



'We both want stability, peace'

Addressing Matua community in Orakandi, Modi says India is Bangladesh's partner in development

STAR REPORT

Both India and Bangladesh want to see stability, love, and peace instead of instability, terror and unrest in the world, said Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday.

Both the countries want to see the world progressing through their own development and progress, Modi said while addressing the Matua community in Orakandi of Gopalganj's Kashiani.

Bangladesh is presenting a strong example of development and change in front of the world and India is Bangladesh's partner in development, the Indian PM continued.

The Orakandi visit, which political analysis say was more to woo the Matua community living in India, marked a busy second day of the Indian PM's two-day state visit to be part of the twin celebrations of the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence.

Modi was flown to Orakandi around 12:30pm after visiting the "Mausoleum of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman" in Tungipara.

"This marked the first-ever visit by any foreign head of state or head of government to pay homage at Bangabandhu Mausoleum Complex," said the Indian PMO office.

Modi planted a Bakul tree sapling to commemorate this historic event. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina accompanied her Indian counterpart.

After paying homage to Bangabandhu by placing a wreath at his mausoleum, Modi stood in solemn silence for some time as a mark of profound respect to the memory of Bangabandhu, the architect of Bangladesh's independence.

Sheikh Hasina along with her sister Sheikh Rehana also showed the Indian PM various parts of the mausoleum.

Modi also signed the visitors' book there.

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Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is greeted by a member of the sebayet family of Jashoreswari Kali Mandir in Satkhira's Shyamnagar, on the second day of his visit. He also visited and prayed at the Orakandi Thakurbari temple in Gopalganj's Kashiani, before returning to Dhaka where he called on President Abdul Hamid at the Bangabhaban. Modi and her Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina also virtually inaugurated various development projects -- by pressing buttons simultaneously -- from the Prime Minister's Office.

PHOTO: PID, TWITTER/NARENDRA MODI, KALYAN BANERJEE



'Tougher demos if hartal obstructed'

Hefajat warns; Police, BGB on high alert

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hefajat-e-Islam yesterday warned that they would go for tougher movement if the government tries to hinder today's nationwide hartal to be observed in protest of attacks on anti-Modi campaigners.

While addressing a protest rally in front of Baitul Mukarram Mosque in Dhaka, they also said the government would be held responsible in case of any unwarranted situation.

"The government has stained Bangladesh's Independence Day by killing activists of the party during Friday's protest. The deaths of Hefajat activists will be avenged," Hefajat Joint Secretary General Mamunul Haque said at the rally.

He alleged that ruling party "cadres", wearing helmets, intruded into mosques and attacked worshippers.

"Police accompanied the ruling party men. If we take to the streets, the ruling party men will not be able to escape," he said.

He urged police to act as the protector of people instead of serving any political party.

In a statement yesterday, Hefajat-e-Islam Ameer Junaid Babunagari also vowed to avenge the deaths of its activists, who were shot dead during the clashes with police and ruling party men. The Hefajat chief said the incident of police firing on a peaceful movement can never be accepted.

Several thousand activists of Hefajat-e-Islam yesterday gathered near Baitul Mukarram around noon, protesting Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh and Friday's police action in Dhaka, Chattogram and Brahmanbaria.

Prior to the demonstration, police ramped up security measures around the national mosque and surrounding areas centering the protest programme. Members of Rapid Action Battalion were also seen patrolling the area.

Later in the afternoon, at a press conference at Makhjanul Ulum Madrasha at city's Khilgaon, Hefajat-e-Islam called upon their leaders and activists to carry out the dawn-to-dusk hartal across the country today peacefully.

Hefajat Secretary General Nurul Islam urged their activists so that no one engage in any vandalism or arson activities "in the name of Hefajat" during the hartal.

Hefajat leaders said emergency services including hospital, ambulance, vehicles of fire service and newspapers, medicine shops, and restaurants will remain out of purview of the hartal.

Speaking there, Hefajat Joint Secretary General Mamunul Haque said law enforcement agencies are yet to hand over bodies of four Hefajat men who were killed on Friday at Chattogram's Hathazari.

He demanded that law enforcement agencies hand over the bodies to their family members immediately.

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Transport owners to defy hartal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transport owners yesterday vowed to operate buses in the capital and adjacent areas, defying today's hartal called by Hefajat-e-Islam.

They will operate buses on inter-district routes if there are passengers.

Dhaka Road Transport Owners Association took the decision at an emergency meeting of the association, with its general secretary Khandaker Enayet Ullah in the chair. It later issued a press statement in this regard.

Leaders urged police to take necessary security arrangements at important points of the city, so that vehicular movement would not be halted amid the hartal.

They said transport businesspeople would incur loss due to the hartal, and they do not support public suffering in the name of hartal.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad yesterday urged Hefajat-e-Islam to withdraw the hartal, as it coincides with Dol Purnima, a major religious festival of the Hindu community.

Rana Dasgupta, general secretary of parishad, made the appeal though a press statement yesterday. He hoped Hefajat would withdraw the hartal, considering religious sentiment of the Hindu community.

'Govt trying to suppress new generation'

Alleges Zafrullah Chowdhury at rally; speakers seek probe into attacks on Friday's anti-Modi events

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gonoshasthaya Kendra founder Zafrullah Chowdhury yesterday alleged that the government is trying to suppress the new generation.

Speaking at a protest rally in the capital, he also accused the government of killing five youths in a planned way in Chattogram and Brahmanbaria on Friday over the protest against Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit, reports UNB.

"Registering protest is our fundamental right. The killings... are planned," Zafrullah said, adding, "Those killed [on Friday] were young men. This new generation is being suppressed..."

Bhashani Anusari Parishad organised the rally in front of Jatiya Press Club protesting the attacks on programmes against Modi's visit on Friday, reports UNB.

Zafrullah, also a freedom fighter, alleged that the government forced the country's people to greet someone like Modi on the occasion of Bangladesh's golden jubilee.

Chief coordinator of Ganasanghati Andolan Zonayed Saki urged the government to ensure a proper investigation into police attacks on anti-Modi programmes in the capital, Chattogram and Brahmanbaria and make public the identities of those killed in the incidents.

He also demanded that the government put those responsible for the killings on trial and ensure compensation for the victim's family members. Besides, Saki urged the government to investigate the attacks on different progressive student organisations over the past week and withdraw the false cases filed against them.

At one point yesterday, the organisers of the protest programme locked into an altercation with police members as they encircled the rally before it concluded, UNB adds.

Addressing the same rally, former vice president of Dhaka University Central Students' Union Nurul Haque Nur urged the countrymen to stage protest, saying the country was undergoing a crisis, reports a correspondent.

He also urged the ruling party to hold talks with different political parties to "bring back peace in the country".

Meanwhile, Faruque Hasan, a leader of Chhatra Odhikar Parishad, claimed that police picked up 10 leaders and activists of the platform from the rally.

Asked, Sazzadur Rahman, deputy commissioner (Ramna division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, refused to make any comment immediately.

'KILLING' OF PEOPLE BY POLICE BNP announces two-day demo

Mirza Fakhrul avoids question when asked if they support Hefajat's strike

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday announced demonstrations on Monday and Tuesday, protesting what it said was the "killing" of people in different parts of the country on Independence Day.

Party Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir came up with the announcement at a press conference at BNP chairperson's Gulshan office in Dhaka, following a virtual meeting of BNP standing committee members.

However, the party did not formally extend its support to Hefajat-e-Islam's dawn-to-dusk hartal -- to be enforced across the country today, protesting the killing of its activists and attack on them on Friday.

Fakhrul said they will stage demonstrations and bring out processions in every city across the country, including Dhaka, on Monday protesting the killing of people in "peaceful demonstration" on Independence Day (Friday).

He said they will also hold similar programmes on Tuesday in all district towns.

Asked whether BNP supports Hefajat's hartal, Fakhrul dodged the question saying they are only going to protest the killing of people on Independence Day.

"I'm saying very specifically that every organisation and every citizen has a constitutional right to register protest or express his/her views. We announced the programme to protest the firing on those who tried to exercise their right of freedom of expression," he said.

The BNP leader said Hefajat has the right to enforce a hartal by exercising their democratic rights.

He also said it will be an undemocratic and reckless act if the government tries to resist or stop those who have convened the hartal.

"No one can expect such an action by the government. The government has to shoulder the responsibility if any unwarranted situation arises in the country over the matter."

He alleged that the ruling party has been trying to suppress the opposition and dissent by "resorting to killing, enforced disappearance and repressive acts in order to retain its illegitimate power".

SCHOOL REOPENING

Retaining students may be harder than bringing them back

Speakers tell virtual discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bringing students back to school once those reopen after the Covid-19 pandemic will be difficult, but keeping them in classes might be even tougher, speakers said at an online discussion programme yesterday.

They also called on the government to allocate adequate budget for the education sector hit hard by the pandemic.

The programme was held virtually by the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE) on the "Abidjan Principles" on the human rights obligations of states to provide public education and regulate private involvement in education.

The Abidjan Principles was adopted in 2019.

During his speech, BRAC's education programme director Safiqul Islam said while everyone is eagerly waiting for schools to reopen, an additional challenge lays elsewhere.

"Everyone will definitely want to send their children back to school. But the question is how many of the students will

really back come back to school, and how long will they stay?"

"While 'back to school campaigns' will be helpful to bring students in, keeping them in class will prove to be much more challenging," he said.

CAMPE Executive Director Rasheda K Choudhury said regardless of circumstances, education must not be deprioritised.

"If education is deprioritised, it will be tough to ensure right to education for all," she said.

She also said that it is high time to start discussion about a revamped education budget.

"Many teachers are going through difficult times, and their struggles cannot be overlooked. To make up for the academic time lost due to the pandemic, their roles in the class room will be invaluable," she added.

Bangladesh Kindergarten Association General Secretary Mizanur Rahman Sarkar said that only around 10 percent students are being educated online.

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To commemorate the birth centenary of Abdur Rab Serniabat -- prominent lawyer, politician and Bangabandhu's brother-in-law -- a traditional boat race was organised on Kirtankhola River in Barishal yesterday. People of the city and nearby areas thronged the riverbank to cheer them on.

PHOTO: TITU DAS