

Six-point demand ‘Charter of Freedom’

Says PM in article marking the historic day

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has written an article marking the historic Six-Point Day today. Following is an abridged version of the article:

We observe June 7 as the Six-Point Day. The year 2020 has appeared as a unique year in the life of the Bangalees. This year is very important for us -- meaning the people of Bangladesh. Massive programmes were taken up to celebrate the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Not only in Bangladesh, the Bangalees around the globe had also taken preparations to this end. The Unesco had decided to observe the day, while the UN member states had taken necessary preparations too. The UN has already released a commemorative postage stamp in this regard.

When such massive preparations were going on, a pandemic emerged across the globe. An infectious disease named novel coronavirus has infected people around the world. The economic, social and cultural operations of almost all the countries have come to a stalemate. Bangladesh, too, is not free from this virus. Under the circumstances, we have suspended all kinds of activities in the areas where there can be mass gathering, considering public interest and thus observing various programmes through radio, television, and digital media.

The Father of the Nation had declared the six-point demand in 1966 which is regarded as the “Charter of Freedom” for the Bangalees. I recall with deep respect Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, show my respect to my mother Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib as she played a unique role in making the June 7 programmes successful. I remember my beloved family members who embraced martyrdom on August 15, 1975. I also pay my profound respect to the four national leaders, all the martyrs of the Liberation War and my oppressed mothers and sisters.

UNVEILING OF SIX-POINT DEMAND

At the residence of Chowdhury Mohammad Ali in Lahore, the conference of the opposition party began on February 5, 1966, with then Muslim League president Syed Mohammad Afzal in the chair. Bangabandhu placed the Six-Point Demand at a subject committee meeting. But the proposal was not adopted.

The six-point demand had proposed to give self-autonomy to every province of Pakistan. The six-point demand was passed at the working committee of Awami League. **WHY SIX-POINT DEMAND?** During the Indo-Pak war in 1965, the people of East Bengal or East Pakistan remained totally unprotected as there was no importance to the central government of Pakistan for protecting this region and East Bengal was left at the mercy of India.

After the Indo-Pak war, an agreement was signed between India and Pakistan which is also known as the Tashkent Treaty. The interest or security of East Bengal was ignored in the deal.

When the six-point demand was placed in the wake of torture and oppression by Ayub Khan, public support started to grow fast in favour of it.

Bangabandhu then started visiting the entire East Bengal. He was arrested for eight times in a span of just two months.

Bangabandhu returned to Dhaka on May 8, 1966 after joining a public rally in Narayanganj. He was arrested from his Dhanmondi residence on the same day. He was sent to jail the



following day.

Cases were filed one after another against Bangabandhu, and the party leaders and workers were also arrested during that time.

On May 13 in 1966, Awami League organised a public rally to observe the protest day and the people extended their full support to the Six-Point Demand. A hartal (strike) was called for June 7 across the East Pakistan and all-out efforts were made to make the strike a success.

My mother, Begum Fazilatunnesa, had played a special role in making the strike a success. Holding secret meetings with student leaders, she gave necessary instructions to this end.

Pakistani military junta and then president Ayub Khan bestowed the full responsibility on East Pakistan governor Monem Khan to resist this movement in any way.

But the people of Bangladesh had extended their support to the Six-Point Movement by enforcing the hartal on June 7, ignoring all the oppressions. But it was a matter of regret that police opened fire on the people without any instigation. Labour leader Monu Mian and 10 others were killed.

On June 10-11 in 1966, a meeting of the Awami League executive committee thanked students-workers and general people for lending their support to the Six-Point Demand by observing the hartal.

Different programmes, including meetings, rallies, protest processions and distribution of leaflets, were taken up to spread the autonomy movement across the country. Steps were initiated to mobilise public opinion in support of the demand.

AGARTALA CONSPIRACY CASE On January 18 in 1968, Bangabandhu was brought to the detention centre at Dhaka Kurmitola Cantonment from Dhaka Central Jail. A seditious case was filed against him, widely known as the Agartala Conspiracy Case. Bangabandhu was made the number one accused in the case.

The proceedings of the case were initiated by setting up a court inside the cantonment. Besides, the Ayub government was unleashing torture and repression on the people.

The general people spontaneously began to build resistance against the torture, oppression, and repression by the Pakistani government. They took to the streets.

On February 21, Ayub Khan was compelled to withdraw the Agartala Conspiracy Case in the face of a severe mass movement.

SUCCESS OF SIX-POINT DEMAND The Ayub government was overthrown due to the mass movement. Army chief Yahya Khan grabbed the power. Based on the Six-Point Demand, election was held on December 7 in 1970. Awami League, led by Bangabandhu, secured a majority in the election in the entire Pakistan.

On December 5 in 1970, Bangabandhu declared that the name of East Pakistan would be “Bangladesh”.

On March 7 in 1971, the Father of the Nation proclaimed, “This time the struggle is for our freedom. This time the struggle is for our independence.”

Bangabandhu called for a non-cooperation movement. The people of Bangladesh strictly observed it.

On March 25, the Pakistani military junta launched genocide. In the first hours of March 26, Bangabandhu declared the independence (of Bangladesh) and instructed all to continue the war.

After the nine-month war, Bangalees achieved the final victory. The Bangalees have got the status as a nation in the world, got the nation-state -- independent, sovereign Bangladesh.

UN extends mandate to inspect Libya-bound ships for arms

AFP, United Nations

The UN Security Council on Friday unanimously extended for a year a resolution authorizing the inspection of ships suspected of breaking a 2011 arms embargo on Libya.

The renewal had already been unanimously decided upon last year by the 15 members of the Security Council, but Russia, which backs strongman Khalifa Haftar in his fight against the UN-backed government in Tripoli, had expressed doubts in talks at the beginning of the month, diplomats said.

For the past year, there have been constant violations of the embargo on both sides of the war, making it a “farce,” one diplomat said.

The European naval Operation Irini, launched at the start of April using aerial surveillance and satellite tracking, aims to strengthen the UN resolution on controlling arms shipments to Libya.

Drafted by Germany, the resolution

“decides to extend the authorizations as set out in resolution 2473 for a further 12 months from the date of this resolution,” and requested the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council within 11 months of its adoption.

The authorization for inspections on the high seas is also linked to other resolutions, such as 2292 and 2146. The latter, which was renewed in March, aims to prevent the illegal import or export of oil to or from Libya.

After a French naval vessel recently intercepted a tanker seeking to load up at the eastern port of Tobruk without permission from Tripoli, as part of the Irini operation, Russia called for a meeting of the Security Council to demand an explanation.

Germany and France said at that session at the start of the week that Operation Irini was being carried out within the strict framework of the UN resolution.



Abdus Shahid, aged over 60, is sitting on a wall after waiting in the line for several hours to be tested for coronavirus in the capital's Mugda General Hospital. He had travelled all the way from Laxmipur. There is no separate queue for the elderly people. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Some hotspots go into total lockdown

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death rates, work on dividing the areas affected by the deadly virus into three zones -- red, yellow and green -- would go on simultaneously, said Habibur, also the chief of the health ministry's media cell

No one would be allowed to enter or exit the “red zone”. There would be restrictions on people and traffic movement in the “yellow zone”. The “green zone” will have no such restrictions, but no one from the “red zone” and the “yellow zone” will be allowed to enter the “green zone”, he said.

He, however, did not mention the name of any areas. “We will do the zoning based on recommendations of health experts.”

Habibur said they would take help also from technology experts, city corporation mayors, councillors and police.

Asked about the issue, medical scientist and educationist Dr Liaquat Ali, a member of the eight-member government expert panel formed to supervise, monitor and support the coronavirus response, stressed the need for actively engaging community members, including local ward councillors and religious leaders, civil society members, NGOs and volunteers in the effort to make it a success.

“It can't be implemented only by issuing a government order,” said Liaquat.

He said the containment zones could be implemented in rural areas as well.

The government decision came when the country is struggling to put the brakes on ever-increases coronavirus cases.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), 846 people have died of Covid-19 in the country, with 35 in 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday. With 2,635 new

cases reported, the total number hit 63,026, it said.

On June 1, a high-profile government meeting, chaired by Health Minister Zahid Maleque and attended by mayors of three cities, discussed dividing the coronavirus-hit areas in the three zones.

The suggestion mainly came from health experts after the government on May 31 relaxed a coronavirus-driven nationwide shutdown, which continued since March 26. The authorities made the decision taking the country's economy and people's livelihood into consideration.

‘THE ZONING’

The Daily Star has obtained a set of draft recommendations forwarded to the government by the eight-member expert committee.

Upon receiving the draft, the health minister gave some suggestions. The committee is expected to submit its final report within a day or two, incorporating those suggestions, a committee member said.

As per the draft recommendations, city areas would be marked as green, yellow and red zones on the basis of the number of cases detected in a ward, its population density and people's living standards. “Specific interventions will be needed to implement the containment zones,” said the member, wishing not to be named.

An area with no recorded Covid-19 case would be marked a “green zone”.

A ward area with less than 40 detected cases would be put in the “yellow zone”. If the area is densely populated and the living standard of most of the people is low, the number should be 30.

Any ward area will be put in the “red zone” if it has more than 40 cases. If population density is high, the number considered should be 30, according to the draft recommendation.

THE IMPLEMENTATION

The committee also gave a set of recommendations on how to implement the containment zones.

It said all positive cases should be identified and put in isolation centres, which could be built in local schools, colleges and community centres. The work should be done by local health officials with support from private facilities, including NGOs.

The committee also said those to be sent to the isolation centres and their family members must be provided with food and social support. Community kitchens can be set up with physical help from community organisations and financial help from government bodies.

The committee members emphasised on carrying out an effective contact tracing of all those who have come in contact with infected persons. Anyone found to be positive through contact tracing must be sent to the isolation centres as well.

Besides, they suggested setting up sample collection booths and deploying trained sample collectors to actively identify all Covid-19 cases. Local health officials with support from private facilities will carry it out, they said.

They added that local community members must be made aware of the plan for their active engagement in the process. Written and pictorial descriptions of health and hygiene instructions must be placed in visible places according to the zones.

The committee members said people should get treatment in any case and those who are extremely poor should get free ambulance services.

Other recommendations included ensuring use of masks, hand sanitizers and social, physical distancing.

Ride-hailing services not resuming soon

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guidelines, especially for motorcycle users.

It's also a hint that the BRTA would not allow any unlisted vehicles.

Although bus and other public transports hit the streets on June 1, operations of ride-sharing services are still suspended.

“We will make the final decision after getting their response,” said Lokman Hossain Mollah, director (engineering) of BRTA and also the signee of the letter.

“As per the guideline [Ride Sharing Service Guideline-2017], there is no scope to allow any unlisted vehicles under rider sharing services,” he told The Daily Star on Friday.

UBER HAS 126 ENLISTED VEHICLES, PATHAO 118

According to the BRTA letter, only 126 vehicles (15 cars and 111 motorcycles), operates under Uber, have the enlistment certificate while 118 (two cars and 116 motorcycles) runs under Pathao have the certificate.

But, according to the latest BRTA documents, a total of 20,637 vehicles operate under Uber and 20,000 under Pathao.

As per the Ride-Sharing Service Guideline-2017, each vehicle has to be enlisted with the BRTA after paying a certain amount of money.

Libya govt says offensive launched for Sirte

AFP, Tripoli

Forces loyal to Libya's UN-recognised government said they launched an offensive yesterday for slain dictator Moamer Kadhafi's hometown Sirte, as rival strongman Khalifa Haftar backed a ceasefire following a string of military setbacks.

Government of National Accord forces have repulsed a 14-month offensive against the capital Tripoli by eastern-based Haftar and are now poised to drive on eastwards taking advantage of stepped up military support from Turkey.

“The air force has carried out five strikes in the outskirts of Sirte” -- the

last major town before the traditional boundary between Libya's western Tripolitania and eastern Cyrenaica regions -- GNA spokesman Mohamad Gnounou said.

“Orders have been given to our forces to begin their advance and to systematically attack all rebel positions,” he added.

Sirte was taken by Haftar's forces virtually without a fight in January after one of Libya's myriad local militias switched sides.

Beyond Sirte lies the prize of Libya's main oil export ports, Haftar's most important strategic asset.

Some 450 kilometres (280 miles)

east of Tripoli, the town was where Kadhafi put up his last stand against NATO-backed rebel forces in 2011 and nostalgia for his ousted regime remains strong.

Haftar's forces have put a brave face on their precipitate fallback from the west, saying that it was a response to mounting international pressure for a lasting ceasefire.

“Heeding appeals from the major powers and the United Nations for a ceasefire... we pulled back 60 kilometres (40 miles) from the Greater Tripoli city limits,” the general's spokesman, Ahmad al-Mesmari, said.

Zafrullah's condition improves slightly

UNB, Dhaka

Gonoshasthaya Kendra founder Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, who tested positive for Covid-19, was given plasma therapy for the third time on Friday night when he was on regular kidney dialysis.

“It seems Sir's health has improved slightly than yesterday [Friday] as the he was taken off the ventilator this [Saturday] morning. He has been given oxygen support,” Gonoshasthaya Kendra Public Relations Officer Forhad Hossain told UNB yesterday.

He also said Zafrullah started taking normal food in the morning.

Farhad said doctors suggested the Gonoshasthaya Kendra founder undergo some medical tests to assess the improvement of his condition.

He said Zafrullah's fever has gone down, but he still has breathing problems. “He will be kept under close observation by doctors for the next two/ three days.”

Zafrullah's condition deteriorated slightly on Thursday night after he developed breathing complications.

He has been receiving treatment at Gonoshasthaya Nagar Hospital in the city's Dhanmondi area under the supervision of Brig Dr Mamun Mustafiz and Prof Dr Najib.

Zafrullah, also a freedom fighter, underwent coronavirus testing with the kit developed by Gonoshasthaya which found him to be Covid-19 positive on May 25.

Four days later, a RT-PCR test at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) also found him positive for novel coronavirus. Earlier, he was given plasma therapy twice.

DMP boss

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police chief for immediate transfer of Imam and take necessary steps regarding the issue.

Asked about the commissioner's letter, Sohul Rana, assistant inspector general of PHQ, told The Daily Star that the headquarters had not receive any correspondence from the DMP yet.

“Every organisation has some administrative issues and these issues are addressed with appropriate administrative and professional measures. The issue being discussed has not yet reached the headquarters,” he said.

“However, police headquarters will deal with the issue with due professionalism [after receiving the letter],” added the AIG.

Interest payment

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Economists argue that increased utilisation of foreign aid now in the pipeline will reduce the burden of domestic borrowing.

Foreign aid in the pipeline stands at \$48.11 billion.

World Bank's former economist in Dhaka Zahid Hussain said interest payments grew rapidly in recent years primarily because of excessive reliance on expensive National Savings Certificates (NSC).

He said, “The Tk 8,000 crore projected increase in interest payment expenditure is bigger than the wage support package of Tk 5,000 crore given to export oriented industries.”

“The best thing the government can do is to contain the growth of interest payments. The government must fully utilise the opportunities for external financing on concessional terms offered by donor agencies to help countries fight the pandemic. This will help, but not suffice since the bulk of the interest payment is for domestic debt.”

Containing the growth of interest on domestic debt requires reforms in the management of NSC debt issuance and setting interest rates, Zahid said.

“The government tightened enforcement of eligibility rules since July 2019 [for NSC buyers]. This must continue. It should now link the NSC rates with bank deposit rates,” he added.

Venezuela arrests DirecTV executives after US firm pulls out

AFP, Caracas

Venezuelan authorities have detained three DirecTV executives after the US-owned television service's decision to shut operations in the South American country due to US sanctions, their lawyer said Friday.

“I hope there is justice in this country,” Carlos Villamizar, vice president of strategy for DirecTV, told reporters before surrendering himself.

Villamizar said he was “very, very surprised,” at the warrant issued against him and his former colleagues Hector Rivero and Rodolfo Carrano.

He was accompanied by lawyer Jesus Loreto, who said the other two managers had “voluntarily surrendered” to authorities and were being held at the intelligence service headquarters in Caracas, known as El Helicoide.