

It was people's demand for freedom

PM about the historic six-point demand

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the historic Six-point Demand had emerged before the people of this part of Bengal as their demand for freedom since they had taken it as their right to live.

"The people had taken the Six-Point Demand in such a way that I don't know whether such a demand could draw so much popularity so rapidly in any country of the world. The people of Bangla had taken it as their rights to live. And it was actually that demand," she said while chairing a virtual online discussion marking the historic Six-Point Day.

The National Implementation Committee for the Celebration of the Birth Centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman organised the discussion as well as an online quiz completion with participation of the young generation.

Hasina said the people of the country not only extended support to the Six-Point Demand, they also accepted the demand of autonomy as their own.

Focusing on the context of the Six-Point Demand, Hasina said Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had placed the demand for establishing the rights of the Bangalee nation.

"It was seen the people of East Bengal meaning East Pakistan was completely unprotected during the 1965 Pakistan-India war," she said, adding that the then Pakistani rulers did not take any step to save the East Bengal.

The PM said the Pakistani rulers arrested numerous leaders and activists of the Awami League and the general people during the six-point movement.

The Father of the Nation in his "Karagarer Rojnamcha" (Jail Diary) clearly wrote how the Pakistanis unleashed torture and repression at that time, she said. But the people of Bangladesh were marching forward along the path of movements and struggles.

"With continuation of the tortures

and oppressions to suppress the movement, the people of Bangla became more conscious, more organised and more united. Of course, there was exception for some collaborators. Some collaborators are always there, which is a problem," she said.

Bangabandhu on January 18, 1968, was taken to Dhaka Cantonment from Dhaka Central Jail after his arrest and a case -- which became famous as Agartala conspiracy case -- was framed by the Pakistani rulers against Bangabandhu and 34 other civil and military officers and persons.

Bangabandhu was made the number-1 accused in the case, said Hasina, the eldest daughter of Bangabandhu.

In this case, the main charge was that Bangabandhu tried to secede East Bengal from Pakistan through an armed revolution, she mentioned.

But the people of Bangladesh burst into protest against the case. Chhatra Sangram Parishad waged movements in a united way and mass upsurge took place, she said.

Ayub Khan was compelled to withdraw the case in the face of mass movement on February 21, 1969. And Bangabandhu was released from jail on February 22, 1969, she added.

The PM said the 1970 general election was held in the backdrop of the six-point movement and Bangladesh Awami League won the election and got majority seats in entire Pakistan.

"June 7, the day the historic Six-Point Demand was placed in 1966, is very important for us as we got the independence for the Six-Point Day," she said.

Bangabandhu raised the issues of disparity and deprivation again and again, Hasina said. "Bangabandhu struggled against the deprivation and we got the independence marching along the way of his struggles."

Noted writer Prof Syed Manzoorul Islam was present as the chief discussant at the event, while Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzaque and Education Minister Dr Dipu Moni also took part in the discussion.



As sweltering heat becomes unbearable, children and some young adults play in the water of Crescent Lake in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Bangladesh MP held in Kuwait

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traffickers in Mizdah of Libya. Eleven others were also injured. The victims were on their way to Tripoli from Benghazi while heading to Europe through the Mediterranean.

Momen said Shahid, also known as Kazi Papul, has a big business firm in Kuwait. Shahid is its managing director and a Kuwaiti national its chairperson.

"His Kuwaiti partner is trying to help him with bail," Momen mentioned.

Asked what action the government would take against the MP, the minister said, "We are investigating. We will take appropriate actions after probe."

Contacted earlier in the day, Bangladesh Ambassador to Kuwait SM Abul Kalam said he was trying to learn why the MP was detained. "No human trafficking takes place from Bangladesh to Kuwait. What happens is visa trading," he said.

Meanwhile, Shahid's wife Salina Islam in a statement claimed that the information published by some news portal about her husband's arrest in Kuwait was wrong.

"My husband has not been arrested in any case. As per the rules of the country, the government of Kuwait called him to meet at its respective department or CID for discussion on his business," said Salina, also an MP from the reserve seat for women.

She urged all to refrain from "spreading misinformation".

In the latest development, a source in Kuwait said Shahid was denied bail and sent to jail.

ACC PROBE

In response to a complaint filed on February 16, Bangladesh's Anti-Corruption Commission opened an enquiry into an allegation that Shahid Islam amassed Tk 1,400 crore by trafficking people to Kuwait and siphoned off the money to different countries.

Asked, Shahid at that time said he had been in construction business for 30 years and that about 26,000 people worked in his Marafie Kuwaitia General Contracting Company. Of them, about 20,000 were from Bangladesh and the rest from different other countries, including India and Nepal.

"I don't have any businesses in

Bangladesh. I have never made any illegal transaction and have always used proper banking channels," he had said, denying his involvement with any criminal activity.

Earlier, the Kuwaiti media reported that three Bangladeshis were operating a human trafficking racket in the Middle Eastern country. On February 12, a report of the Arab Times, an English language daily, said one of the three was a "member of parliament in Bangladesh".

According to the report, the trio "occupied sensitive positions" in three major companies that brought more than 20,000 Bangladeshi workers to Kuwait in exchange for an amount believed to be more than Tk 1,391.6 crore.

Migration experts say studies found Bangladeshi migrants pay the highest amount of money to go abroad.

Even, cases filed for human trafficking rarely see conviction. According to the Police Headquarters in Bangladesh, 5,088 cases were filed under the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act-2012 between 2012 and 2019, but only 111 people were convicted.

9 local rings

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DB claimed to have found a ringleader after arresting a syndicate member from the capital's Kamalapur area on Saturday night.

During primary interrogation, the arrestee, Sujon Mia, 26, admitted to sending around 16 people to Libya over the last two years, said Shahadat Hossain, additional deputy commissioner of DB, to this newspaper.

DB arrested Sujon while investigating a human trafficking case filed with Tejgaon Police Station after 26 Bangladeshis were kidnapped and killed in Libya on May 28.

According to the First Information Report, Sujon and his syndicate members sent three people -- Esar Uddin, 25, Md Bijoy, 22, and Md Sajal, 26 -- to Libya on December 3 last year. But last month, Esar called his wife Sumaiya over cell phone and said the traffickers have confined him to a torture cell and would kill him if she did not send Tk 10 lakh to them.

The Daily Star managed to get some audio recordings from the victim's family, in which Esar was crying and shouting for help. He was saying, "Please send Tk 10 lakh, they broke both my hands and are electrocuting me."

Sumaiya's brother Mohammad Ali said they registered a complaint with the police as they were unable to contact Esar for a week after the killing took place.

Of the three who went to Libya through Sujon, only Sajal is now undergoing treatment in hospital while Bijoy and Esar remain missing, said ADC Shahadat.

"We are now trying to trace the victims using the information we got from Sujon," he added.

Regarding the trafficking system, ADC Shahadat said that after interrogating Sujon, they have learnt that the syndicate members first send migrants to UAE, where a Bangladeshi person named Afrin Ahmed, wearing a blue T-shirt, receives them.

"Afrin then sends the migrants to Amman, where another person [of unknown identity] wearing a green T-shirt receives them and sends them to Libya, where three Bangladeshis -- Sanjib, Manik and Jafor -- wearing black and white T-shirts receive them," he said.

Finally, the traffickers send the migrants to Europe by boat via Malta, the ADC said, adding that Sujon himself had gone to Libya using this route in 2017. He joined the trafficking syndicates after

coming back to Bangladesh.

Primarily, these traffickers charge Tk 4.60 lakh to send people to Libya but take an additional Tk three to four lakh before sending them to Europe, according to the official.

The Bangladeshis who receive these migrants in Libya hand them over to local gangs, who keep them in torture cells for money. They do not release the migrants until their demands are met, the official added.

Contacted, Golam Mostofa Rashel, deputy commissioner (west) of DB police, told The Daily Star that they have traced some of the syndicates while investigating.

Rashel refused to disclose further details of these syndicates as it may alert them. "We are conducting drives and are hopeful to arrest all the absconding members soon," he added.

13 ARRESTED

Different units of police have arrested around 13 people in connection with 22 cases filed across the country till yesterday, regarding the killing of the 26 Bangladeshis, according to a statement issued by the Police Headquarters.

Under the strict guidelines of the Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed, all police units, including Rapid Action Battalion, Criminal Investigation Department, Police Bureau of Investigation and Dhaka Metropolitan Police, started drives to arrest those responsible for the trafficking. The drives are still underway, reads the PHQ statement.

Earlier, in an emergency video conference with all police unit chiefs and high officials on June 1, the IGP said, "The way our countrymen were brutally killed is totally unacceptable. Bangladesh is no longer in a position in which it's people should die in such a manner."

"Those who have deceived the citizens of the country, taken them abroad, and are responsible for their miserable deaths will not be spared. Every one of these syndicates will be found and will face capital punishment in line with the law so that no one dares to play with life and lead any Bangladeshi to their death."

It is to be noted that Bangladeshis who go abroad this way usually travel to India or other countries first by using valid travel documents like passports and relevant visas. In all these cases, they left Bangladesh after showing those documents, reads the PHQ statement.

Then, in collaboration with brokers and traffickers, they migrate to the Middle East or Libya from India or other countries, it added.

Strict rules for stay at home

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Slum dwellers in the red zones or someone who suddenly lost their job will be provided with food for two weeks. Only the goods laden vehicles will be allowed to travel through the areas at night.

All offices and factories will remain closed and there will be restrictions on going to mosques too.

These and many other restrictions have been mentioned in the draft standard operating procedure (SOP) the government has prepared to curb the spread of Covid-19 in the cities.

In the yellow zones, grocery stores, pharmacies, and restaurants will remain open, but offices and factories may operate with 50 percent of their employees by informing the administration in advance. Public transport will operate with half the seats empty while rickshaws and three-wheelers will carry just one person.

The draft SOP was submitted before Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Saturday night and the cabinet division might issue a circular endorsing it in a day or two with edits suggested by the PM, officials familiar with the development said.

The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the draft SOP.

Meanwhile, local administration declared three areas in Narayanganj as red zones, and imposed lockdown for the next 15 days starting yesterday, to contain the growing number of coronavirus cases in those areas.

LACK OF PREPARATION HALTS INITIATIVE

The government originally planned to make what officials called containment zones in some areas of

Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur and Narsingdi from yesterday.

But that did not happen because the preliminary work had not been done, officials said.

There were areas under the capital's Wari and Sher-E-Bangla Nagar police stations that were to be containment zones.

Contacted yesterday, officers-in-charge of both the police stations said they had not received any directive from their high-ups regarding this.

Health ministry's medical cell chief Habibur Rahman Khan said, "There was an attempt at starting a zoning system from today. But...the background work was not complete."

"People directly involved in the process can tell you when the process will start."

Habibur, also an additional secretary of the ministry, said classifying areas as red, yellow and green zones was a time-consuming process.

Officials are also working to figure out how the restrictions will be enforced, he said.

Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Atiqul Islam, who played a key role in preparing the draft SOP, told The Daily Star last night: "We hope to start [the zoning system] within a day or two... upon getting approval from the prime minister."

The mayor said he intended to start a lockdown as soon as possible. The issue was discussed at a meeting on June 1 chaired by Health Minister Zahid Maleque and attended by mayors from three cities.

The suggestion of classifying different areas was made by health

experts after the government on May 31 relaxed the nationwide shutdown enforced on March 26.

The suggestion was then discussed at another high-level meeting this week attended by the health, home, local government and rural development ministers, and the two mayors of Dhaka.

As per the decisions, city areas will be marked as green, yellow and red zones based on the number of cases detected in a ward, its population density and people's living standard.

The eight-member government expert panel formed to supervise, monitor and support the coronavirus response prepared a draft of recommendations on the zoning system.

Areas with no recorded Covid-19 case will be marked green while those with less than 40 detected cases will be yellow. If the area is densely populated and the living standard is low, the number should be less than 30.

A ward 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 DRAFT SOP

According to the draft, there will be two committees implementing the zoning system.

A 10-member committee led by the mayor of the city will choose the zones where interventions should be urgent. The zones were identified by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Other members of the committee will be representatives from the

Country now

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The growing number of infection in Bangladesh may take the case number to around 90,000 by the mid of this month, Shafiq Shimul, an associate professor of health economics at Dhaka University, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Like other experts, he also said the number of tests is too little compared to the other countries.

So far, Bangladesh has tested 2,418 people in every million whereas the US has tested 62,924, according to www.worldometers.info.

Among the Asian countries with more cases than Bangladesh, Qatar has tested about 91,008 people for every million, India has tested 3,384 and Pakistan 3,099.

Based on the test results of 13,136 samples in 52 Covid-19 testing labs, the rate of positive cases was 20.88 percent yesterday, Dr Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) of DGHS, said during a briefing.

Meanwhile, 578 Covid-19 patients have recovered in those 24 hours, taking the total number of recoveries to 13,903 and the recovery rate to 21.14 percent.

Among the deceased, 35 were male and seven female, she said adding that 27 were from Dhaka, eight from Chattogram, two from Sylhet, two from Rajshahi, two from Khulna and the other from Mymensingh division.

Of them, 30 died in hospitals and 12 at home, the DGHS official said.

Of the deceased, one was aged between 21-30 years, seven between 31-40, nine between 41-50, seven between 51-60, 14 between 61-70, three between 71-80 and another between 91-100 years old, Nasima also said.

A total of 467 people were put in isolation during this period, she said.

CHT affairs minister

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"As he is a VIP patient, and there is no ICU and CCU in Bandarban, we sent him to Dhaka."

Civil Surgeon Aung Swi told The Daily Star last night that samples of Bir Bahadur were sent to a Cox's Bazar lab on June 4 for coronavirus tests.

The minister tested positive on Saturday, he said.

"He was admitted to the Dhaka CMH around 12:45pm," said Biswas Russel Hossain, personal secretary of the minister.

He added that the minister had no fever and only a slight cough now.

Bir Bahadur is the first minister of the country who is infected with Covid-19.

Meanwhile, ISPR in a press release said the minister was flown to Dhaka by a Bangladesh Air Force helicopter.

Anti-racism protests spread around world

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area took on a block party vibe, with music, mural painting, food trucks, and vendors selling Black Lives Matter T-shirts.

Helicopters circled overhead as some protesters danced -- but the pain which drove many in to the streets was never far below the surface, as others yelled "This ain't no party!"

Military personnel as well as police watched over the gathering. But there appeared to be fewer than on previous days, and some gave the protesters small smiles and waves as they marched by.

On the National Mall, fencing and uniformed guards blocked protesters from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial where civil rights icon Martin Luther King Jr famously delivered his "I have a dream" speech in 1963.

The protests were ignited by videos of a police officer kneeling on Floyd's neck for almost nine minutes as he pleaded for his life -- the latest unarmed black person to be killed by white law enforcement officers.

The officer, Derek Chauvin, has been charged with second-degree murder.

President Donald Trump announced in a tweet yesterday that he has ordered the National Guard to begin withdrawing from Washington, DC.

Peaceful protests swelled in other US cities on Saturday.

Tens of thousands rallied across New York City and Philadelphia, Chicago shut down the city's Lake Shore Drive to facilitate protests, and demonstrators marched in Los Angeles.

New York Mayor Bill de Blasio early yesterday lifted a curfew he had imposed on the city for nearly a week as anti-racism protests raged there and nationwide, reports AFP.

In San Francisco, thousands marched across the Golden Gate Bridge, briefly stopping traffic as they spilled into the driving lanes.

'I CAN'T GO IN'
But the demonstrations in Washington were the biggest since protests began in Minneapolis before spreading across the country and then abroad.

"Today, the pain is so raw it can be hard to keep faith," tweeted Democratic presidential hopeful Joe Biden.

A remembrance for Floyd was held Saturday in North Carolina, the state where he was born, following a memorial service in Minneapolis on Thursday.

Hundreds waited to view his coffin, some holding umbrellas against the hot sun. Some sobbed and many held cell phones high as a hearse arrived with the casket.

Floyd's sisters LaTonya and Zsa-Zsa told reporters they would not go inside.

"I can't go in, see him laying in a coffin, it would drive me crazy forever," said LaTonya through tears.

She expressed her pain at watching the footage of her brother's agonizing death.

'IT'S ABOUT TIME'

Around the world, protesters echoed the rage of American demonstrators. "It is time to burn down institutional racism," one speaker shouted through a megaphone at a hooting crowd of

thousands outside the parliament building in London.

Tens of thousands rallied in Australia and France, while in Tunisia, hundreds chanted: "We want justice! We want to breathe!"

Several thousand people massed outside the US embassy in Madrid yesterday, repeating "I cannot breathe", Floyd's last words as he was asphyxiated by the officer, and demanding racial justice.

Rome's Piazza del Popolo ("People's Plaza") also fell silent for eight minutes -- around the time Floyd was pinned down by the white police -- with thousands of people taking a knee in memory of Floyd, their fists in the air.

Back in New York, two policemen in Buffalo were charged with felony assault Saturday after they were filmed shoving a 75-year-old protester who fell, hit his head and began bleeding in one of the most widely shared videos fuelling outrage.

But there were some changes to policing as well.