

Govt failed to protect hill people: BNP

Party leaders claim they were blocked from visiting Longadu victims

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A BNP delegation was barred by the local administration from visiting the Rangamati's Longadu, alleged the party's Vice Chairperson Abdullah Al-Noman yesterday.

"Our chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia sent us to visit Longadu and to talk to the arson attack victims. She sent Tk 5 lakh for the victims. But the local administration prevented us from going there citing security reasons," Noman said at a press conference at the BNP office in Rangamati yesterday morning.

He also said that the government failed to protect the indigenous people in Longadu and demanded exemplary punishment for the culprits through a judicial probe.

The five-member delegation comprised of BNP central committee leaders.

Asked, Rangamati Deputy Commissioner Manzarul Mannan denied BNP's allegations.

BNP leaders Sukomol Barua, Mahbubur Rahman Shamim, Nazim Uddin, Dipen Dewan, Manish Dewan, Shah Alam, Dipon Talukder, Saiful Islam Poinir among others spoke at the press conference.

Meanwhile, Hill Women's Federation, Pahari Chhatra Parishad and Gonotantrik Jubo Forum in Chittagong city demanded a judicial probe into the arson attack at three villages in Longadu, reports our staff correspondent in Chittagong.

They also slammed the role of law enforcers during the attack and marched in a procession from Chittagong Shaheed Minar to Chittagong Press Club and held a rally at Cheragi intersection.

Leaders of the organisations Shuvo Chakma, Sunayan Chakma, and Monti Chakma among others spoke at the rally.

On June 2, Bangalee settlers unleashed a series of arson attacks on the indigenous community in three villages -- Titula, Manikjorchora and Baittapara -- of Longadu over the death of Nayan, a local Jubo League leader.

Over 200 homes and shops were vandalised and burned after they were looted. Later, almost all the indigenous families fled to nearby jungles and villages.

Self-navigating

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Nikkei Asian Review.

The smart ships would also predict onboard malfunctions and other troubles, which would help in avoiding maritime accidents. In addition, the parties aim to implement fully unmanned shipping at some point down the road, hoping to halve the present count of roughly 2,000 maritime accidents per year.

Participating shipbuilders such as Japan Marine United will include the self-navigating system in new ship models, of which they plan to build around 250.

The collaboration between ship-pers and shipbuilders is intended to help Japan take the lead in developing a technology for which demand worldwide is expected to grow.

The partnership would also increase the volume of data to be gathered, potentially speeding up development.

BNP blames

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Rizvi criticised Finance Minister AMA Muhih for his "rigid" stance on excise duty on bank deposits and 15 percent uniform VAT.

"The government and its ministers are making a mockery with people over excise duty and 15 percent uniform VAT after losing their political sense," he said.

Claiming that there is no existence of excise duty on bank deposits across the world, Rizvi said, "Tk 800 will be deducted if anyone keeps Tk 1 lakh in any bank. Service charge will also be added to this."

He said the government "created loopholes" in the national budget by imposing excise duty and increasing 15 percent uniform VAT, which would badly affect the common people.

The BNP leader also alleged that the government was involved in massive corruption.

Indian soldiers kill 5 rebels in Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar

Indian soldiers yesterday killed five suspected rebels in a shoot-out near the de facto border that divides disputed Kashmir with Pakistan, the army said.

Troops deployed along the heavily militarised frontier known as the Line of Control shot and killed the suspected fighters when they tried to cross into Indian-administered Kashmir.

An operation to counter the infiltration bid was still underway in Uri, some 100 km northwest of the summer capital of Kashmir, the army said in a statement.

UK vote sparks uncertain outlook for financial sector

AFP, London

Financial markets dislike uncertainty but were handed a hugely clouded outlook yesterday after the Conservative party of Prime Minister Theresa May lost its parliamentary majority in Britain's snap general election.

Traders and analysts in the City of London financial district spoke about feeling jaded, not just because they were up all night awaiting the results but because the UK's second shock election result in a year throws the nature of Brexit talks into yet more doubt.

The initial reaction to the general election outcome has been to send the pound plunging.

However this propelled the London stock market higher as a weaker pound boosts the FTSE 100's numerous multi-

national companies that earn in currencies other than sterling.

"Everyone is a bit tired," said Neil Wilson, senior market analyst at trading group ETX Capital.

"There are a lot of uncertainties," he told AFP from his company's offices soon after the start of London trading.

While the Conservative party came first, it lost its parliamentary majority, and is now set to secure the support of Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and its 10 seats to push it over the line.

May called the election in April in an attempt to extend her majority and strengthen her Brexit-negotiating position, but her gamble backfired spectacularly, triggering fresh concern for the financial sector and businesses.

"The City of London would wish to see an effective and secure government

formed as soon as possible," said Catherine McGuinness, the body's policy chairman.

"Markets do not like instability. It is also important for the prospect of successful Brexit negotiations that we have certainty in the political system," she added in a statement.

Leftist opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn, whose Labour party surged from 20 points behind in the opinion polls, has told May to quit after she "lost votes, lost support and lost confidence".

"I think Corbyn was underestimated massively," Kevin Hector, a fifty-year-old worker at Swiss bank UBS, told AFP yesterday. "The question now is Theresa May's future obviously, it looks like rejection of a hard Brexit."

A so-called "hard" Brexit would see Britain's departure from the single market or tariff-free zone, while also ending the free movement of people.

Call to protect society

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secular society and prevent the rise of radical groups.

Nothing can be achieved without waging a movement, he said.

Prof Muhammed Zafar Iqbal of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology said insolvent parents send their children to Qawmi madrasas as those provide free education and residential facilities.

Iqbal, also a noted writer, underscored the need for providing people with authentic information to make them aware of militancy and radicalism.

Sarwar Ali, trustee of the Liberation War Museum, said all problems were rooted in the radical explanation of religion and its use in politics.

"Use of religion in politics is tainting both religion and politics," he added.

Prof Anwar Hossain, former vice chancellor of Jahangirnagar University, called for holding elections to student unions at universities to

build a progressive nation.

Language Movement veteran Ahmad Rafique said hate attacks on the houses of religious minority people in Ramu of Cox's Bazar and Nasirnagar of Brahmanbaria as well as arson in Santal houses in Gaibandha's Gobindaganj prove that Bangladesh is "not a non-communal country".

Many people might take the murder of Tonu as a stray incident, but in fact it was not, he said.

"So many incidents, including those of violence against women, are taking place. The society has turned out to be one without protests."

Rights activist Khushi Kabir alleged that wrong interpretation of religion was being given to make communal provocations in the society.

Progressive forces should find out ways to reach out to people as many still believe that changes can be made in the society, she said.

Prof Abul Kashem Fazlul Haque of Dhaka University urged all to reach a national consensus to prevent the rise

of Islamist groups like Hefajat.

Cultural personality Lubna Marium said there should be a progressive political movement to rebuild the society. She called for finding out the reasons behind choosing the path of militancy by youths.

Reading out a written statement, journalist Julfikar Ali Manik, a key organiser of Sanglaptutra, said some people in the previous years used muscle power and carried out physical attacks to counter arguments instead of taking part in creative debates.

He said religious fanaticism of Hefajat, militant attacks and threats of physical attacks by some vested groups were part of a series of efforts to curb the freedom of speech.

Eminent jurist Barrister Amirul Islam, economist Prof Kazi Kholiquzzaman, architect Shamsul Wares, Prof Salimullah Khan, Prof Sadeka Halim, Ain o Salish Kendra Executive Director Sheepra Hafiza and Prof Mahfuza Khanam, among others, spoke at the discussion.

Tigers clinch famous win

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of the fantastic five -- Shakib Al Hasan and Mahmudullah Riyad. The problem with Shakib is that he does not curb his attacking instinct in whatever situation his team is in. Mahmudullah had just hit some sort of form in the Ireland tri-series but could not still be the sitting duck that he was in New Zealand against pace earlier this year.

But sit tight. The tournament, which has so far been dogged by rain, has already got underway with two spectacular results. Pakistan beat top-ranked South Africa and Sri Lanka chased down India's imposing 321 in some style over the last couple of days.

So the caravan needed continuity and something more special. It was really something special that Shakib and Mahmudullah delivered after that opening burst from the Kiwi pace bowlers. Shakib scored an imperious 114 and Mahmudullah struck a magnificent 102 not out as Bangladesh eclipsed the Black Caps' 265, which nobody believed could be possible after that early mayhem.

The fifth wicket partnership of 224 runs between the left-right combination was something heavenly in the context of Bangladesh cricket and something extraordinary in the context of world cricket. It was the highest partnership for any wicket in the

annals of Bangladesh's ODI history and the second highest in the Champions Trophy.

But who cares for stats. It's a partnership the 6000-odd Bangladesh fans in green will remember as long as they live. And, would you believe it, the partnership did not have a single blemish? Shakib is always regarded as a special breed and his authoritative innings -- mixed with caution and aggression -- was a truly special one. The southpaw showed signs of hitting form against Australia on June 5 before his innings was cut short by an injudicious call from umpire Nigel Llong.

Yesterday, he did not allow any delivery to hit his pads. It was only on 99 when he became ultra aggressive. Mahmudullah on the other hand was as cool as ice. The right-hander also showed that he was no longer a sitting duck against short-pitched deliveries.

They way they complemented each other in that magnificent stand appeared as if they wanted their scores to stayed in synchrony. They reached their 90s almost at the same time, strolled through their 90s also at the same pace. They were actually tied on 98, before Shakib took a single and completed his seventh one-day century and probably the most memorable with a six over long-leg. It was a top-edge off James Milne. Shakib was

in murderous mood after completing his ton off 111 balls.

That six left Bangladesh needing another 17 runs off 24 balls. Shakib was in a hurry to finish the chase -- hitting Trent Boult for consecutive boundaries. He lofted the first one over mid-off and the next one through the covers. Thankfully he did not connect the next ball -- he was bowled -- because the way he was going about his business it would have denied Mahmudullah a deserved century.

When Shakib departed, Bangladesh needed nine runs off 21 deliveries. Mosaddek Hossain dabbled a couple followed by a single down to third man, which allowed Mahmudullah to complete his century. He did it in style, pulling a Boult short ball down to the square-leg boundary for four.

Two runs off 18 balls. It was time to bask in a memorable victory, and the celebration started in Cardiff and all the way to Bangladesh when Mosaddek steered the second ball from Milne to the third man boundary for four. Bangladesh posted 268 for five and won the game by five wickets with 16 balls to spare.

Will this win guarantee Bangladesh's place in the semifinals. Will England be able to beat Australia today? Let's forget about the future. Let's celebrate a magnificent victory fashioned by two magnificent Tigers -- Shakib and Mahmudullah.

Twin trouble

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of Statistics (BBS) provisional estimate.

The real estate sector has also expanded this fiscal year, spurred by recovery in demand for homes among urban middle class following reduction in property prices and interests on home loans.

"If prices of apartments go up following [implementation of] the new VAT, many people will be discouraged [to buy them] and the sector will go down again," said Alamgir Shamsul Alamin, president of Real Estate and Housing Association of Bangladesh (REHAB).

Prices of flat are likely to increase by Tk 500-1000 per square foot, he said, adding that they had been demanding reduction in registration fees for flats for the last several months. But, the government took tax measures, instead of meeting the demand.

"On one hand, the government promises to ensure home for all by 2021 and on the other, it takes budgetary measures to discourage housing. This is contradictory," he said.

Toufiq M Seraj, managing director of Sheltech (Pvt) Ltd, a real estate company, said the new VAT system would put an extreme adverse impact on the real estate sector.

"Apartment sale will tumble. The government's revenue collection will also go down," he said, adding that

employment and other ancillary industries related with the real estate sector would be affected too.

Steel millers and brick kiln owners also fear negative impact on their business owing to a fall in demand, resulting from higher prices due to the 15 percent VAT implementation.

Currently, the VAT on per tonne of rod, costing Tk 50,000, is Tk 900. A 15 percent VAT means another Tk 7,500, said SK Masadul Alam Masud, former president of Bangladesh Auto Rolling and Steel Mills Association.

"Our production cost will also rise...This will create a huge negative impact on the construction sector, particularly in the private sector in both rural and urban areas."

Now, 50-55 lakh tonnes of rod are used annually in the country, up from 35-40 lakh tonnes five years ago, said Masud. "We have increased our production capacity to meet the growing demand."

Citing slump in demand in 2008 after prices hit up to Tk 75,000 per tonne, he said, "It took years for us to recover [from the situation]. And now we are ahead of a new challenge. We are not taking the price hike positively as higher prices cut off demand."

Prices of each piece of brick will also go up by Tk 1 for imposition of the single VAT rate, said BN Dulal, general secretary of Bangladesh Auto Brick Manufacturers Association.

Defiant May

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She had set out a plan for a "hard Brexit", with Britain severing almost all ties with the European Union. Instead, voters preferred the "softer Brexit" proposed by Labour under Jeremy Corbyn, or the "no Brexit" line touted by the Liberal Democrats, still fighting the cause for Remain.

However, a defiant May vowed to form a new government to lead Britain out of the EU despite losing her majority and facing calls to resign.

"What the country needs more than ever is certainty," May said after the shock outcome of Thursday's vote.

Although winning the most seats, her centre-right party lost its majority in parliament, meaning it will now rely on support from Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP).

Sterling plunged against the dollar and the euro yesterday as the election result created even more uncertainty over the whole Brexit process.

But May vowed to "fulfil the promise of Brexit", in a statement outside her Downing Street office after seeking permission from the head of state Queen Elizabeth II to form a new government.

"I have just been to see Her Majesty the Queen and I will now form a government -- a government that can provide certainty and lead Britain forward at this critical time for our country," she said after returning from Buckingham Palace to her Downing Street office.

She also said, "It is clear that only the Conservative and Unionist Party has the legitimacy and ability to provide that."

"This will allow us to come together as a country and channel our energies towards a successful Brexit deal."

She also confirmed she would keep her senior ministers in the same posts, according to AFP.

May made no reference to her party's damaging losses, leading the Evening Standard, edited by former Tory finance minister George Osborne, to splash the front-page headline "Queen of Denial".

'LOST CONFIDENCE'
Corbyn, whose Labour party surged from 20 points behind in the opinion polls, told May to quit, saying she had "lost votes, lost support and lost confidence".

Labour has picked up the support of two crucial groups of voters: Leave supporters in the north of England who at the 2015 election had backed the anti-EU party Ukip, and Remain voters in the south of England who switched from both Conservatives apparently in protest at Brexit.

Barely a month ago, Corbyn's centre-left party seemed doomed to lose the election, plagued by internal divisions over its direction under the veteran socialist.

But May's botched announcement of a reform in funding for elderly care, plus a strong grassroots campaign by Corbyn which energised the youth vote, gave him momentum.

With all but one constituency declared, the Conservatives won 318 seats -- short of the 326 needed for an overall majority and down from 331 at the 2015 election -- while Labour was on 261, up from 229.

May, a 60-year-old vicar's daughter, is facing questions over her judgement in calling the election three years early and throwing away her party's slim but stable working majority of 17.

She has faced calls to quit from within her own party, with Anna

Soubry saying she should consider her position after a "disastrous" campaign.

However, other MPs have urged her to stay on, with Iain Duncan Smith saying a leadership contest would be a "catastrophe".

Labour said they were the "real winners" while the Lib Dems said May should be "ashamed" of carrying on.

The Conservatives and the pro-Brexit DUP are expected to team up on a vote-by-vote basis rather than enter a formal alliance after the result left Britain with a hung parliament.

DUP leader Arlene Foster confirmed that she had spoken to May and that they would speak further to "explore how it may be possible to bring stability to this nation at this time of great challenge", writes BBC.

While always striving for the "best deal" for Northern Ireland and its people, she said her party would always have the best interests of the UK at heart.

With the London seat of Kensington yet to declare, the SNP won 35 and the Lib Dems 12. The DUP won 10 seats.

As it stands, the Tories and the DUP would have 328 MPs in the Commons, giving it a wafer-thin majority although as Sinn Fein will not be taking its seven seats, the new administration will have slightly more room for manoeuvre.

The Conservatives have argued in the event of a hung Parliament, May gets the opportunity to form a government first, as her predecessor David Cameron did in 2010 when there was also no clear winner but the party had comfortably more seats than their nearest rival.

Labour has said it is also ready to form a minority government of its own, after far exceeding expectations by picking up 29 seats in England, Wales and Scotland.

But even if it joined together in a so-called progressive alliance with the SNP, Lib Dems, Green Party and Plaid Cymru, it would only reach 313 seats -- well short of the 326 figure needed.

'MAYHEM'
The result is "exactly the opposite of why she held the election and she then has to go and negotiate Brexit in that weakened position", said Professor Tony Travers of the London School of Economics university.

Newspapers reflected the political tumult, with headlines such as "Britain on a knife edge", "Mayhem" and "Hanging by a thread".

In a night that redrew the political landscape once again, the UK Independence Party (UKIP) lost millions of voters, triggering the resignation of leader Paul Nuttall.

The Scottish National Party of First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, which has dominated politics north of the border for a decade and called for a new independence vote after Brexit, lost 21 of the 56 seats it won in 2015.

Sturgeon said the result showed that "the reckless Tory pursuit of a 'hard Brexit' must now be abandoned."

May, who took over after the June 2016 Brexit referendum, began the formal two-year process of leaving the EU on March 29, promising to take Britain out of the single market and cut immigration.

Officials in Brussels were hopeful the election would allow her to make compromises, but this has been thrown into question by the prospect of a hung parliament.

"It creates another layer of uncertainty ahead of the Brexit negotiations," said Craig Erlam, senior market analyst at OANDA currency traders.

Tragic

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Police recovered the bodies from Rehena's house around 2:00am and sent those to Dhaka Medical College (DMC) for autopsies.

Mahbub-e-Khuda, officer-in-charge of Turag Police Station, said Rehena's body was hanging from the ceiling fan of a room and the bodies of her children were on a bed, with their necks tied with separate scarfs.

According to neighbours, Rehena's husband Mostafa Kamal used to work for a buying house in Chittagong and was also involved in a multi-level marketing business. Recently he became unemployed and was facing a financial crisis.

Talking to reporters at the DMC, Mostafa said two influential men, who had taken Tk 50 lakh from him to invest the amount in a multi-level marketing business, were not repaying the money. Instead, they were threatening him.

He suspected the two might have been behind the deaths of his wife and children. He, however, didn't disclose the two names.

Mostafa returned home around 12:15am and found the room locked from inside. He extended his hand through a window to the cleat of the door and managed to open it, only to find the four dead, neighbours told The Daily Star quoting Mostafa as saying.

Sharif Khan, who lives next to Mostafa's room, said he heard Shanta complaining about food during iftar on Thursday.

Mostafa's family lived in three rooms and his mother and sister in three others. Ten more rooms on the plot were rented out to tenants, said neighbours.

Rehena's cousin Nur Hossain said Mostafa and Rehena used to collect rent from tenants, but Mostafa's mother and a sister took over off late. The couple was also asked to leave the house.

Kafil Uddin, a neighbour of the victims, said he heard Mostafa screaming around 12:30am yesterday. Sooh went to the room and found the four dead.

Mostafa with the help of several others got the hanging body down.

Autopsies were carried out on the four bodies at the DMC. Sohel Mahmud, chief of the forensic medicine department at the medical college, said three children were strangled to death.

The reason for their mother's death would be ascertained after examining some tissues of her body, he added.

OC Mahbub said they would investigate further to find out the reason for the deaths. "We are looking into all the aspects, including a land dispute, multi-level marketing business and financial crisis."

He said Rehena's brother Shamsur Rahman filed a murder case, accusing Mostafa and his sister Kohinur.

Man killed

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At one stage, family members of Al-Amin including his sister, brother and others managed to snatch Al-Amin from the police. The law enforcers in self-defence opened fire on the attackers, the official said.

On information, additional force from Savar rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Ismail who was the main aide of Al-Amin received a bullet and died on way to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. His body was kept in the hospital morgue.

All five policemen were injured during the attack and were undergoing treatment at Enam Medical College Hospital, said the police.