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Protesters liken DSA to 1952

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore and writer Mushtaq Ahmed behind bars for more than nine months, a group of citizens, including teachers and rights activists, staged demonstrations at the city's Central Shaheed Minar yesterday demanding abolishment of the controversial Digital Security Act (DSA).

Mentioning that people are now fighting to establish freedom of speech in the country, the protesters compared the prevailing situation with that of the February 1952, when Bangladeshis raised their voice to establish the right of their mother tongue.

Terming the DSA a draconian law, the protesters said they fear to be under the government's surveillance round the clock as they feel that they live in a state of "speaking, hearing and seeing no evil".

Their fear was portrayed through different cultural performances like singing songs of rebellion and freedom, baul songs, reciting poems and staging a street drama.

Rights watchdogs and different other organisations are voicing deep concern about arbitrary detention and other forms of harassment of citizens, including journalists and artists, who are facing increasing attacks on their right to freedom of expression in Bangladesh.

With placards bearing different slogans against the government, around 250 people joined the protest rally yesterday.

Speaking at the programme, Prof Anu Muhammad of Jahangirnagar University said everybody knows about the

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Activists perform a street play on Central Shaheed Minar in the capital yesterday. A group of citizens, including teachers and activists, demonstrated there demanding Digital Security Act be abolished as it was being used for suppressing freedom of expression.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Journalist Shaheen Reza Nur no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shaheen Reza Nur, former executive editor of the daily Ittefaq and son of Shaheed journalist Serajuddin Hossain, has died of cancer.

He was 66. The prominent war crimes trail campaigner breathed his last in Canada's Vancouver General Hospital at 10:40am (Bangladesh time) yesterday, his brother Tawheed Reza Noor told The Daily Star.

Shaheen's health started to deteriorate 10 days ago. He was admitted to the hospital four days ago, Tawheed said.

"Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina phoned our family to express condolences. She reminisced on Shaheen bhai. She was informed about his last wish. She listened to our



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AL runner threatens voters

Quader says action to be taken if proof found

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

The dwellers of Thakurgaon town yesterday expressed fear and panic centering today's municipality polls as the ruling Awami League candidate threatened voters to leave the town if they did not cast votes for "boat".

"Those, who don't want to vote for boat symbol, go to visit your relative's house to Birganj and Panchagrah that are adjacent to Thakurgaon," said Mahmuda Beguma, general secretary of the central committee of Bangladesh Mohila Awami League.

"We don't want to see you in Thakurgaon on February 14," she said while addressing a rally in the Thakurgaon Road area in the town on Wednesday.

"Those, who will not

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Coca-Cola trials first paper bottle



AGENCIES

Coca-Cola is partnering with Danish startup Paboco to develop a 100% paper bottle as part of a longer-term bid to eliminate plastic from its packaging entirely.

The prototype is made by Paboco from an extra-strong paper shell that still contains a thin plastic liner.

But the goal is to create a 100% recyclable, plastic-free bottle capable of preventing gas escaping from carbonated drinks.

The barrier must also ensure no fibres flake off into the liquid.

That would pose a risk of altering the taste of the drink - or potentially fall foul of health and safety checks.

But industry giants are backing the plan. Coca-

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Workers Party 'disappointed' with govt

Says AL soft on religious political parties

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Left-leaning Workers Party of Bangladesh, a major part of the ruling alliance, yesterday expressed disappointment at the country's current election system, including the use of EVM, and over AL's "softer stance" towards religious political parties, at the party's central committee meeting held virtually yesterday.

Party leaders also said that participation of AL allies in elections has become "almost impossible" due to the current election situation, said sources. Opposition parties are also facing a similar situation, leaders alleged.

Party president Rashed Khan Menon presided over the meeting, which was conducted by party general

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COVID VACCINATION

Govt mulling spot registration for seniors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is considering an on-the-spot registration provision for senior citizens for Covid-19 vaccination, Secretary to the Health Services Division Abdul Mannan said yesterday.

Mannan made the remark while replying to a query from journalists when he was visiting the BSMMU vaccination center.

People, aged 40 and above, and front liners are being vaccinated in the first phase of the nationwide drive.

The registration for Covid-19 vaccines drastically fell yesterday as the server of the surokkha.gov.bd went down.

On Thursday, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said there would be no on-the-spot registration.

Some 1.6 lakh people registered online for the vaccine since 2:30pm yesterday, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Yesterday, renowned columnist Syed Abul Maksud got inoculated at the BSMMU centre.

After taking the vaccine, Syed Abul Maksud told the journalists, "To stay safe, we all have to take vaccines when we get a chance. The fear about the vaccine is unnecessary."

In the previous 24 hours, more than 1.7 lakh registered. Vaccination was continuing for the sixth day yesterday after a weekly holiday on the previous day.

A total of 194,371 people were vaccinated till yesterday.

Some 1.6 lakh registered in the previous 24 hours till 2:30pm yesterday.

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MUNICIPALITY POLLS TODAY

Many fear irregularities, violence

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Fifty-five municipalities in 34 districts go to polls today amid worries over violence and confusion among many about being able to cast votes in a free and fair manner.

The confusion stemmed from some remarks made by ruling party leaders in a few of the districts. A leader in Lakshimpur asked voters to cast their ballots in public for an Awami League mayor candidate. Another AL leader, in Chuadanga, went one step further and ordered party men to bar anyone from voting for candidates from other parties.

Besides, several people have been injured in clashes in the run-up to the election.

This time, the Election Commission is holding municipal polls, which take place after every five years, in six phases. The fourth phase is being held today.

Electronic voting machines (EVMs) are in use in 29 of the 55 municipalities while traditional ballot papers in the rest.

Mainly, the AL and its political archrival BNP are locking horns in the polls, which also has mayor candidates from other parties, including the Jatiya Party and

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Coronavirus 'will remain with us'

Europe's top expert says

AFP, Stockholm

The head of the EU's disease control agency has warned that the novel coronavirus could last indefinitely even as global infections slowed by nearly half in the last month and vaccine rollouts gathered pace in parts of the world.

In an interview with AFP, ECDC chief Andrea Ammon urged European countries in particular not to drop their guard against a virus that "seems very well adapted to humans" and may require experts to tweak vaccines over time, as is the case with the

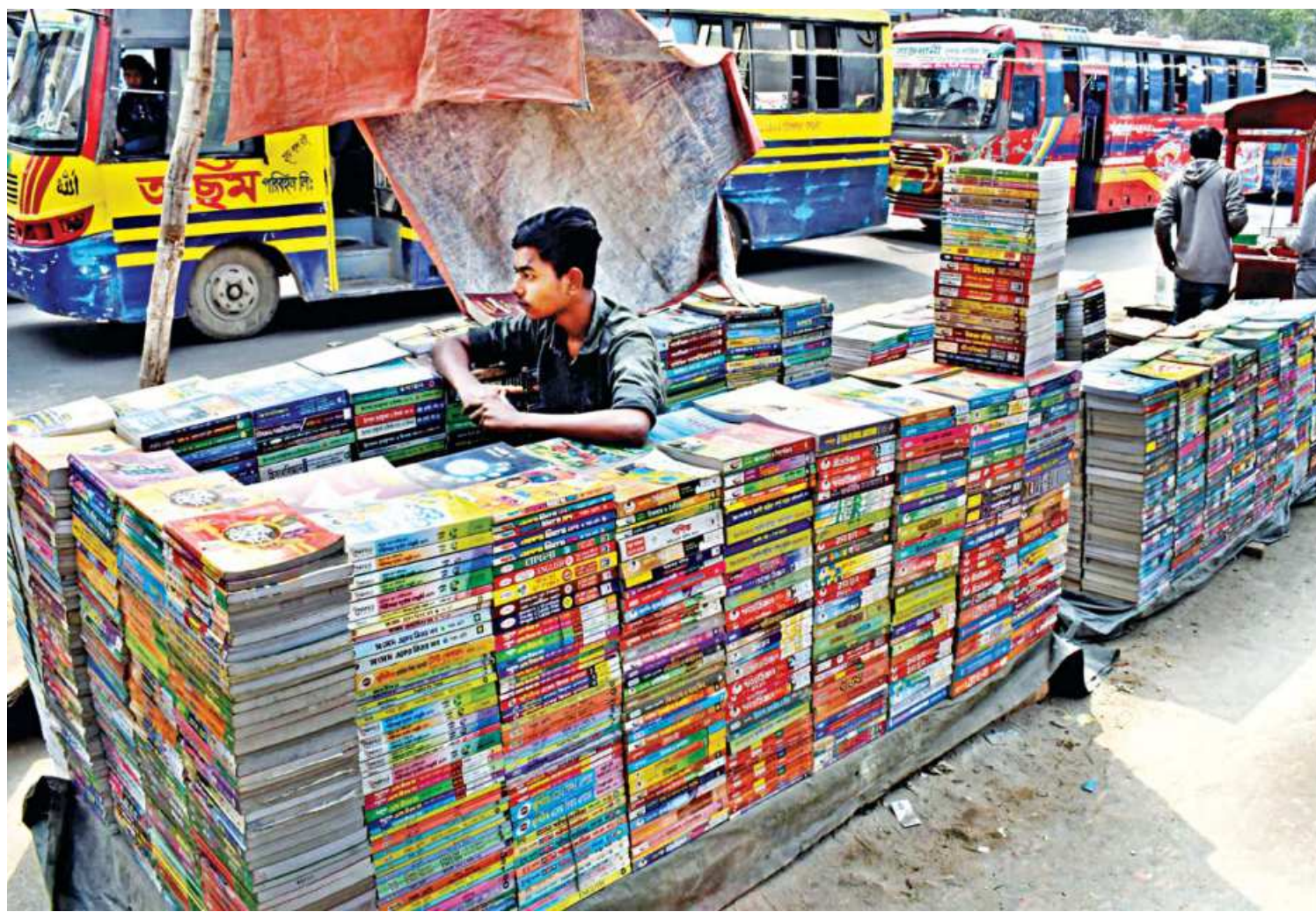
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PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 14

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:25 12:45 4:30 5:57 7:15
JAMAAT 6:00 1:15 4:45 6:01 7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Sajib Hossain, who sells used copies of the so-called guide books, is sitting in the middle of stacks of such books near Mirpur Cricket Stadium. He says there is hardly any demand for the books because of the closure of educational institutions.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Police, BNP men clash at press club

Scores hurt during protest against revoke of Zia's gallantry award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A clash occurred between BNP activists and police in front of the city's Jatiya Press Club yesterday around noon during BNP's protest against the decision to revoke the gallantry award given to late president Ziaur Rahman.

Police claimed at least 10 of their members were injured during the clash while BNP said 119 of its members were injured "in police attack."

Witnesses said several hundred protesters started gathering in front of the Jatiya Press Club around 10:00am and started a rally with huge police presence nearby.

Several senior leaders of BNP, including Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, Khandaker Mosharrif Hossain, and Amanullah Aman, joined the rally organised by Dhaka south and north city units jointly as part of the party's countrywide programme in all cities.

The rally was being held peacefully for nearly two hours, with BNP men blocking the road in front of the club.

But they became locked in altercation at the end of the rally when BNP standing committee member Khandaker Mosharrif Hossain was speaking, when law enforcers requested them to vacate one lane of the road after 12:00pm to facilitate traffic movement, witnesses said.

At one stage, BNP activists scuffled with police, prompting the law enforcers to go into an action on the protesters.

Protesters threw brick chips at police while law enforcers

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