

# Peru president dissolves parliament, calls fresh elections

AFP, Lima

Peru's president dissolved parliament and called for fresh elections Monday, prompting a vote by lawmakers to suspend him, deepening a long-running institutional crisis.

The announcement by President Martin Vizcarra came after he warned Congress he would dissolve the body if it continued to block a raft of anti-corruption reforms and changes to

# PM leaves for Delhi

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invitation of her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi.

Hasina is also scheduled to attend the India Economic Summit of the World Economic Forum (WEF) as the chief guest on Friday and meet Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi the next day.

This will be the second meeting of the premiers of the two neighbouring countries following their first meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York on September 27 after their re-election.

"Though our prime minister will be attending the summit, her meeting with the Indian prime minister is very important as there are a number of issues regarding the India-Bangladesh relations," said a foreign ministry official.

The issues that will be discussed by the two include sharing of water of 54 common rivers; use of waterways; maritime cooperation; the Rohingya crisis and National Register of Citizens (NRC), he told The Daily Star.

Apart from a number of agreements that are to be made during the visit, the two PMs will also jointly inaugurate three bilateral projects via a video conference.

The PM's visit to India comes after her visit to China in July and Japan in May, when the Rohingya crisis was one of the most important issues of the discussions, apart from trade.

## ROHINGYA CRISIS

Two years after more than 743,000 Rohingyas fled a military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine state and took shelter in Bangladesh and despite two repatriation attempts, Rohingyas have refused to return to Myanmar without the guarantee of citizenship and safety.

India, China and Japan have worked to find a bilateral solution to the Rohingya crisis, but are yet to create pressure on Myanmar to solve the crisis.

"Bangladesh is facing a formidable challenge regarding the Rohingyas. As a powerful neighbour, Bangladesh wants India's active role to help address the crisis," said the foreign ministry official, requesting anonymity.

**WATER SHARING AND WATERWAYS**

Water resources ministry officials said Bangladesh would raise the issue of Teesta water-sharing agreement and sharing of waters of other common rivers.

A framework for water-sharing of eight rivers may be signed. The rivers include the Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Feni, Gumti, Dharla, Dudhkumar and Teesta.

Besides, the two sides will also discuss enhancing cooperation in flood forecasting and basin-wide river management, they said.

The Teesta water-sharing agreement could not be signed between India and Bangladesh during former Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Bangladesh in 2011 due to objections from West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Though the two countries have 54 common rivers, there is only one water-sharing treaty on the Ganges.

"As a lower riparian country, Bangladesh should hammer on the water issue on a regular basis. We are talking about river basin management, but there is no progress on it for years though there were similar talks years ago," said eminent water expert Dr Aunur Nishat.

A water resources ministry official said siltation was occurring in southern Bangladesh due to inadequate flow of water from the upstream during

the way judges are appointed to the country's Supreme Court.

Vizcarra called new parliamentary elections for January 26, according to a decree published in the official gazette.

Shortly after his televised statement, 86 of Congress' 130 members voted to suspend Vizcarra for one year on the grounds of "moral incapacity" and nominated Vice President Mercedes Araoz as acting head of state.

the lean season. Joint dredging of rivers by Bangladesh and India can be considered on a pilot basis under the river basin management.

India wants to bring Bangladesh into its coastal radar chain network, reports The Hindu newspaper of India.

A standard of operating procedures on the use of Mongla and Chattogram ports for transporting Indian goods through Bangladesh is also likely to be signed during the PM's visit, shipping ministry officials said.

**NRC**

Assam's NRC, which excluded 1.9 million people in its final list, has been considered both by Bangladesh and India as an "internal matter of India".

During a meeting between Hasina and Modi in New York last Friday, Modi said there was nothing to worry about it.

Indian Home Minister and BJP President Amit Shah, however, repeatedly said "illegal Bangalees" would be deported.

Asked, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen recently said, "The issue will be raised as there are concerns among some people."

Experts say Bangladesh must seek clarification from India on the issue because the country has already been burdened with Rohingya refugees.

**INDIAN LINE OF CREDIT**

Foreign ministry officials said Dhaka wants speedy disbursement of Indian Lines of Credit (LoC) as projects under the three LoCs, worth around \$7.5 billion, have been facing delays mainly due to technical and bureaucratic reasons.

In the last eight years, Bangladesh has managed to use \$523 million of the first LoC worth \$862 million, despite various steps to expedite utilisation of the funds. Bangladesh has so far used \$14 million of the \$2-billion second LoC.

India is yet to disburse any money from the \$4.5-billion third LoC, officials said.

Foreign Minister Momen recently said he asked the officials concerned to take the stock of projects and find ways to speed them up.

India's Exim Bank, a state body to manage public loans, which opened its representative office in Dhaka in 2017, may now open a permanent office in the capital to process the total Indian LoC amounting to \$7.5 billion, finance ministry officials said.

The issue will be discussed during the PM's visit, Momen told The Daily Star.

According to the BSS, Hasina will have a joint meeting with three leaders from the Indian Chamber of Commerce and exchange views with them on Friday.

Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will call on the Bangladesh PM on Saturday morning.

After a meeting between the two premiers on Saturday, Hasina will join a lunch to be hosted by the Indian PM in her honour.

Hasina will then call on the Indian President Ram Nath Kovind.

Besides, Singapore Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat is likely to call on Hasina on Friday while the Bangladesh premier is likely to meet Indian Congress chief Sonia Gandhi on Sunday.

Hasina will also join a reception and a dinner to be hosted by the Bangladesh High Commission in India on October 3 on its premises in her honour. Foreign envoys along with ambassadors currently accredited to Bangladesh and other dignitaries will join the reception and dinner.

# People suffer as city roads

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in Rajarbagh, Paltan, Nayapaltan, Motijheel, Karwan Bazar, Mirpur Road, Tejgubazar, Manikpur Para, Green road, Dhanmondi-27, Doyaganj, Chankharpul and many alleys in old Dhaka.

People suffered more in areas where road renovation and construction work of different projects, including the Metro Rail, were ongoing.

On the other hand, rickshaw-pullers cashed in on the situation and charged high fares even for short distances.

Visitors, officers and staffers at the Secretariat faced hurdles, as the area was submerged. Many were seen walking barefoot on the road adjacent to the Secretariat.

Muktar Hossain, a commuter, said, "I had waited for about half an hour hoping the water would recede. But there was no sign of it. So, I started walking."

After office hours ended, huge traffic tailbacks were created on

different link roads to the capital's banking hub - Motijheel, which too was submerged.

Asma Jahan, a banker, said that whenever there is heavy rainfall, the traffic in the area turns into a mess.

It took her one and half hour to reach her Shantinagar residence from Motijheel.

"Had I walked, I would reach earlier but there was no scope due to water logging," she added.

Hundreds of people were seen waiting at different points including Karwan Bazar and Farmgate to avail public transport. Buses were seen jam-packed and moving at a slow pace.

While riding amid knee-deep water, some motorcyclists were seen falling over on the roads, losing control over their motorbikes.

"Politicians boast of development, while in after an hour-long rainfall, the roads turn into river," said Tousif, while pulling up his motorcycle from water at the Shahjahanpur intersection.



Bottles of liquor, bundles of money, and foreign currencies seized from the Gulshan home of Salim Proddhan, seated. Rab detained Salim on Monday from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on charges of laundering money.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

# Salim, partner got Tk 9cr in a month

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48 bottles of foreign liquor.

One server, four laptops and a desktop computer used for the gambling operations were also seized during the raids, Rab said.

Salim's assistant Md Akhtaruazzaman, who was the in-charge of the gambling site, and staffer Md Roman were also arrested.

Sarwar said cases would be filed under the Money laundering, the Foreign Currency Act, the Wildlife (Preservation and Security) Act and the Narcotics Control Act.

After the drive, Rab sealed Salim's Banani and Gulshan office and residence, said Rab magistrate Sarwoer Alam who led the drives.

Sarwoer said they planned the operation after the cyber monitoring team of Rab-1 found some businessmen running online gambling games in Bangladesh.

On Monday, they came to know that Salim Proddhan, the alleged kingpin of online gambling, was about to leave the country by air. Soon, Rab members reached the airport and offloaded him from the plane.

After primary interrogation the Rab, taking Salim with them, raided his office in Gulshan around 8:30pm on Monday and then his residence.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit of the

central bank yesterday directed all banks to freeze the accounts of Salim Proddhan and all persons, and organisations affiliated with him for the next 30 days.

In its letter, the Bangladesh Bank asked all the banks to inform it immediately about all previous and current accounts opened in Salim's name, or by persons or organisations affiliated with him, along with the details of transactions made within five working days.

## FROM CARS TO CARDS

During primary interrogation, Salim Proddhan said he was born in Dhaka in 1973.

He went to Japan in 1988 along with his brother and started an automobile business in partnership with some Japanese individuals.

Salim later came to Thailand along with his Japanese partners and started a ship-breaking yard.

During that time some Japanese individuals introduced him to North Korean citizen Doo, who asked him to open a construction business in Bangladesh, Rab said.

"At the same time Doo advised him to open an online gambling business in Bangladesh. So, he opened two gaming sites, P24 and T21, in Bangladesh in 2018 and since then he had been running those," Sarwar-Bin-Quasheem said.

# Disregarded all along

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into practice.

A noted civil engineering educator, National Professor Jamilur Reza Choudhury, said globally building code is revised every three or five years.

So, on a five-year cycle, the country's building code of 1993 was supposed to be revised at least five times by now, but the government has not completed updating even once, he said.

The government took 13 years to approve the code in 2006 and 16 years to initiate the first revision. Then it procrastinated for a decade, meanwhile rendering the existing approved code obsolete, he said.

It has neither instituted a building authority nor appointed building officials in 26 years since the code was first made though those measures were required as enforcement tools, added Prof Jamilur Reza.

One may recall that the High Court in October 2010 asked the government to establish a national building code enforcement authority within a year.

And now, the revised code provides for constituting an apex body named Bangladesh Building Regulatory Authority for its enforcement throughout the country.

The BNBC is a complete set of codes to ensure safe construction for a healthy habitat, use of quality materials, accountability of the professionals and conservation of environment.

The code provides that the engineers, architects and planners involved in a building construction would be legally accountable for any anomalies in their professional duty.

The act, as amended in 2006, provides for punishment with seven years' imprisonment or a fine of Tk 50,000 or both in case of violation of the BNBC and Building Construction Rules of 2006.

In the absence of application of the BNBC, it is almost impossible to hold anybody responsible for a disaster triggered by faulty construction.

So, in the absence of an updated code and designated enforcement authority, an anarchy is what has been reigning over the country's thriving construction landscape, putting people's lives, property and environment in dire danger, building

professionals said.

Disasters overwhelmed the nation time and again due to building construction in violation of BNBC, said Brig Gen (ret'd) Ali Ahmed Khan, former director general of Fire Service and Civil Defence.

"Enforcement of BNBC is a must in order to contain building disasters either triggered by a fire or an earthquake," he said.

Khan Mahmud Amanat, a professor of structural engineering at Buet and an author of the proposed revised BNBC, said a building cannot be considered safe for occupancy if its structural design is not done in compliance with the building code.

"The tragedies of Rana Plaza, Spectra and Phoenix building collapses were all due to structural failure," he said.

One may recall that building professionals attributed the structural failure of a six-storey sweeper colony building in May in 2007 within a week of its construction in Dayaganj to the use of construction materials of poor quality. The building was built by undivided Dhaka City Corporation.

M Abu Sadeque, immediate-past director of Housing and Building Research Institute and currently secretary general of Bangladesh Earthquake Society, said, "Compliance with the building code would ensure life-saving built-in system with sufficient fire safety and earth quake resistance measures in a building."

In the capital city, the building code could be largely applied if the Building Construction Act was enforced accordingly, he said.

"But the question is how far the building rules are enforced, as 95 percent structures of all kinds in the capital have been built without building approval, according to Rajuk's information," said Sadeque, also a member of editorial team and steering committee on revision of BNBC.

## A DECADE-LONG DELAY

The building code was made legally binding for building construction on November 15, 2006 under the Building Construction Act.

The government in 2008 took the first move to revise the BNBC and a year later hired Buet consultants for the job.

"The Proddhan Group website mentioned that it was one of the first providers of B2B live casino solutions in Bangladesh, which proves he was engaged in the gambling business," he added.

The Rab official said a player had to keep a certain amount of money in their account to be entitled to participate in the game.

Elaborating further on the gaming system, Sarwar said if a player won, they would get back the amount.

In case of loss, the betting amount would be deposited in one of three banks accounts through the payment gateway.

Salim's assistant Akhtaruazzaman used to withdraw the amount once a week and deposit the money in two other bank accounts from where it was laundered to foreign countries.

"Salim admitted to us that he used to send money to London at different times," the Rab 1 CO said.

Asked how many people were involved in online gambling, Sarwar-Bin-Quasheem said they were still investigating the matter.

During the press briefing, Sarwar said Salim also claimed to be a close friend of businessman Giasuddin al Mamun. Mamun has been in jail since 2007.

The Buet team of experts first submitted a revised version in 2010. The Housing and Building Research Institute however sent it back to the consultants, as it lacked adequate provisions on fire safety and implementation mechanism, said Prof Raquib Ahsan, coordinator of Buet consultants.

The consultants submitted the updated code two years later. There was, however, no progress towards formalisation. In 2014, it was revised again and submitted the following year. It went through legal vetting and correction. It was not approved though.

The law ministry took more than a year for scrutiny and asked for some corrections. The final corrected version was submitted to the works ministry in mid-2017 and the law ministry cleared the revised code by that year for publication.

But, according to official sources, diploma engineers opposed approval of the revised code demanding equal status as graduate and doctorate engineers and lobbied with the government.

The government on political consideration went slow on approval, as the general elections were to be held within a year, they said.

"The first updating process has been so delayed that yet another updating has been due," said Prof Saiful Islam, vice-chancellor of Buet, at a national seminar at the university auditorium on April 27.

Public Works Minister SM Rezaul Karim at a press conference in the capital on April 6, said the government would publish the amended building code in a week or two.

As this correspondent called the minister on September 23, he said his ministry had sent the final revised BNBC to the law ministry a week ago for publishing it in the official gazette.

Asked why the government took a decade to revise the nation's building code just once, the minister said, "I do not want to make any comment on it. I have no idea why it took so long."

Several days back, the law ministry sent back the revised BNBC to the public works ministry with some queries, said an official source.

# Iran confirms arrest of another academic

AFP, Tehran

Iran yesterday confirmed the arrest of anthropologist Kameel Ahmady, reportedly a British-Iranian dual national, less than three months after the detention of Franco-Iranian academic Fariba Adelkhah was publicised.

"It is true that this person was arrested," said judicial spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili, responding to a question about Ahmady at a press conference in Tehran.

French anthropologist Christian Bromberger wrote in August that Ahmady was "recently arrested", in an article published on the French edition of The Conversation website.

Author of a book in English titled "In the Name of Tradition: Female Genital Mutilation in Iran", Ahmady holds dual British and Iranian citizenship, according to Bromberger, himself an Iran specialist.

Ahmady is subject to a "preliminary investigation" on suspicion of "links to foreign countries and institutes affiliated with foreign (intelligence) services," said Esmaili during the press conference, which was broadcast online.

On 15 July, French authorities announced Adelkhah had been arrested in Iran. A specialist in Shiite Islam, Adelkhah is the research director at the Centre for International Studies and Research at Sciences Po University in Paris.

# Seven

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transfer them to offices outside police stations."

He said the reshuffle was a good move to ensure better service at the police stations.

Yesterday, Motijheel OC Omar Faruk was transferred to DB (north). He was replaced by Kalabagan OC Yeasin Arafat Khan.

During the ongoing anti-gambling drive, the law enforcers found that six clubs in the city's Motijheel area had been running gambling businesses for a long time.

Poritosh Chandra, inspector (investigation) of Uttara East Police, was made the OC of Kalabagan Police Station.

Mirpur OC Dadan Fakir was replaced by Khilkhet OC Mostazirur Rahman. Dadan was transferred to DB (south) while Borhan Uddin, inspector (investigation) of Banani Police Station, was transferred to Khilkhet Police Station as OC.

Shyampur OC Mizanur Rahman was posted to Kotwali Police Station while outgoing Kotwali OC Shahidur Rahman was transferred to DB (west). Mofizul Alam, inspector (investigation) of Sabuzbagh Police Station, was made the OC of Shyampur Police Station.

Bhatara OC Abu Bakar Siddique was transferred to Paltan Police Station. Paltan OC Mahmudul Haque was suspended on Monday over a rape allegation.

Moktaruzzaman, inspector (investigation) of Airport Police Station, was made the OC of Bhatara Police Station.

Earlier on September 15, DMP Commissioner Shafiqul Islam during his first briefing to media expressed dissatisfaction over the service at police stations and said he would take over the duties of OC if the service did not improve.

He also directed senior DMP officials to start discharging their duties at police stations if desired changes did not happen there.

Shafiqul took charge as the DMP commissioner on September 13.