

## No understanding reached behind the scenes

### Says Fakhrul binning Quader’s claim

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday dismissed claims that the government had reached “an understanding behind the scenes”.

“Why do they [the Awami League] repeatedly say that a compromise has been made behind the scenes? Because nothing [like that] has actually happened. All democratic countries in the world are asking the government to step down and hold a free and fair election,” Fakhrul said at a three-hour-long symbolic hunger strike programme in front of BNP’s Naya Paltan office.

He also said the BNP will launch

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a mass movement after Durga Puja, with demands for Khaleda Zia’s release and for the next national election under a non-party neutral government.

“With Durga Puja nearing, we don’t want any trouble as we believe in the democratic movement,” he said while accusing the ruling party of being “undemocratic”.

“The BNP is the largest political party [in the country]. It has come to power three times. Yet AL’s Obaidul Quader calls us their enemy. No democratic party does that.”

Referring to Friday’s attack on a rally of the Hindu Buddhist Christian Unity Council in Cumilla, Fakhrul alleged, “Police obstructed the peaceful protest while AL activists carried out the attack.”

Thousands of leaders and activists from the BNP joined the hunger strike programme in Naya Paltan, while its 12-party alliance, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, and other like-minded parties observed similar programmes elsewhere in the capital.

Similar programmes were also held in other metropolises and many districts across the country.

BNP’s standing committee members Nazrul Islam Khan, Abdul Moyeen Khan, Mirza Abbas, and Nagorik Oikya Convener Mahmudur Rahman Manna also spoke at the event.



Thousands of BNP leaders and activists attended a symbolic hunger strike programme, demanding a neutral government for the upcoming national election, near the party office in the capital’s Nayapaltan yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## WAR IN UKRAINE

# ‘Heated’ fighting in Avdiivka as Russia tries to ‘surround’ city

AFP, Kyiv

Kyiv reported “heated” fighting around its eastern city of Avdiivka yesterday, saying Russian forces had “not stopped assaulting” the symbolic industrial hub for days in their attempt to surround it.

Ukraine last week said Russia had stepped up assaults on the frontline city, which lies just 15 kilometres (nine miles) from Moscow-held Donetsk.

Avdiivka has been a symbol of Ukrainian resistance since 2014, after it briefly fell to Russian-backed separatists.

Russian forces now control territory to the east, north and south of Avdiivka.

“For the fifth day already, the enemy has not stopped either assaulting or shelling positions around the city,” Vitaliy Barabash, the head of the city, said on Ukrainian television.

“It is very heated, very heated,” he said of the fighting.

“They are trying to surround the city,” Barabash added, claiming that Moscow was deploying “more new forces” to the area.

He described intense battles: “There is certainly no silence there at all. Shooting battles continue, both from the north and



from the south of the city.”

Kyiv’s interior ministry said Russian shelling had “destroyed” a five-storey building in the city, saying it believed a man in his sixties was under the rubble but that it was “impossible to retrieve the body.”

It urged residents still in Avdiivka to evacuate.

Some 1,600 civilians are believed to be in the city, which had a pre-war population of 31,000.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has said Kyiv was holding its ground in Avdiivka, but Moscow claimed it had improved its positions there.

Ukraine also yesterday said that a Russian attack killed an 11-year-old boy in the eastern village of Bagatyr, also in the Donetsk region, some 80 kilometres (50 miles) west of Avdiivka.

“The boy turned 11 just two days ago,” Ukrainian police said in a statement.

## Window for Gazans to flee closes

FROM PAGE 1

Panic and fear reigned in the rubble-strewn streets of Gaza where hospitals have been overwhelmed with bloodied casualties and morgues have struggled to cope.

But with food, water, fuel and medical supplies running low because of an Israeli blockade, aid agencies are warning of an impending humanitarian crisis.

On the diplomatic front, Saudi Arabia pressed for an “immediate ceasefire”, while the United States called on China to use its regional influence to push for calm.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres described the situation in Gaza as “a dangerous new low”.

“Even wars have rules,” he added, as Israel faced accusations of collectively punishing Gazans for Hamas’s action last week.

“Civilians must be protected and also never used as shields,” Guterres said.

Israel, which has likened last week’s attacks to those on September 11, 2001 in the United States, has fired thousands of missiles at northern Gaza.

One air strike killed Ali Qadi, described as “a company commander of the Hamas ‘Nukhba’ commando force” involved in the unprecedented attack, the army said.

“Localised” raids have also taken place, as Israeli troops encircle the Gaza Strip, said army spokesman Jonathan Conricus.

“We will likely evolve into additional significant combat operations,” he added. “When we do so, remember how this started... All of this is Hamas-made.”

Some 1.1 million people – nearly half the population of 2.4 million – live in the north of Gaza, and aid agencies have said forcing them to move is an impossibility as the war rages.

Exiled Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh yesterday accused Israel of committing “war crimes” in Gaza and blocking the supply of much-needed aid.

In a letter to United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, posted on the militant group’s website, he called Israel’s cutting off

of electricity, water and fuel supplies “barbaric”.

But he ruled out any “displacement” of Gazans, including to Egypt.

Israel has vowed to destroy Hamas, which several Western governments, including the United States have proscribed as a terrorist organisation, and likened to the Islamic State group.

But it maintains that ordinary Palestinians are not their target.

Israeli military spokesman Richard Hecht urged civilians in northern Gaza not to delay in getting out, with a “window” for safe passage between 10:00am and 4:00pm.

He did not say how many days the window would remain open.

Gazans, who cannot leave the enclave as it is blockaded by both Israel and Egypt, have packed what belongings they can into bags and suitcases, to trudge through the rubble-strewn streets.

A stream of cars, trucks, three-wheeled vehicles and donkey-drawn carts joined the frantic mass movement south, all loaded with families and their belongings, mattresses, bedding and bags strapped onto the roofs of packed vehicles.

Roads in the 40-kilometre (25-mile) long territory were jammed. But putting distance between people and the bombings had not dispelled fear.

“We wake up to the killing and death under the bombs,” said Mohamed Abu Ali, who lives in Gaza.

“We don’t know where to go, where is safe. We have no food, water or electricity,” he added.

International aid agencies, including the UN and Red Cross, plus several foreign diplomats have voiced concern about the feasibility of the evacuation plan.

“We fear an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe,” said Ivan Karakashian, of the Norwegian Refugee Council.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez yesterday warned Israel that international law does not permit the kind of mass evacuation demanded by Israel in the Gaza Strip.

According to the UN, more than 1,300 buildings in Gaza have been destroyed, while local hospitals and

their exhausted staff have become overwhelmed with growing numbers of dead and injured.

“What does the world want from us?” asked one Palestinian resident, Mohamed Khaled, 43. “I am a refugee in Gaza and they want to displace me yet again?”

A potential Israeli ground invasion has also increased fears for the safety of the 150 hostages, including foreigners, that Israel said Hamas seized during its deadly rampage.

Hamas has threatened to kill the hostages one by one for every unannounced Israeli air strike.

A total of 22 have already been killed in bombardments, the militant group said, without elaborating.

Meanwhile, Egypt and Israel have agreed to let US citizens leave the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing, a US official accompanying Secretary of State Antony Blinken on a regional tour told reporters.

But it was not immediately clear when the plan would be implemented.

The Hamas attack and the war it sparked – Gaza’s fifth in 15 years – have upended Middle Eastern politics, prompting fears that the violence will spread across the volatile region.

Angry protests condemning Israel and supporting the Palestinians in Gaza took place across the Arab world on Friday.

More took place in New York on Friday night, and London yesterday, where protesters waved Palestinian flags and placards with slogans such as “Freedom for Palestine” and “End the massacre”.

Israel faces the threat of a separate confrontation with Lebanon to the north, and artillery exchanges have taken place with the Iran-backed Hezbollah group in recent days.

On Friday, a Reuters video journalist was killed and six other reporters, from AFP, Reuters and Al-Jazeera, were wounded in shelling that Lebanon blamed on Israeli forces.

Two Lebanese civilians were killed in Israeli shelling of a southern village yesterday, its mayor told AFP.

Meanwhile, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said a plan to evacuate more than one million people in a

single day was “utterly impossible to implement”.

Calls for a humanitarian corridor or an escape route for Palestinians from Gaza have drawn a blunt reaction from Arab neighbours.

Egypt, the only Arab state to share a border with Gaza, and Jordan, which is next to the Israeli-occupied West Bank, and Turkey have warned against Palestinians being forced off their land.

It reflects deep Arab fears that Israel’s latest war with Hamas in Gaza could spark a new wave of permanent displacement from the land where Palestinians want to build a future state.

## AL plans

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when the BNP was in office.

Pre-2009 photos of unpaved, dirt roads will be presented alongside recent photos of paved roads constructed during the AL rule.

Contacted, Salim Mahmud, AL information and research affairs secretary, said, “On one hand, our goal is to debunk the propaganda being spread against us. On the other hand, we are promoting the development achieved by the Awami League government.”

AL leaders believe that the BNP has successfully spread the allegations of corruption against the AL-led government, sources say, adding that that is why the AL will launch a campaign “against disinformation”. The social media campaign will turn its focus to AL nominees in the last week of December. The AL candidates’ potentials and commitment will be compared with those of their competitors.

The CRI survey also found that rural people trust Facebook posts made by lawmakers, teachers, and accounts with the blue tick.

The AL has formed committees to conduct social media campaigns in the upazilas. Content will be given to them from Dhaka.

Contacted, Tonmoy Ahmed, coordinator of the AL’s web team, said, “We have been preparing our campaigners since 2020.”

## Lioness dies at Ctg Zoo

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

A lioness died at the Chattogram Zoo in the port city’s Foy’s Lake area early yesterday

Nova, was 18 years and four months old, said Shahadat Hossain, deputy curator of the zoo.

“She had been ill for the past year, with one leg paralyzed for the last six months,” he added.

Zoo officials confirmed that the lioness had been suffering from old-age complications and had reduced her food intake.

The zoo is currently home to various animals, including lions, bears, zebras, deer, crocodiles, rhesus monkeys, fishing cats, wild cats, cheetahs, asian palm civets, large Indian civets, drung oxen, rabbits, porcupines, jackals and more.

## 2 die after house catches fire

UNB, Magura

Two people died and another suffered injuries when a fire broke out at a house at Kachubaria in Sreepur upazila, Magura around 4:00am yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Arshed Sheikh Kanu, 45, and Sabiron Begum, 40.

Kanchan Kumar, officer-in-charge of Sreepur Police Station, said the fire broke out at the house of one Alam Sheikh. It originated in the kitchen and soon spread, he said, quoting locals.

On information, a firefighting unit rushed to the spot and recovered the charred body of Sabiron.

Two neighbours of Alam Sheikh – Arshed Sheikh and Jahangir Sheikh – tried to extinguish the blaze, but both of them got electrocuted.

Later, they were taken to Sripur Upazila Health Complex, where Arshed was declared dead.

Jahangir Hossain, station leader of Sreepur Fire Service, said the fire might have originated from an electric short circuit.

## TCB starts monthly sales of subsidised essentials

BSS, Dhaka

The state-run Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) will start selling essential commodities today among one crore cardholder families across the country, including the capital, for the month of October.

The TCB launches these monthly sales, aiming to deliver edible oil, sugar, rice, lentils, and onions to beneficiaries at subsidised rates via designated dealer’s shops or trucks.

During this period, a cardholder can buy a maximum of 2 litres of soybean oil/ rice bran oil, 2kg of lentil, 5kg of rice, 1kg of sugar, and 2 kg of onion.

Soybean oil will be sold at Tk 100 per litre, sugar at Tk 70 per kg (subject to availability in some places), lentil at Tk 60 per kg, onion at Tk 35 per kg (subject to availability of imported onion only for Dhaka metropolis) and rice at Tk 30 per kg.

## India continue WC

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took the team home with ease.

Bowlers set up victory after India elected to field and Mohammed Siraj, Jasprit Bumrah, Hardik Pandya, Kuldeep Yadav, Ravindra Jadeja took two wickets each.

Pakistan were bowled out in 42.5 overs, losing eight wickets for 36 runs in 80 balls.

The total was Pakistan’s third lowest against India in the World Cup after their 173 in Sydney (1992) and 180 at Manchester (1999).

Pakistan started strongly but lost their openers before skipper Babar Azam (50) and Mohammad Rizwan (49) attempted to rebuild and hit back in their stand of 82.

Azam reached his fifty off 57 balls with a boundary but fell in the next over, bowled by Siraj as the crowd roared to see the back of the world’s number one ODI batsman.

Kuldeep Yadav soon struck twice in an over to send back the left-

handed Saud Shakeel and Iftikhar Ahmed, bowled around the legs for four after the ball deflected off the batsman’s gloves.

Bumrah denied Rizwan his fifty with a slower-off cutter that rattled the stumps as Pakistan slipped to 168-6.

Bumrah, playing in front of his home crowd, had a spring in his step and struck again in the next over to get Shadab Khan out for two before Pandya and Jadeja combined to wrap up the tail.

“You try to analyse the wicket as soon as possible so when we started bowling, we came to know that the wicket was on the slower side and a hard length would make run-scoring more difficult,” added Bumrah.

“There was no consistent turn but it was turning a little bit and I count my slower ball as a spinner so I thought it might be an option. I was trying to do that and it gripped – it was one of those days.”

## Stay away from political bias

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deputy commissioners, deputy inspectors general, superintendents of police and regional election officers at the Electoral Training Institute.

Usually, divisional commissioners and district DCs perform duties as returning officers during the polls while DIGs and SPs maintain law and order.

Habibul said it should be showed to the people that the election has been fair, voters have been able to enter the polling stations unhindered and exercise their franchise.

“If we can show this much to the people, and the voters can exercise their voting rights, it would be a great success ... not matter who takes part in it or not.”

The CEC said that the election, likely to be held in January next year, should be free, fair and acceptable.

“With your help, law and order will be maintained properly during the polls. I hope no untoward incident and violence would occur, and a peaceful election will be held,” he added.

Speaking at the event, Election Commissioner Ahsan Habib Khan said he does not like to dwell in the past. “But let’s learn from the past, let us all work together to set an example of a free and fair election.”

Another Election Commissioner Anisur Rahman said they want a free, fair, and participatory election as people from around the world are observing the election situation.