

Matia likely to be next deputy leader of House



STAR REPORT

Awami League presidium member Matia Chowdhury is likely to be made the Deputy Leader of the House.

The post fell vacant after Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury died on September 11.

Former presidium member of ruling AL, Sajeda was appointed the deputy leader of the 11th parliament for the third consecutive term.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday hinted that Matia would be the next Deputy Leader of the House.

The PM said this while delivering her speech marking the Begum Rokeya Day-2022 at the Begum Rokeya Padak-2022 award giving ceremony at the capital's Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

"Unfortunately, deputy leader of the House Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury died some days ago. But we will fill the vacuum with a woman," Hasina, also the Leader of the House, said.

Names of AL veteran leaders including Amir Hossain Amu, Tofail Ahmed, Matia Chowdhury and Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim were in discussion for the post after Sajeda's death.

Matia, an MP from Sherpur-2, was an agriculture minister during the Awami League government's tenure.

Global orgs urge BTRC, telcos to provide unfettered internet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of global and regional organisations working on connectivity and ending internet shutdowns yesterday urged the telecom regulator and mobile operators to ensure unhindered mobile internet access during the BNP's rally in Dhaka today.

This comes as mobile users could not get internet access at the venue and adjacent areas during BNP's 13 rallies in key cities across Bangladesh recently.

The disruption usually occurs for several hours from morning to night on the day of the rallies.



BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul and the party's Standing Committee Member Mirza Abbas being taken to jail from Dhaka Judicial Magistrate's Court yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

West's desire for dominance increases conflict risks

Says Putin; fighting rages in Ukraine's Donetsk region

AGENCIES

Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday said the West's desire to maintain its dominance on the world stage was increasing the risks of conflict.

"The potential for conflict in the world is growing and this is a direct consequence of the attempts by Western elites to preserve their political, financial, military and ideological dominance by any means," Putin said.

The Russian leader was speaking in a video message to a summit of defence ministers from the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and a group of ex-Soviet countries that was published by the Kremlin.

"They deliberately multiply chaos and aggravate the international situation," Putin said. He also accused the West of "exploiting" Ukraine and using its people as "cannon fodder" in a conflict against Russia.

He also warned that Russia could cut oil production and will refuse to sell oil to any country that imposes the West's "stupid" price cap on Russian oil, reports Reuters.

Putin has repeatedly cast the war in Ukraine - which Moscow calls a "special military operation" - as a conflict between Russia and the West, criticising those who have provided military and financial backing to Ukraine.

Russian forces, meanwhile, have shelled the entire front line in the Donetsk region in eastern Ukraine, Ukrainian officials said, part of what appears to be the Kremlin's scaled-back ambition to secure only the bulk of territory it has claimed.

The fiercest fighting was near the towns of Bakhmut and Avdiivka, the region's governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said in a television interview. Five civilians were killed and two wounded in Ukrainian-controlled parts of Donetsk over the previous day, he said early yesterday.

"The entire front line is being shelled," he said, adding that Russian troops were also trying to advance near Lyman, which was recaptured by Ukrainian forces in November, one of a number of battlefield setbacks suffered by Russia in the past few months.

In Bakhmut and other parts of the Donetsk region that neighbours Luhansk province, Ukrainian forces countered with barrages from rocket launchers, a Reuters witness said.

"The Russians have intensified their efforts in Donetsk and Luhansk," Ukrainian presidential adviser Oleksiy Arestovych said in a video post.

"They are now in a very active phase of attempting to conduct offensive operations. We are advancing nowhere

but, rather, defending, destroying the enemy's infantry and equipment wherever it tries to advance."

In a report, the Ukrainian general staff said its forces had attacked Russian positions and troop assembly points in at least half a dozen towns in the south of Ukraine.

Russian losses amounted to about 240 wounded, with three ammunition depots and about various military equipment destroyed, it added.

Russian and US representatives were expected to meet in Istanbul yesterday to discuss a set of "difficult questions" including visas and embassy staffing levels, Russia's TASS news agency reported, citing an unnamed source.

The US House of Representatives passed a defence bill on Thursday that provides Ukraine with at least \$800 million in additional security assistance next year.

Ukraine's Zelensky in a video address late on Thursday accused Russian forces of leaving landmines, tripwire mines, mined buildings, cars and infrastructure in places they had abandoned under Ukrainian military pressure.

"This is perhaps even fiercer and more devious than missile terror," said Zelensky, who paid tribute to four policemen killed by landmines in Kherson province.

US House passes defense bill with billions in Taiwan aid

AFP, Washington

The US House of Representatives on Thursday passed a defense spending bill that includes up to \$10 billion in military grant assistance for Taiwan and seeks to expedite arms sales to the island, drawing a rebuke from Beijing.

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for 2023 - which still requires Senate passage and the signature of President Joe Biden to become law - would authorize grant assistance for Taiwan of up to \$2 billion per year from 2023 through 2027.

The act also authorizes Biden to provide Taiwan with up to \$1 billion per year in defense items from US stockpiles, or other services such as military training.

And it requires the secretaries of State and Defense to "prioritize and expedite the processing of requests from Taiwan under the Foreign Military Sales program."

The NDAA "will dramatically enhance the United States' defense partnership with Taiwan," Senator Bob Menendez, the Foreign Relations Committee chair, said in a statement ahead of the bill's passage.

FROM PAGE 1

DEC 7

A fierce clash between police and BNP men leaves one killed and many injured at Nayapaltan.

DEC 8

At a meeting with the DMP, the party proposes Kamalapur stadium while DMP offers Mirpur Bangla College.

DEC 9

DMP finally allows BNP to hold rally at Golapbagh field.

All eyes glued to Golapbagh

FROM PAGE 1

crowd spilled over nearby streets. The whole area was reverberating with continuous slogans by BNP leaders and supporters.

There was another late evening twist. The Dhaka South City Corporation, which owns the ground, said it would give its decision on whether BNP could hold the rally there today. Late last night, it eventually gave the permission.

Many BNP leaders and activists reached the city over the last couple of days.

He added that he and several others deleted the photos and videos that would reveal their political affiliation.

"We downloaded the photos of Sheikh Hasina and other Awami League leaders to hoodwink the law enforcers into thinking that we were ruling party activists. And it worked," he said.

Mokhlesur Rahman, a Jubo Dal leader from Noakhali, said he along with 10 others reached Dhaka on Monday and checked into a hotel in Fakirapool.

"Four of my party men were arrested from there. So, I had to leave. I have been staying in Kamalapur Railway Station for the last two days," he claimed.

Leaders and activists of the Awami League and its associated bodies also marched through the streets in the city, chanting slogans against the BNP throughout yesterday.

Security measures have been beefed up around Golapbagh and the DMP placed 26 conditions on the BNP for holding the rally.

Harun Or Rashid, additional commissioner of DMP, said, "BNP wanted Golapbagh ground as their venue and our commissioner gave them the permission to hold the rally

there."

He said they would implement the same security measures planned for the Suhrawardy Udyan at the Golapbagh ground.

"Our teams are working all over the area and monitoring the surrounding areas," he added.

The BNP rally in Dhaka will be the culmination of similar programmes across Bangladesh that drew large crowds from far and wide.

It had been holding rallies since October 12 protesting price hikes of essentials and fuel.

The political arena heated up in the last few days over the BNP not willing to have the rally at the Suhrawardy Udyan and the government showing no intention of allowing it to happen at Nayapaltan.

Police asked the BNP for alternative venues.

The BNP proposed Arambagh but police said that they would not allow rallies on any street.

As negotiations between the DMP and the BNP went on, party leaders and activists started gathering in front of the Nayapaltan party office. On Wednesday, police and BNP men engaged in a clash that left one killed and many injured. Police raided the BNP office and even barred Fakhrul from entering it.

The USA and the UK issued travel alerts for their citizens. A number of western countries and the UN issued statements, urging the government to allow the opposition parties to hold rallies.

On Thursday night, BNP leaders met DMP officials and both hinted at reaching a consensus over the venue.

The BNP held its standing committee meeting and decided that Golapbagh ground could be the venue. A BNP delegation met DMP officials in the afternoon yesterday

before the official announcement was made.

With other BNP rallies turning out to be big shows despite hurdles on the way, its leaders in Dhaka were out to outdo their colleagues in other divisions.

This apparently triggered even stricter measures by law enforcers.

Public transport became thin on the streets yesterday. Traffic was light on Dhaka streets and fewer than usual buses entered Dhaka.

Checkpoints were set up at the entries to the capital as police continued to check all the vehicles. They interrogated drivers, passengers and searched their luggage. They also frisked pedestrians.

Chhatra League activists of Jahangirnagar University kept the Dhaka-Aricha highway blocked in front of the university for two and a half hours yesterday evening resulting in a 4km-long tailback.

In Abdullahpur, Sayedabad, and Gabtoli, this newspaper found that police did not allow any long-haul buses to enter Dhaka without being checked.

Helal Uddin, driver of a bus from Kishoreganj, said the passengers started panicking when armed police searched them at Abdullahpur.

Sharif Hasan came from Mymensingh to join the rally. After reaching the venue, he said, "No one can stop us. The government tried its best to foil our rally but couldn't. We will return home ousting the government."

BNP standing committee member Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku said, "We are holding the rally at the cost of a life."

He said people will join the programme defying all odds and obstacles to show that they have no confidence in the government.

Argentina

FROM PAGE 1

The Dutch, though, were not about to go out with a whimper - pulling a goal back, seven minutes from the end, with an angled glancing header from Weghorst from a Berghuis cross from deep.

Ten minutes of added time raised Dutch hopes and - tempers with a couple of mass confrontations - and they moved Van Dijk up front and pumped balls int the box.

Deep into added time, one of those high balls, led to a free-kick just outside the area.

Koopmeiners feigned an expected shot before instead, to everyone's surprise, playing a short pass into Weghorst, who twisted past Enzo Fernandez and poked home the equaliser.

The wild celebrations over, the

game went into extra-time and curiously became becalmed, only sparking back into life late in the second period.

Lautaro Martinez saw a powerful goalbound shot deflected off Van Dijk and then another deflected effort, from Fernandez, flew just over the bar.

Lautaro then forced a diving save out of Noppert and Messi screwed a shot wide and only the post kept out a long-range drive from Fernandez.

After all that, it was penalties.

Van Dijk was up first and Martinez dived to his right to save. Messi followed and made no mistake before Martinez saved again from Berghuis.

This time there was no way back for the Dutch as, even despite a miss from Fernandez, Argentina held on to win the shoot-out and head into the semi-finals.

Watchful AL takes to streets

FROM PAGE 1

Ashulia AL committees will organise the rally. Insiders say over 2 lakh people will attend the event.

On streets of the capital yesterday, crowds of ruling party activists took position and chanted slogans.

Chhatra League leaders and activists patrolled the streets on motorcycles in Gulistan, Kawran Bazar, Hatirpool, Kalyanpur, Mohammadpur, Sadarghat, Kazipara, Sheorapara, Dholaikhal, Dhanmondi, Dhaka University and other places.

"After the announcement of the party president, leaders and activists took positions in at least seven places in each thana [AL units]. From tomorrow afternoon until evening, we will hold protest rallies in every ward," Dhaka City North President Sheikh Bazlur Rahman told The Daily Star.

The leaders and activists will also be at every AL office in the city from 10:00am today, AL activists said. The BNP rally in Golapbagh starts at 11:00am.

Besides, ruling party men will also be at every entry to the capital.

The ruling party sources said they were asked to remain prepared

2 Rab men killed, 1 hurt in crash while chasing drug carrier

STAR REPORT

Two on-duty Rab personnel were killed and another was injured in a road crash while chasing a phensedyl-laden pickup van on the Magura-Jhenidah highway around 3:30am yesterday.

The dead are Anisur Rahman, 35, a corporal, and Faruq Hossain, 36, a constable; and the injured is Mohammad Nazmul, 35, a soldier, read a statement of Rab Headquarters.

Mohammad Alauddin, 35, the pickup van driver, was also killed in the accident, read the statement.

Acting on a tip-off, members of Rab-6 set up a checkpoint in Rautara Saitrish area of Magura Sadar around 2:50am, said Kamrul Hasan, additional superintendent of Magura police.

Spotting the suspected vehicle, they signalled it to stop. The pickup van, however, sped up and tried to flee, he added.

"Subsequently, the Rab patrol car followed it in pursuit. As it sped passed the pickup van and tried to stop it, they collided and fell off the side of the highway."

Around 500 bottles of contraband phensedyl were found on the pickup van in hidden condition following the crash, Rab claimed.

Faruq Hossain died on the spot, and Anisur Rahman and Mofidul were taken to Magura Sadar Hospital, where doctors declared them dead, according to officials.

The bodies were kept at the hospital morgue for autopsies.

Meanwhile, Namzul, the injured Rab man, was sent to Dhaka Combined Military Hospital by helicopter.

Rab data shows at least 31 members of the force have sacrificed their lives while taking action against narcotics traders, militants, and arms traders.

[Our Jhenidah correspondent contributed to this report.]

AL activist dies following factional clash in Narsingdi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

An activist of the Awami League, injured in a factional clash in Narsingdi's Raipur upazila 21 days ago, succumbed to his injuries yesterday.

With the death of Bachhu Mia, 45, of the upazila's Srinagar union, the toll rose to three in two clashes between the supporters of the union AL's President Abdul Khalek Mia and Raipura upazila Jubo League's Executive Member Shah Alam.

There is a long-standing rivalry over establishing supremacy between Mia and Alam, said Sottojit Kumar Ghush, assistant superintendent of Narsingdi police.