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Deployment of armed forces was necessary

Says Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said the government was compelled to deploy armed forces to protect lives and properties.

He, however, said the curfew will be relaxed when the situation becomes normal.

Quader was addressing a press briefing at the party president's Dhanmondi office.

In an ill attempt, the BNP Jamaat is trying to keep the country's people hostage using the quota movement, Quader alleged.

The AL spokesperson said criminals have gathered in the capital under the directive of BNP leader Tarique Rahman, aiming to take advantage of the quota movement.

He urged all to assist the armed forces to face the criminals and foil their evil plan. Quader hoped that the court's verdict will be acceptable by students.

Foreign minister to brief envoys today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud will brief foreign diplomats today on the current crisis that has arisen out of the quota reform movement in Bangladesh.

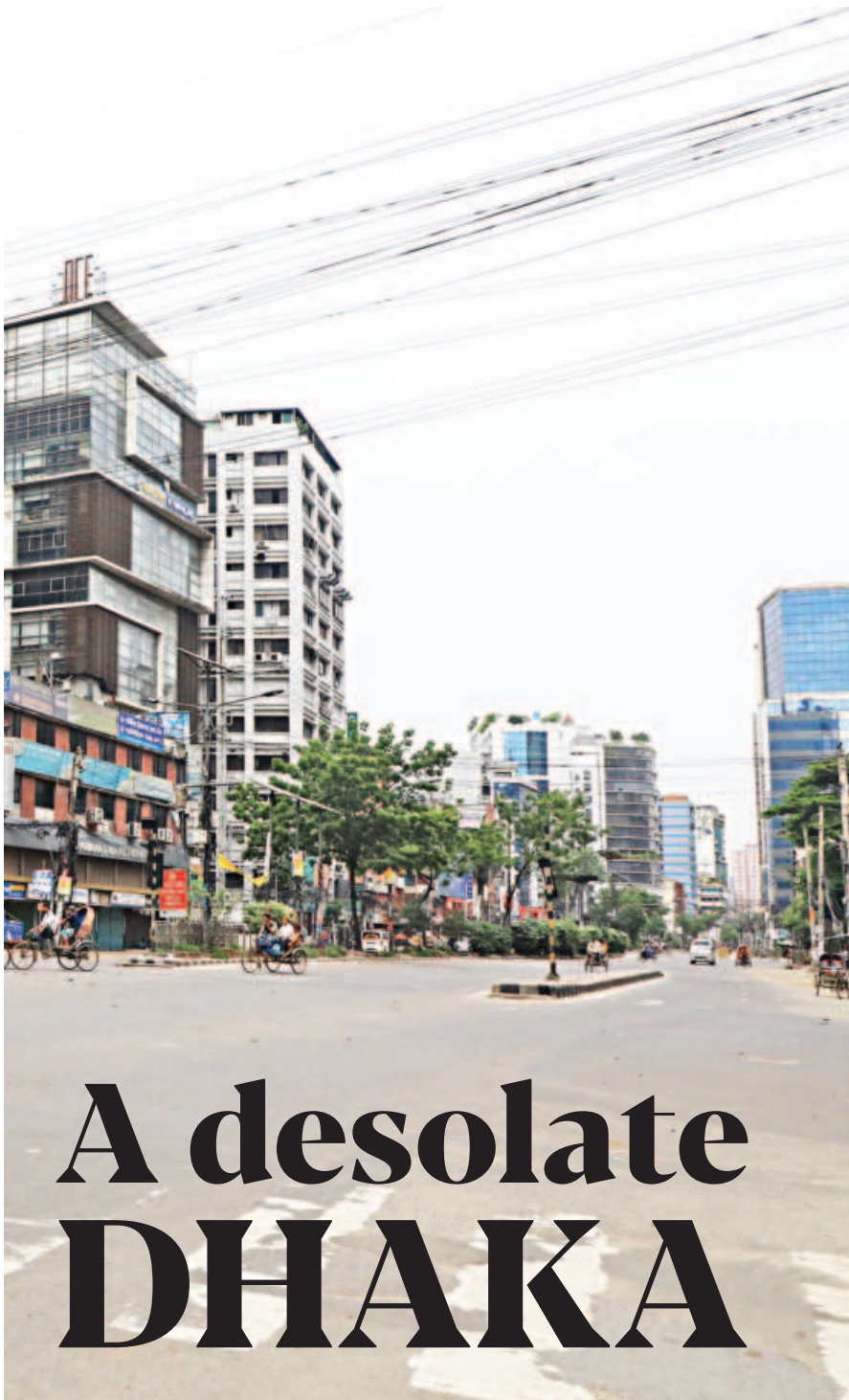
The briefing will be held at the state guesthouse Jamuna at 11:00am, he told reporters at the foreign ministry yesterday.

He also thanked the foreign embassies in Dhaka for not making any public statements on the internal affairs of Bangladesh.

Last Thursday, the foreign ministry sent a verbal note to the foreign missions in Dhaka, describing the current situation.

It said that the government has read the demands of the students who were demonstrating for reform to the quota

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A desolate DHAKA

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

All major roads and streets in Dhaka wore a deserted look amid curfew yesterday.

Apart from a few sporadic clashes between agitators and law enforcers in different areas, much of the city remained largely empty as most people chose to stay at home throughout the day.

From morning till noon, the kitchen markets, shopping malls, offices and all sorts of businesses remained completely closed. Pedestrians and vehicles were rarely noticed even on the busiest streets including Mirpur Road, Manik Mia Avenue, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, and Sat Masjid Road.

Only a few rickshaws, ambulances and some police vehicles were seen plying the capital's roads, while no public and private transports could be seen anywhere in the city.

When the curfew was lifted on 12:00pm for two hours, people rushed to shops and kitchen markets to buy essentials.

However, the panic-stricken people moved cautiously in and around their neighbourhoods even during this time, only opting for the nearest shops and bazaars, thereby causing long queues and supply shortages in the stores, leaving many compelled to return home empty handed.

The shop owners were seen keeping their shutters half open so they could close shops at any moment if needed.

Rubaya Ahmed went to buy eggs, vegetables, chicken and fish for her family. After waiting for half an hour, she could only purchase four eggs and some vegetables.

Chicken, eggs and fresh fish were out of stock in many shops.

"I walked from one shop to another but could not find chicken and fish. I managed to buy four eggs and some vegetables. The vegetables were not fresh, but I had no choice," she said.

Many customers also alleged that the shop owners were demanding higher prices for essential commodities.



Clockwise from left, an empty street in Kakrail. Teens playing cricket in Hatirpool. Piles of Garbage remain unattended in Shewrapara. People getting water from a pipe in front of Bangabhaban as Wasa water ATM booths became non-functional due to internet shutdown.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN, PRABIR DAS, RASHED SHUMON

Long queues also formed in front of mobile top-up outlets and mobile financial services (MFS) agent outlets. Amid the countrywide internet shutdown, people are heavily relying on mobile phones for communication.

However, many people could not recharge their phone balance due to poor mobile phone network, and send or receive funds through MFS agents.

Rakib Hasan, a resident of Dhanmondi, said he could not recharge his phone and hence will be unable to make any emergency call for the rest of the day.

"My family lives in another district and they are very worried about the situation in Dhaka. I need to maintain regular communication with them, but due to poor network, even communication through mobile phone has become extremely difficult," he said.

"I also regularly use MFS for financial transactions. Due to poor network and long queues at the agent outlets, I could not send or receive money for four days," Rakib added.

'How many bullets does it take to kill a person, sir?'

Grief-stricken SI asks after losing 17-year-old son in Jatrabari clash

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Moynal Hossain, a sub-inspector at Razorbagh Police Lines, and his wife were frantically running from one room to another at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, looking for their son Imam Hossain Tayeem, 17, yesterday.

"Do you know, where we can find this boy?" the couple asked everyone, showing a photograph of Tayeem.

However, even after looking for him for two hours since 5:00pm, they could not find his name on the list of the injured or deceased.

Seeing the photograph, a journalist suggested that Moynal search the emergency mortuary. The tensed father immediately took off in that direction, and found Tayeem's lifeless body there around 7:00pm.

Shell shocked, Moynal froze for a moment. His wife collapsed on the floor, wailing, "Oh almighty, who took my son? Why did you go outside without telling us, my son?"

Tayeem, a college student in Narayanganj, had left his home around 11:00am yesterday to join an agitation as part of the quota reform protests at Rayerbagh of Jatrabari, which has been a flashpoint of violent clashes for the past three days.

About an hour later, his parents got a phone call that said Tayeem was shot and being taken to DMCH.

"My youngest son had been protesting for quota reforms since the beginning. Yesterday too, he went out to the streets, defying my instruction to stay home amid the curfew," said Moynal.

Tayeem, a college student in Narayanganj, had left his house around 11:00am yesterday to join an agitation as part of the ongoing quota reform protest at Rayerbagh of Jatrabari, which has been a hotspot of violent clashes for the past three days.

After finding Tayeem's body, Moynal was heard talking to someone over phone, "Sir, my son is dead. His chest was torn apart by bullets [pellets]. Sir, my son is no more."

The aggrieved father asked, "How many bullets does it take to kill a person, sir?"

The Daily Star could not verify who was on the other side of the phone.

INTERNET SHUTDOWN

ATM services, digital banking disrupted

MD MEHEDI HASAN

Online banking, ATM and digital payment services including money transfers and utility bill payments continued to be disrupted yesterday amid the ongoing internet blackout across the country since Thursday.

Robiul Islam, who has an account with EXIM Bank, wanted to withdraw money as he urgently needed cash but failed to do so from numerous ATM booths in different areas of Dhaka.

He finally managed to withdraw money from an ATM booth of Mutual Trust Bank at Panthapath.

"Most ATM booths of different banks were shut down, while those that were open had no money," he told this correspondent.

Contacted, Mohammad Feroz Hossen, managing director of EXIM Bank, said they loaded all of their ATM booths with money before the ongoing unrest began.

While all of their ATM booths remained open since then, there is a possibility that some of the booths ran out of cash because the bank was facing difficulties to load money to the booths amid the unrest,

he added.

Faria Anjum, a student, wanted to use her bank card for buying some urgent medicines for her mother at Popular Diagnostic Centre in Shantinagar due to shortage of cash in hand.

But she was unable to do so as the POS (point of sale) machine at the diagnostic centre could not run without internet.

"There should be no problem in withdrawing cash if ATM booths have adequate funds. However, ATM booths in some areas are vulnerable to risk of attacks, so those have been kept shut as a precautionary measure," said Syed Mahbubur Rahman, managing director of Mutual Trust Bank.

Saiful Islam, executive director and spokesperson of Bangladesh Bank, said the central bank's systems were operating well and there were no problems at their end.

However, online banking transactions have not been taking place amid disruption to data services, he added.

The transfer of bandwidth was suspended to internet service providers,

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Most ATM booths of different banks were shut down, while those that were open had no money.

ROBIUL ISLAM

A bank account holder

Family's struggle to bury a loved one

Vendor dies amid violence in Banasree

ASIFUR RAHMAN and AHMED DEEPTO

"Please help! We need money to send this body to his village for funeral. Donate whatever you can."

There lied the body of Jashim Uddin, 32, on a khatia (wooden platform), covered in a white cloth.

The appeal for help came from his uncle Kala Miah, a street vendor.

These correspondents spotted him in front of a mosque in Sipahibag Bazar area of Khilgaon on Friday evening.

Jashim died when BGB and police, opened fire at protesters in Banasree area around 5:00pm on that day, claimed locals.

They brought the body to a nearby hospital where Kala Miah identified him. The body



was handed over to Kala Miah without an autopsy at 7:00pm.

From there, he brought the body to Sipahibag and started collecting funds.

"Look, I am a street vendor, so was my nephew. He used to sell chanchur (a traditional spicy snack). We were already in a tight spot due to rising costs

of essentials. On top of that, we didn't earn any money due to violence for the last three days," said Kala Miah.

"His [Jashim's] family lives in Sarail of Brahmanbaria. We need to send the body back home. But I don't have any money. So, I am collecting funds," he told these correspondents.

People, from all backgrounds and ages, were seen chipping in, donating five taka coins or ten-taka notes, up to over Tk 1,000.

Within an hour, Kala Miah managed to collect Tk 60,000 with the help of locals.

He didn't waste any time. He hired a microbus and left Dhaka with the lifeless body of his nephew.

Before leaving, he said, "Jashim has five children -- four daughters and a physically challenged son. All of them are aged between one and 12. What will happen to them?"

Jashim was sick for the last two days and couldn't earn a single penny as the whole area remained a warzone during the movement.

He was suffering from fever for a week. So, he couldn't venture out to sell chanchur.

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