



POST-SIT-INS BNP weighing up options

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

As long as it faced no street confrontation, BNP saw a huge success in its recent anti-government demonstrations. But because of the way Saturday's sit-ins played out, the party high-ups are considering taking a step back from capital-centric anti-government programmes for now.

According to some senior BNP leaders, programmes like sit-ins right after a mammoth rally were called too early. They said their Saturday's demonstrations failed to meet expectations due to a lack of coordination and preparations. Also, the "aggressive and attacking" approach of the police and ruling party activists made matters worse.

Some party leaders, however, consider the sit-ins a success. According to them, the violence unleashed by the ruling Awami League activists and police has only "exposed the government's intent to tackle the opposition movement with brute force".

Against this backdrop, BNP high-ups are now reevaluating if they should press on with tougher programmes or go slow for the time being instead.

A group of senior BNP leaders said they are in favour of programmes like rallies and road marches till August 15. By that time, they need to "devise coordinated plans" and address some organisational issues to launch tougher programmes after that.

Another group of senior leaders believes that the party must go ahead with their original plan and stage tougher programmes as the government is under pressure more than ever. According to them, backing away now will only give the government a breathing space and their movement will lose momentum.

A senior BNP leader wishing not to be named told The Daily Star yesterday that instead of programmes like sit-ins, they announced rallies in different districts and cities for today.

This indicates that the party top brass have decided not to go ahead with the planned Dhaka-centric programmes for now.

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MAYHEM ON STREETS: BNP activists, top, rush towards the alleys in Matuail from the Dhaka-Chattogram highway after police fire teargas and charge truncheons on them. BNP men retaliate by attacking a police riot vehicle, bottom left, on the highway. In Gabtoli, AL activists drag a BNP supporter away after taking him away from his party's protest programme. The BNP was unable to hold its scheduled sit-in demonstration there as the area was eventually taken over by AL leaders and activists. There were clashes in Jatrabari, Gabtoli and Dholaikhal between the BNP activists and police and ruling party activists on Saturday centring the sit-in programme.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN/PRABIR DAS

Govt won't allow sit-ins, blockades

**AL to hold programmes
regularly from now on**

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE,
MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The government will allow BNP to hold programmes like rallies and processions but won't permit blockades or sit-ins that might lead to violence.

It is also thinking about imposing a ban on political programmes on weekdays, citing public sufferings.

Police sources said they learnt a lesson on Saturday and would be more alert in tackling political programmes in the coming days. The law enforcers will increase the deployment of forces and monitoring by intelligence agencies centring political programmes in future.

They will also conduct special drives to apprehend "troublemakers" and will not allow any illegal gathering on the streets, said officials, adding that there will be checkpoints in every key area of the capital.

Following clashes between police and BNP activists in the capital on Saturday, Awami League has decided to keep a tight grip on the streets and hold programmes regularly.

It, however, will not declare programmes to counter the BNP like it has been doing since December.

Party sources said AL will keep its activists ready to resist any BNP attempts to deteriorate law and order.

Speaking at a programme at Shilpakala Academy, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said law enforcers will not stand idle if anyone causes trouble in the name of agitation or assembly.

There is no problem with peaceful political programmes, but police will not allow blocking of roads, he added.

"We will allow BNP to conduct its peaceful political programme. But we will resist them if they want to create an anarchic situation and get involved in violence," AL Joint General Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim told The Daily Star.

He said, "We will take action according to the situation.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



The horror of BNP's arson violence back Says PM

UNB Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the people once again witnessed the horror of arson violence unleashed by BNP as the activists from the opposition party set fire to a number of buses during their protests.

"We again witnessed the terrible scene of arson violence unleashed by them even yesterday," she said

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

SIT-IN VIOLENCE

Cops sue over 600 BNP activists, spare AL members

STAR REPORT

Hours after clashes between BNP supporters and law enforcers, who teamed up with ruling party activists, erupted at Dhaka city entrances on Saturday, police filed at least 13 cases against 628 named BNP leaders and activists and many unnamed others till yesterday.

Awami League supporters, who were seen attacking opposition members with sticks, rods and hammers, were neither arrested nor charged.

Dhaka Metropolitan Police said it has so far arrested 149 of the accused in the cases filed with different police stations across the capital, while the rest are absconding.

Meanwhile, four other cases were filed with Savar, Ashulia and Siddhirganj police stations outside the capital, accusing 96 named BNP activists and 600 unnamed others.

Seven were arrested in Siddhirganj.

Different police stations have already produced 138 of the accused BNP activists before Dhaka courts yesterday. Of them, 28 were placed on one-day remand, while 13 were to be interrogated at the jail gate for a day.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said at least 700 people were detained in connection with Saturday's clashes, adding that anybody found innocent would be released.

As police and AL activists obstructed BNP's prescheduled sit-ins at all entry points to Dhaka, clashes erupted in Dholaikhal, Jatrabari, Matuail, Uttara and Abdullahpur, leaving scores of opposition members and at least 32 police officials injured, witnesses said.

During the clashes, police fired rubber bullets and tear gas canisters to disperse the BNP activists.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

DENGUE OUTBREAK July, deadliest month in 22 years

HELEMUL ALAM

July has turned out to be the deadliest month since the outbreak of the mosquito-borne disease in the country way back in 2000.

Dengue has claimed the lives of 200 people this month till yesterday, which is the highest number of deaths recorded in one month alone in the last 22 years.

The number of dengue deaths this month is also nearly twice that of the previous July months combined – 103.

A total of 247 dengue patients have died so far this year. Last year, it was 281, the highest number of dengue deaths

the country ever recorded. And the number of total dengue deaths over the years is 729, according to the data of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Expressing concern, experts and doctors attributed this year's unusually high death rate to delays in hospitalisation, patients getting infected multiple times, and the presence of dengue strains Den-2 and Den-3.

Tahmina Shirin, director at the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research, said when the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



Yesterday's deaths
8

New cases yesterday
2,731

Deaths this year
247

Cases this year
49,138

Deaths this July
200

Deaths in all july's
in 22 years
103

Highest deaths
in a year
281 (2022)

Highest cases in a year
1,101,354
(2019)

Deaths in first
outbreak
93 (2000)





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