

Netanyahu mocked over party ‘loyalty pledge’

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday faced harsh criticism and mockery by election rivals and a former cabinet colleague after members of his Likud party were asked to pledge support for his leadership.

The request for Likud politicians to pledge to support Netanyahu as prime minister after September 17 elections came with rivals in the opposition calling on members of his party to ditch him.

His opponents went as far as to accuse Netanyahu of engaging in “North Korea”-like tactics due to what some were labelling a loyalty pledge.

The veteran premier is engaged in a tough re-election campaign while facing the possibility of being indicted for corruption in the months ahead.

He failed to form a governing coalition after April polls despite his Likud along with its right-wing and religious allies winning a majority of seats.

The main opposition Blue and White alliance has called on Likud to abandon Netanyahu and form a unity government with them.

At the weekend, former defence minister Avigdor Lieberman, of the hardline Yisrael Beitenu party, warned that the next vote has to produce a government, and if Netanyahu cannot do the job another Likud MP should step forward.

With Likud accusing Lieberman of trying to encourage rebels, Netanyahu loyalist David Bitan on Sunday enlisted the top 40 party candidates to sign up to a document saying that they would support only Netanyahu in a the next coalition-building attempt.

India scraps

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Indians to invest and settle there, just as they can elsewhere in India, although the measure is likely to provoke a backlash in the region.

Pakistan’s foreign ministry condemned the move as “illegal”.

“As the party to this international dispute, Pakistan will exercise all possible options to counter the illegal steps,” it said in a statement.

A senior Pakistani security source said that a meeting of the Pakistani military’s top commanders had been called for today.

Kashmir has been divided between Indian and Pakistan since their independence in 1947.

For three decades the Indian-administered part has been in the grip of an insurgency that has left tens of thousands dead.

Armed Kashmiri rebels and many residents have fought for the region’s independence or to join neighbour Pakistan.

There were already growing fears among Kashmiris that the special status would be ditched after Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) obtained a large parliamentary majority in recent elections.

His party had vowed to fulfil a long-held promise to scrap the laws, and many fear New Delhi wants to change the region’s demographics by allowing non-Kashmiris, mostly Hindus, to buy land locally.

The move is set to exacerbate the already bloody rebellion in Kashmir and deepen the long-running animosity with nuclear rival Pakistan which has fought two out of three wars with India over the territory.

“There will a very strong reaction in Kashmir. It’s already in a state of unrest and this will only make it worse,” Wajahat Habibullah, a former senior bureaucrat in Jammu and Kashmir, told AFP.

DARKEST DAY FOR DEMOCRACY

The announcement sparked chaotic scenes in the national parliament, and the main opposition Congress party described it as a “catastrophic step”.

One lawmaker from the regional Kashmir-based Peoples Democratic Party tore up a copy of the Indian constitution before being reportedly removed from the chambers by parliamentary marshals.

Condemning what she described as Indian democracy’s “darkest day”, former Kashmir chief minister Mehbooba Mufti tweeted that Delhi’s move was illegal and

WHAT IS ARTICLE 370?

Article 370 gave Jammu and Kashmir state a special position in India’s union. The provision gave Kashmir’s assembly the power to vet national laws passed by New Delhi. It also gave the state a separate constitution and a flag. Under the provision, Indians outside the state were blocked from permanently settling, buying land, holding local government jobs and securing education scholarships. Under the changed status, the region will now be governed by the laws applicable to other Indian citizens.

Myanmar army’s

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“These numbers really are the tip of the iceberg,” investigator Christopher Sidoti said.

Two main military-owned conglomerates -- Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL) and Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC) -- as well as numerous subsidiaries and “crony companies” have interests in everything from jade and ruby mining to real estate and tourism.

The military also controls two large banks.

But the companies do not release full financial results to the public, shielding themselves from public scrutiny.

The UN probe argued the army’s “business empire” allows it to evade accountability and oversight.

The 111-page report also detailed how dozens of private companies donated more than \$10 million to the military amid operations against the Rohingya.

They later helped finance development projects, assisting the military to “erase evidence of Rohingya belonging to Myanmar”.

unconstitutional, and would make India “an occupational force” in the state.

The announcement follows days of uncertainty in the region that began on Friday when New Delhi ordered tourists and Hindu pilgrims to leave “immediately”.

All phones, internet services and cable networks in the restive Himalayan region of more than seven million people were cut at midnight, and only residents issued with a curfew pass were allowed on the streets.

Article 370 of the Indian constitution gave special status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

It limited the power of the Indian parliament to impose laws in the state, apart from matters of defence, foreign affairs and communications.

MUSCULAR APPROACH

Yesterday’s move reflects Modi’s muscular approach to national security. In February, he ordered war planes into Pakistan after a militant group based there claimed responsibility for a deadly attack on a military convoy in Kashmir.

That step, in turn, prompted a retaliatory raid by Pakistan.

Introduced decades ago, the constitutional provisions reserved government jobs and college places for Kashmir’s residents, among other limits aiming to keep people from other parts of the country from overrunning the state, reported Reuters.

The government has also decided to split the state into two federal territories, one formed by Jammu and Kashmir, and the other consisting of the enclave of Ladakh, citing internal security considerations.

India’s interior ministry ordered all states to put security forces on “maximum alert” to maintain public order and quash the spread of any rumours.

Ram Madhav, general secretary of Modi’s BJP, hailed the government’s actions as ushering in a “glorious day”. In Modi’s western home state of Gujarat, people shouted slogans of support on the streets.

In Pakistani-controlled areas of the region, however, there was anger at India, with protests extending to the capital, Islamabad and the southern commercial centre of Karachi.

In Muzaffarabad, 45 km (28 miles) from the two countries’ contested border, dozens of protesters held black flags and burnt car tyres, chanting “Down with India”.

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Sidoti said he found it shocking that so many firms contributed.

“It’s not as though businesses didn’t know what was going on. They did,” he said.

The report demanded criminal investigations into these companies and urged for a complete ban on arms sales to Myanmar.

Watchdog Global Witness called the report a rallying cry.

“Global governments and companies who find themselves connected to a military company can therefore no longer plead ignorance,” said campaign leader Paul Donowitz.

A spokesman for Myanmar’s military said he was unable to comment.

The report comes after the US announced a travel ban on Myanmar’s army chief last month, the strongest censure yet from a Western power since the Rohingya crisis.

The military remains politically powerful in the country despite a transition to democratic rule launched in 2011.

It still controls a quarter of parliament and three key ministries, including defence.



Dengue patients overwhelm this ward at Mughda Medical College and Hospital in the capital. Only a few of them could manage beds while most are receiving treatment, lying on the floor.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Aedes sources need to be wiped out

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Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), told The Daily Star.

“We need microlevel approach to contain the dengue disease. And community involvement is a must. If mass people do not take part in the process and do not become aware, the situation will not be normal,” he added.

Aedes mosquitoes, which carry dengue virus, cannot fly more than 300 metres on an average, but they can reach far away by taking shelter in buses or other vehicles.

In urban and semi-urban areas, gutters, old tyres, plastic containers and refuse -- in short, any items that have become water receptacles in close proximity to households -- make excellent hatcheries for dengue-carrying mosquito larvae.

So, experts say, urban waste management, especially tackling the plastic pollution, is one of the major challenges in fight against dengue.

Surveys carried out by Directorate General of Health Services, have found that plastic buckets, plastic drums and under construction buildings are the key breeding grounds for Aedes.

“Basically, clean water remains stagnant in plastic tyres, drums and even in single-use plastics. We have found that plastic is one of the major sources of vector borne diseases,” said

DGHS chief Abul Kalam Azad.

A research paper titled “Dengue Situation in Bangladesh: An Epidemiological Shift in terms of Morbidity and Mortality” was published in Canadian Journal of Infectious Disease and Medical Microbiology early this year.

It said that in 2016 pre-monsoon Aedes survey found that the most common outdoor habitats of Aedes vectors were plastic buckets (13%), plastic drum (11%), and clay pots (7%).

It also said the most productive wet indoor habitats of Aedes vectors were plastic drums (15%), buckets (15%), flower tubs and trays (2%), and water tanks (0.77%).

“We may conclude from the findings of our survey that the dengue vectors are present in the domestic and outdoor environment throughout the year in Bangladesh,” the report said.

Dr Sanya Tahmina, director of disease control at the DGHS, who was involved with the study, said, “Plastic is one of the big sources of mosquito breeding and incubation.

“We got the same trend in the following years. This year we found under-construction buildings to be another big source.”

She said at least once a week plastics and other containers where

clean water gets stagnant should be removed. It doesn’t matter who will be doing it -- the city corporation, community-based organisations or volunteers.

“If we fail to do so, all the efforts will go in vain and sprays alone will not yield any result.”

A senior entomologist of WHO is now in Bangladesh and giving advice to the government on controlling Dengue.

The expert suggested using granular temephos to treat vector-infested water instead of the liquid one as the granules remain effective for 21 days while the liquid remains effective less than a week, said DGHS chief.

According to the World Health Organisation, the main methods to control or prevent the transmission of dengue virus include preventing mosquitoes from accessing egg-laying habitats by environmental management and disposing solid waste properly.

It also says mosquitoes should be combatted by applying appropriate insecticides to water storage outdoor containers and improving community participation and mobilisation.

Active monitoring and surveillance of vectors should be carried out to determine effectiveness of control interventions, it added.

Most were infected for second time

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and patients, ... and if these signs are seen in any patient, then we assume the patient will go into a critical phase within two or three hours,” he said.

A patient may go into less severe or severe shock in that critical phase, Nazmul said, adding that a dengue patient who seeks medical attention late and then goes into shock has reduced chances of survival.

“But if a patient is admitted to hospital just after the warning signs appear, and is treated properly, then the patient going into the critical phase could be averted,” he said.

Pregnant women, children, old people, people with high blood pressure, diabetes, kidney or liver issues have higher risk and they should be hospitalised in the initial stage of the fever, he suggested.

RECORD ADMISSION

The number of dengue cases reported in a single day set a new record yesterday with 2,096 new cases in 24 hours since 8:00am on Sunday.

Two people died after being diagnosed with dengue yesterday, raising the unofficial death toll to 59.

According to a DGHS report, 27,437 people have been infected with the mosquito-borne disease until yesterday, the highest ever in the

country.

Last year the number was 10,148.

In Madaripur, a man suffering from dengue died in Rajarchar village under Shibchar upazila around 12:30am yesterday.

Ripon Hawladar, 30, worked in a garment factory in Dhaka.

Shafiqul Islam, civil surgeon of Madaripur, said, “Ripon went to Shibchar Upazila Health Complex on Saturday from Dhaka. The doctors told him to get admitted to Shibchar Upazila Health Complex but he went home instead.”

Eleven-year-old Athai Saha, of Kamargram under Boalmari upazila in Faridpur, died in a private hospital in Dhaka around 1:00pm yesterday.

Athai’s uncle Proshanta Saha said, “We admitted her to a private hospital in Dhanmondi after doctors in Bolamari Upazila Health Complex recommended she be moved to Dhaka.”

WHO ENTOMOLOGIST

BN Nagpal, senior entomologist, SEARO, of World Health Organisation, in a press briefing at the DGHS said Aedes mosquito search and destroy is very important.

Nagpal, who has experience of around 40 years in this field, said 40 percent dengue cases would be

reduced if the construction sites could be monitored and controlled.

Suggesting pouring oil in the breeding sources at construction sites, Nagpal said caretakers of the sites must monitor regularly and take effective steps to destroy the breeding source.

“Everyone must keep at least an hour a week to clean all containers in their homes so that Aedes mosquito cannot breed,” he said.

Nagpal also suggested monitoring and cleaning bus depots, vehicle impounds, plant nurseries, and educational institutions.

He said Aedes never breeds in drains, ponds, lakes, rivers or in rainwater but they love to lay eggs in small containers.

Water tanks on the roofs of houses could also be breeding grounds for Aedes mosquitoes, he said, adding that the tanks must be covered.

He suggested spraying mosquito repellent aerosol inside houses in the morning and evening. During day time, Aedes mosquitoes prefer to rest in the dark corners of rooms and avoid light. The peak biting time is after sunrise and two hours before sunset.

He said Aedes mosquito eggs can last up to a year in dry conditions.

Police to probe rape allegation against cops

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from Jashore by train to visit her mother, who was undergoing treatment at Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH).

Speaking to The Daily Star, the woman’s younger sister said that around 7:30pm, she was detained inside the train by railway police in Phultala Railway Station. She was then forced to disembark and was taken to Khulna Railway Station.

At the station, the first to rape her was Osman Goni Pathan, officer-in-charge (OC) of GRP Police Station in Khulna. After him, the other policemen took turns in raping her.

The next day, the alleged rapists filed a case against the victim from the station, for possessing five bottles of Phensedyl, after which a court sent her to jail.

On Sunday, the victim filed a bail petition with the district’s additional chief judicial magistrate’s court and filed the complaint of being gang raped by policemen, the sister said.

The court then sent her to KMCH for a medical test.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, KHCH’s chief of forensic department Dr Shafiuzzaman said her medical test was completed.

The victim’s sister also alleged that OC Osman offered paying a large sum

of money to keep the incident a secret, and also threatened them with not to take any further steps with this issue.

A case will be filed against the rapists today, she added.

Contacted, the OC denied the allegations and claimed he was not present at the police station on that night.

SP Mohammad Nazrul Islam said they would take further legal steps, following the medical test and probe reports.

FIVE RAPISTS ARRESTED, TWO ON-THE-RUN

In Dhaka’s Savar upazila, police yesterday arrested five men on charge of raping a 30-year-old woman at Dagarmora area on Sunday.

The arrestees are Arif, 22, Aminul, 35, Badal, 22, Alamgir, 22, and Kabir, 26. All of them are construction workers.

Around 8:00am on Sunday, the victim, a day-labourer, was looking for work at the Savar bus station. At that time, the five accused came to her and offered her to work in an under-construction building, the victim said while talking to The Daily Star.

They then took the woman to the building and raped her, the victim alleged.

The victim filed a complaint and we arrested the accused, said AFM Sayeed,

OC of Savar Model Police Station.

Meanwhile, in Netrokona, family members of a 13-year-old on Sunday filed a case against a young man on charge of raping the girl at Sawyer in Mohanganj upazila.

Speaking to The Daily Star, the victim’s family members said that “an influential quarter of the area” were pressurising them to take care of the matter through social arbitration and not to go to police.

The accused Bappi Khandaker, 25, had been stalking the girl for long, the case statement read.

On August 1, the girl was walking in the yard of her residence around 8:30pm. Bappi then forcibly took her to a nearby jungle and raped her there, said Abdul Motalab Khokon, OC (Investigation) of Mohanganj Police Station.

Hearing her scream, locals rushed to the spot and rescued the girl. But the accused fled the scene, the OC said, adding that police are conducting drives to arrest him.

In Dhaka’s Dhamrai upazila, the father of a third grader yesterday filed a case against one Hridoy Hossain on charge of raping the girl on Sunday at Kushuria area.

Police were trying to arrest the accused, said Dipok Saha, OC of Dhamrai Police station.

Govt withdraws import duty on dengue test kits

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue has withdrawn import duty, value-added tax, advance tax and advance income tax on dengue test kits, dengue reagents and test kits for platelet and plasma.

This will remain effective until October 31, said a NBR press release yesterday.

On the government’s instructions, the NBR made the decision so that people get treatment for dengue at low cost, the release said.

The decision comes at a time when the country is grappling with a record number of dengue cases, different hospitals, clinics and diagnostic centres face a short supply of a kit that is needed to detect the fever at the early stage.

The Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) will fix how many kits can an organisation import and monitor their quality, the release added.

The organisations which will import the kits following the DGDA’s decision will enjoy the duty benefits.

Before withdrawing the duty, total tax incidence on the three items ranged from 5 percent to 31 percent, according to the NBR.

The kit is needed to do NS1 antigen test (nonstructural protein 1). Introduced in 2006, the kit allows rapid detection on the first day of fever, before antibodies appear some five or more days later.

It takes only 15 minutes to get the test result after a doctor or a lab technician takes drops of blood from the patient’s fingertip.

Nigeria police break up ‘revolution’ protest

AFP, Lagos

Nigerian security forces yesterday fired tear gas as they broke up a protest calling for “revolution” against misrule in the country after arresting the high-profile organiser.

Several dozen demonstrators gathered in the face of a heavy security deployment near the national stadium in the economic capital Lagos chanting for the release of former presidential candidate Omoyele Sowore, video broadcast live by local media showed.

The footage showed security forces firing tear gas to disperse the peaceful protest.

A protester told AFP that officers made several arrests and fired live ammunition to disperse the crowd, wounding at least two people.

“Police officers and soldiers were shooting indiscriminantly, we have at least two people I saw who were shot in the leg,” Femi Adeyeye, an activist at the demonstration said.

A spokesman for Lagos police told AFP he did not have details on the unrest or detention of any protesters.

Sowore, a fierce critic of President Muhammadu Buhari, was arrested over the weekend after announcing the “#RevolutionNow” protests across the country for yesterday.

Nigeria’s security services said Sowore had “crossed the line” and was threatening public safety.

“We cannot allow any person or group to foment chaos or fan the embers of revolution,” spokesman Peter Afunaya said on Sunday.

Charges framed

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a few days before the madrasa student was set ablaze by a group of five unidentified persons on April 6.

Siraj had called Nusrat, an Alim candidate, at his office and tried to abuse her sexually on March 27, according to the case statement.

The 18-year-old girl was set afire allegedly for refusing to withdraw the sexual assault case filed by her mother. The teenage girl was tied up and set afire on the roof of the madarsa’s administration building before she could sit for the Alim exam equivalent to HSC.

Nusrat lost her battle for life on April 10, five days after she was set ablaze at the madrasa.

The incident created public outrage across the country.

Police arrested Siraj the same day and put him behind bars following a court order.

In a confessional statement made on April 29, Siraj said that he had ordered his associates from jail to burn Nusrat to death.

Besides, the district’s Senior Judicial Magistrate Sharaf Uddin Ahmed yesterday recorded statements of six accused in a Nusrat Jahan Rafi murder case.

The accused are Sonagazi Islamia Senior Fazil Madrasa teacher Abdul Kader, and students Abdur Rahim Sharif, Umme Sultana Popy, Kamrun Nahar Moni, Sakhawat Hossain Javed and Saifur Rahman Md Zobayer.