of Dhaka-based journalists working for foreign media outlets, at BNP chairperson’s Gulshan office.

Fakhrul reiterated the BNP’s stance that there was no way they would join the next election if it is held under a political government.

He accused the government of harassing opposition BNP leaders and activists and barring them from joining the anti-government rallies.

The BNP leader said obstacles were being created by the intelligence agencies and administration to foil the opposition rallies.

He said their people were being intimidated. “The intelligence people are sitting with the DCs and SPs and making decisions to foil our programmes.”

In reply to a query, Fakhrul said the BNP would present the formula for an election-time caretaker government before the people at an appropriate time. “If the government has any sense of responsibility, it will accept that.”

He added that if they win the next election, the BNP would form a national government with all the parties that participate in their planned simultaneous movement with the common objective of restoring the country’s democracy – something that has been mooted before by the party’s exiled acting chairperson, Tarique Rahman.

“We will then resolve all the existing problems in the country with the united efforts of all,” Fakhrul said.

He also promised to revoke all the repressive laws, including the Digital Security Act, if the BNP gets to form the government.

OCAB convenor and BBC correspondent Qadir Kallol, its member secretary and German news agency DPA correspondent Nazrul Islam Mithu, UNB Editor Farid Hossain, Manabzamin editor Matur Rahman Chowdhury, and Bangladesh bureau chief of the Associated Press Julhas Alam, were among the journalists present.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Rescuers work at a site of a residential building heavily damaged by a Russian missile attack in Mykolaiv, Ukraine yesterday.

Sunak enters race

Holds ‘secret talks’ with Johnson before announcing his bid for next UK PM

AFP, London

British Conservative Rishi Sunak yesterday announced he is standing to be prime minister, just weeks after failing in a first attempt and setting up a potentially bruising battle with his former boss Boris Johnson.

The 58 year-old Johnson is said to be intensely lobbying Conservative colleagues ahead of a deadline of this afternoon to secure the 100 nominations required to face a vote of 357 Tory MPs.

Amid growing calls for unity within the fractured ruling party, he and Sunak held talks late into the night, reports said yesterday, as the feuding political heavyweights battle behind the scenes.

Few details have emerged about what The Sun dubbed a “secret summit”. The Sunday Times said it lasted several hours “in the hope of burying the hatchet and thrashing out a deal to govern together”.

“We’re all waiting for white smoke,” an ally of one told the newspaper.

However, Sunak’s announcement yesterday suggests he is confident he can vanquish Johnson.

Ex-finance minister Sunak said he had a “track record of delivery” and would lead Britain out of “profound economic crisis”,



which experts say has been worsened by the aborted policies of outgoing leader Liz Truss.

“I want to fix our economy, unite our party and deliver for our country,” he said in a short statement posted on Twitter confirming his widely expected candidacy.

The no-frills announcement contrasted with his last failed bid to be Tory leader, when he faced criticism for a slickly produced video launched just days after he had helped depose ex-prime minister Johnson by resigning in July.

Sunak, 42, is the second Conservative MP to declare a run at the top job, after cabinet member Penny Mordaunt launched her campaign on Friday.

Sunak has crossed the minimum threshold Friday and currently boasting the public backing of 139 Tory lawmakers,

according to a BBC tally.

That compares to Johnson’s 56 and 23 for Mordaunt, though the ex-leader’s allies insist he has secured the 100 nominations.

“Boris’s campaign tell me that they have the numbers,” Business Secretary Jacob Rees-Mogg told the BBC. “Clearly, he is going to stand. There is a great deal of support for him.”

The Tories have been forced into a second, this time expedited, leadership contest since the summer following Truss’s resignation after only 44 disastrous days into her tenure over her calamitous tax-slashing mini-budget.

If two candidates remain after Conservative lawmakers vote today, the party’s approximately 170,000 members will make their choice, with the result announced Friday.

Johnson, who only relinquished power in early September following a government revolt over a slew of scandals, is still seen as the grassroots’ favourite. Foreign Secretary James Cleverly yesterday endorsed Johnson’s bid to return to 10 Downing Street as prime minister.

Mordaunt, who missed out on the last contest’s run-off by just eight MPs’ votes, is adamant she alone is able to bring the party together.

Now AL plans to flaunt strength

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The specifics of the event and campaign will be decided by the AL Central Working Committee on November 28 at the Gono Bhavan.

About BNP’s divisional rallies, AL Joint General Secretary Bahauddin Nasim said, “The BNP is trying to create a confrontational situation and the Awami League will not step into that trap. We will hold rallies across the country with participation of leaders, activists and supporters to show that the Awami League is still popular.”

In recent weeks, the BNP held huge rallies in Chattogram, Mymensingh and Khulna and is scheduled to organise similar events in seven other cities to protest the power crisis, soaring prices of essentials and the killing of its leaders and activists.

Despite transport strikes and fear of attacks by AL activists, the rallies in Chattogram, Mymensingh and Khulna saw the presence of thousands of supporters.

The enthusiasm in BNP supporters has worried the AL a little, said insiders, adding that they believed the BNP rallies might have shown

the general public BNP’s popularity, which in itself is a sign of the ruling AL’s weakness.

Besides, BNP leaders repeatedly said the country would be run under the leadership of Khaleda Zia after December 10 when they would hold a rally in the capital.

These remarks have already made the AL leaders uncomfortable, because they do not know the specific plans of the opposition party regarding the rally.

However, the government is now contemplating either not to give permission for the rally or to take measures to prevent the BNP from gathering the expected number of participants.

Addressing the council of Narayanganj AL, Obaidul Quader, AL general secretary, yesterday said they would face the BNP on the streets and the final face-off will take place in December.

AL presidium member Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya on Friday said the BNP would not be allowed to hold political programmes anywhere in the country in December.

Half a century gone chasing recognition

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his sacrifice, was not conferred upon him. Almost all of the martyred guerrillas of the Crack Platoon were honoured with gallantry awards posthumously, but Hafiz was never recognised as a freedom fighter, not even as a martyr.

Between 1974 and 2014, his family submitted eight applications to the state requesting that he be officially recognised as a martyred freedom fighter.

However, for some unknown reasons, each of them was snubbed.

“I don’t understand why my brother would not be given the bare minimum of honour even after his fellow fighters witnessed him being fatally punished in a torture cell and his name is explicitly mentioned in the Liberation War documents,” said Syed Musaddequer Rahman, Hafiz’s younger brother.

The Daily Star obtained copies of every application submitted by four of his family members separately in 1974, 1985, 1990, 1991, 1998, 2010, 2013, and 2014.

Musaddequer, now living in Belgium, told this newspaper over the phone that he submitted the seventh application to the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs in 2013, seeking his brother’s recognition as a martyred freedom fighter.

A copy of the Tk 2,000 cheque awarded to the family by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1972 was attached to the application, along with a recommendation letter signed by Crack Platoon guerrilla commander Golam Dasatgir Gazi, Bir Pratik.

The application was submitted to the then state minister, AB Tajul Islam. Subsequently, the then director general of the Jatiya Muktiyoddha Council was instructed to verify the cheque.

When Musaddequer was called over to the council, the director general asked him to show the “training certificate issued by the Indian government”.

As Hafiz was killed during the war, the family could not collect any such certificate.

Musaddequer said, “I met the director general with the application. But he told me this application would not be accepted unless we submitted the training certificate from India.

“The director general even told me that many such applications from fake freedom fighters were submitted. He told me to leave the application and that I would be informed later.”

The largest collection of the Liberation War documents, “Bangladesher Swadhinota Juddho: Dolil Potro (Volume 10)”, details several operations that Hafiz took part in during the war.

On an August night in 1971, a convoy of the Pakistan army was severely damaged by a mine planted by Hafiz near the Asad Gate.

Besides, a Pakistan military truck was blown up by an M16 mine that he had planted on a road in Science Laboratory area.

Hafiz also participated in the Operation Ulon Grid Substation at Rampura under the leadership of Gazi Golam Dastagir in July-August and destroyed a 30/40/50 MV transformer.

On the night of August 29, Pakistan soldiers raided Hafiz’s home at 20 New Eskaton. There, they found a large cache of arms and ammunition belonging to the freedom fighters and caught him.

Like the other guerrillas captured that night, he was taken to the Pakistan military torture cell in Nakhhalpara, where he was grilled for information about his brothers in arms.

But as he was not one to break, his captors didn’t let him return to his family, and his body was never found.

Linu Billah, a Crack Platoon member who was in the same torture cell at the time, said, “It was unspeakable what they did to Hafiz Bhai. His eyes were gouged out, and

he was beaten from head to toe.

“At one point, he could no longer endure the torture, so he told his captors to shoot him. All this time, he was unwilling to give away any information.”

‘A SHAME FOR ALL OF US’

Veteran Awami League leader Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya, Bir Bikram, another Crack Platoon guerrilla, told The Daily Star, “Hafiz Bhai was a fellow member of the Crack Platoon. I learned from his younger brother that he did not receive the recognition.

“I arranged for Musaddequer to meet the state minister for Liberation War affairs. But I’m not sure what happened after that. The ministry never contacted me to confirm whether I was his fellow fighter. It’s a shame for all of us that Hafiz Bhai has not yet received recognition.”

Contacted, Syed Mahbub Hasan, the then DG of Jatiya Muktiyoddha Council, said, “The training certificate from India is one of the major conditions to get recognition as a freedom fighter. But I cannot recall what happened some 10 years ago. Perhaps there were other documents that were missing. The application was rejected as it did not meet the required conditions.

“I did not have the power to reject any application. Only the council’s nine-member committee had that authority. Perhaps, the rejection was their decision.”

He added, “There were so many applications submitted at that time that it’s impossible to say which application was rejected for what reason.”

In 2014, Syeda Anwara Khatun, Hafiz’s younger sister, submitted the family’s last application to the ministry. There, she faced a humiliating situation.

“An official who received the application asked for the Indian training certificate and enquired about the sector under which Hafiz Bhai fought the war. He also insisted that there was no way to grant

DRU urges SC to speed up trial of Sagar-Runi murder case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday submitted a memorandum to the Supreme Court to speed up the trial proceedings of journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi’s murder case.

As per the memorandum submitted to Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique, the then home minister Sahara Khatun had assured that police will arrest the killers within 48 hours of Sagar and Runi’s murder at their residence in West Rajabazar on February 11, 2012.

However, there has been no progress in this regard so far.

The DRU has requested thorough investigation followed by a fast trial, said Nazrul Islam Mithu, the president of the organisation, quoting the clauses of the memorandum.

4 sentenced to death for rape, murder of minor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

A Bogura court yesterday sentenced four men to death for gang-raping and killing a seven-year-old in 2020.

They were also fined Tk 1 lakh each, in default of which they are to serve another year in prison.

Bappy Ahmed, 24, Kamal Pasha, 37, Shamim Reza, 24, and Lavlu, 23, all residents of Dhunat upazila, were convicted of strangling the girl to death after raping her on December 14, 2020.

According to the verdict, Bappy lured the girl to an empty classroom of a school where he and other convicts raped her.

Police arrested the suspects days later and they confessed to the crimes on December 29.

2 killed in road crashes in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two people died in two separate accidents In Dhaka’s Jurain and Kakrail area on Saturday night.

The deceased were identified as Ibrahim, 12, a poultry shop employee in Jurain, and Waliullah Mollah, 60, a Chandpur resident travelling to Kakrail mosque.

Ibrahim was run-over by a truck at speed near Jurain Mazar Gate area around 11:00pm when he was crossing the road. He died on the spot following severe head injuries, said Al Amin, sub-inspector of Shyampur Police Station.

Police seized the truck and detained its driver, he added.

Meanwhile, Waliullah was left critically injured after an unidentified vehicle hit him near the Kakrail mosque around 10:00pm.

He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead around 11:00pm, said Mahmudul Hasan, sub-inspector of Ramna Police Station.

Both the bodies were sent to DMCH for autopsy.

Hurricane Roslyn hits Mexico’s Pacific coast

AFP, Puerto Vallarta

Hurricane Roslyn yesterday made landfall on the west coast of Mexico as a powerful Category 3 storm, the US National Hurricane Center said, as communities sheltered from damaging winds, a dangerous storm surge and flash flooding.

The storm hit near the small town of Santa Cruz in the coastal Nayarit state around 5:30 am (1130 GMT) packing estimated maximum sustained winds of 120 miles (195 kilometers) per hour, the NHC said.

Just hours before hitting the Mexican shore, Roslyn was downgraded from a Category 4 to a Category 3 storm on the five-tier Saffir-Simpson Wind Scale, with the

NHC predicting “rapid weakening” after landfall.

The NHC and the Mexico meteorological service warned of damaging winds, heavy rains that could cause flash flooding and landslides and waves up to six meters (20 feet) high along the Pacific coast.

“Roslyn is expected to produce a life-threatening storm surge with significant coastal flooding in areas of onshore winds” through yesterday, the NHC said, adding that near the coast “the surge will be accompanied by large and destructive waves.”

Authorities issued hurricane warnings for portions of the Pacific coast states of Jalisco, Nayarit, Sinaloa and Las Islas Marias, some 60 miles offshore.