

Two new divisions on cards

They'll include dists in Faridpur, Cumilla regions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is going to form two new divisions named Padma and Meghna with districts in Faridpur and Cumilla regions.

The matter will be on the agenda of Sunday's meeting of the National Implementation Committee for Administrative Reforms (Nicar), confirmed a Cabinet Division official.

The meeting will be held at the Secretariat, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

"The issue will be discussed at the meeting. If the committee gives the nod, the two new divisions will be formed," the official said.

The proposed Padma division will have five districts – Faridpur, Rajbari, Madaripur, Shariatpur and Gopalganj, while the Meghna division will have six – Cumilla, Noakhali, Feni, Laxmipur, Brahmanbaria and Chandpur.

Currently, there are eight divisions in the country – Dhaka, Chattogram, Rajshahi, Khulna, Mymensingh, Barishal, Rangpur and Sylhet.

On October 21 last year, Hasina said she wanted to upgrade Faridpur and Cumilla to two new divisions and name those after two major rivers – the Padma and the Meghna.

Speaking at a programme marking the opening of the newly constructed office of the Cumilla city Awami League, the PM said, "I have decided to form two new divisions and name those after two rivers – the Padma and the Meghna."

Other agendas of Sunday's meeting include the formation of a municipality in Saktihira's Shyamnagar upazila, re-demarcation of Jamalpur's Madarganj upazila, extension of areas of Nandail municipality in Mymensingh, renaming of Kushtia Islamic University Police Station Jhaudia Police Station and its relocation to Jhaudia area, sources said.

Suu Kyi denies latest corruption charges in court appearance

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi denied further corruption charges when she testified yesterday in a junta-controlled court, according to a source with knowledge of the matter.

Suu Kyi has been a prisoner since the military toppled her government in February 2021, ending the Southeast Asian nation's brief period of democracy.



Villagers salvage items from damaged houses following a 5.6-magnitude earthquake that killed at least 268 people, with hundreds injured and many missing in Cianjur, Indonesia, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Indonesia quake toll hits 268

151 still missing; rescue ops on for survivors trapped under rubble

REUTERS, Cianjur

An earthquake that struck Indonesia's West Java killed at least 268 people, many of them children, with 151 still missing, disaster relief officials said yesterday, as rescuers searched the rubble of destroyed buildings for survivors.

The shallow 5.6-magnitude quake struck Indonesia's most populous province on Monday afternoon, causing significant damage to the town of Cianjur, about 75 km (45 miles) southeast of the capital, Jakarta, and burying at least one village under a landslide.

Disaster agency chief Suharyanto told reporters that more than 1,000 people had been injured, 58,000 displaced and 22,000 houses damaged.

Landslides and rough terrain hampered rescue efforts yesterday, said Henri Aliandi, head of National Search and Rescue Agency (Basarnas).

"The challenge is the affected area is spread out... On top of that, the roads in these villages are damaged," Aliandi told reporters.

Many of the victims were children who had been at school at the time the quake hit, he said.

While strong earthquakes of magnitude 6 or 7 are relatively common in Indonesia, Monday's quake of a lower magnitude had such deadly consequences because

it struck on land at a relatively shallow depth.

Officials said many of the dead were killed when poorly constructed buildings collapsed, with the president calling for reconstruction efforts to include earthquake-proof housing.

President Joko Widodo travelled to Cianjur yesterday to encourage rescuers.

"My instruction is to prioritise evacuating victims that are still trapped under rubble," he said.

Survivors had gathered overnight in a Cianjur hospital parking lot. Some of the injured were treated in tents, others were hooked up to intravenous drips on the pavement as medical workers stitched up patients under torchlight.

"Everything collapsed beneath me," Cucu, a 48-year-old resident, told Reuters. "Two of my kids survived, I dug them up ... Two others I brought here, and one is still missing," she said through tears.

In one area, some victims held cardboard signs asking for food and shelter, with emergency supplies seemingly yet to reach them.

Disaster officials said they would focus their efforts on one of the worst-hit areas of Cugenang, an area that was struck by a landslide triggered by the quake.

Television news channels showed footage of people digging brown earth

by hand using hoes, sticks, crowbars and other tools.

"At least six of my relatives are still unaccounted for, three adults and three children," said Zainuddin, a resident of Cugenang, told Reuters.

"If it was just an earthquake, only the houses would collapse, but this is worse because of the landslide. In this residential area, there were eight houses, all of which were buried and swept away."

National police chief Listyo Sigit Prabowo said more than 1,000 police had been deployed to assist in the recovery.

Rescue efforts were complicated by electricity outages in some areas and 145 aftershocks, with officials warning more landslides could follow in coming weeks.

"It's the rainy season in West Java, the peak is in December," Dwikorita Karnawati, head of the weather and geophysics agency, told reporters. "So we must anticipate any disaster that might follow, such as landslides."

Straddling the so-called Ring of Fire, a highly seismically active zone where different plates on the earth's crust meet, Indonesia has a history of devastating earthquakes.

In 2004, a 9.1 magnitude quake off Sumatra Island in northern Indonesia triggered a tsunami that struck 14 countries, killing 226,000 people.

Two boys hacked over Argentina match

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Two teenagers were hacked allegedly by some Argentine fans in Savar, on the outskirts of the capital, after Argentina lost to Saudi Arabia in the World Cup match yesterday.

The injured are Al Amin, 18, and Mehedi, 16, said Sub-Inspector Raju Ahmed of Savar Model Police Station.

Locals said the attackers and the victims were watching the match on a projector at Baktarpur in Savar municipality. After Argentina lost, over 20-22 boys attacked them with sharp weapons, leaving them critically injured.

They were rushed to Savar Upazila Health Complex. The people who took them to the hospital claimed that some youths who were supporting Argentina attacked the duo after an altercation over the match.

Farbin Jasim, on-duty doctor at the health complex, said the two have several injury marks. As their condition was critical, they were moved to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital, added the doctor.

Woman hacked to death by robbers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

A woman was hacked to death yesterday by unidentified criminals in her house in Rakudia village in Barishal's Babuganj upazila.

Six unidentified criminals wearing masks attacked Marufa Begum, 28, her husband Milon, 41, a businessman, and their two sons, in their house with sharp weapons around 2:00am. They looted gold ornaments worth Tk 50,000, said Farhad Hossain, assistant superintendent of Babuganj police.

Marufa died due to injuries while Milon was rushed to hospital for treatment, the ASP added.

According to local and police sources, Marufa might have been murdered over a family feud as her husband Milon was still in touch with his ex-wife.

Several people were being interrogated in this connection, however, no one was arrested till the filing of this report at 8:15pm.

500 sacks of hoarded sugar seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection yesterday seized around 500 sacks of sugar, weighing 29 tonnes, from a warehouse in Chattogram's Boropool area.

On information, DNCRP conducted a drive, led by Assistant Director M Anisul Rahman, at Sotota Trading's warehouse.

The business house was selling sugar at a price of Tk 105 per kg while the government fixed its price to Tk 102 per kg in the retail markets.

"We imposed a fine of Tk 50,000 on Sotota Trading for selling sugar at a higher price than that fixed by the government," Anisul said.

Cops, AL to be on high alert

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entry points to prevent anyone trying to get in with arms and explosives.

About the BNP rally, DMP Deputy Commissioner (Media) Faruk Hossain said it is for the government to decide whether the rally will go on as planned.

"But we are making all preparations for the December 10 rally. We are prepared to prevent any unwanted situations," he told The Daily Star.

The BNP has already sought DMP's permission to hold their much-talked-about rally in front of the party's Nayapaltan office.

However, DMP suggested that the party shift the venue outside the centre of the capital, and hold it at the International Trade Fair ground at Purbachal or Bishwa Jitema ground in Tongi, police sources said.

Contacted last night, BNP's Dhaka City North unit Convener Amanullah

Aman said, "Our secretary general has already said we want to hold the rally in front of our Nayapaltan office. We don't have any alternative now. Earlier, we held grand rallies here, but this time it's a mass gathering. We hope we will get permission."

But in tune with the DMP, Awami League Presidium Member Jahangir Kabir Nanak at a programme at Suhrawardy Udyan on Monday made similar suggestions.

"BNP leaders are repeatedly saying they will assemble 10 lakh people at their rally. So, they should go for a venue that has the capacity to hold that many people," he said.

On BNP's Dhaka rally day, the AL will hold its own rally in Savar where it expects a crowd of 2 lakh people. Additionally, the party is planning two separate rallies in Jatrabari and Uttara – two gateways to the capital.

It will put its rank and file of Dhaka

city on guard, and ask them to take position at the main streets and allies, as well as at other strategic points.

Party leaders and activists will gather at the offices of 26 thana units, 64 ward and 802 units under Dhaka North City AL, and at 24 thana units, 75 ward and 605 unit offices under Dhaka South City AL.

AL Organising Secretary for Dhaka Division Mirza Azam said the AL men will take position at every unit of Dhaka City.

"We don't want to create any obstacle to the BNP rally. But we will not let them create any unwanted situation," he told The Daily Star. "We will also be alert to avoid confrontations."

The face-off between the two parties raised concerns among police, but they said they have preparations to tackle any possible confrontation between the two parties.

Saudi Arabia stun high-flying Argentina

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But when the shock subsided they will rightly be angry at how a squad packed with household names and who were one game away from equalling Italy's 37-match unbeaten run in international football suffered another World Cup blow-out.

And a self-inflicted one at that against a team entirely made up of players from Saudi Arabia's domestic league.

Messi began like a man on a mission, forcing an early save and then slotting in a penalty for his 92nd international goal.

But even the magician was guilty of taking his eye off the ball as Argentina withered in the face of a ferocious Saudi Arabian onslaught after the interval.

Having one goal disallowed for offside could be considered unfortunate. Three smacked of carelessness by Lionel Scaloni's side who should have been home and dry by halftime.

Saudi Arabia's offside trap was canny, but forwards of the quality of Messi, Martinez and Angel Di Maria

ran into it seven times in the first half – one more than they did in the whole of the 2018 tournament in Russia.

No one thought it would matter much and that Argentina would change gear after the break.

But from the moment the second half kicked off they looked ragged, cumbersome and ponderous.

Certainly not like a team widely-tipped to deliver a third World Cup, and first since Diego Maradona's 1986 glory.

When Saleh Al-Shehri got away from Cristian Romero all too easily to equalise in the 48th minute to draw Saudi Arabia level, it should have focused Argentine minds.

Instead, they looked rattled and when the Saudis swarmed in attack again five minutes later Salem Al-Dawsari shrugged off some flimsy challenges to curl a winner that Messi himself would have been proud to have in his glittering collection.

Even then, with so much time left on the clock, Argentina's quality should have shone through to avert humiliation.

Scaloni threw on Julian Alvarez,

Lisandro Martinez and Enzo Fernandez on the hour but all too little effect as Argentina laboured in attack, with Angel Di Maria looking heavy-legged and Messi continually running into a green wall.

Argentina can still salvage their World Cup as they did in 1990 when they reached the final having been shocked by Cameroon in their opening game, but Scaloni has some serious thinking ahead of their next game against a dangerous Mexico side.

And with Poland also in the group they have left themselves with little wriggle room and Messi's hopes hanging by a thread.

Later in the day, Poland's Robert Lewandowski missed a penalty – and his chance to finally claim a World Cup tournament goal – in a 0-0 draw with Mexico on Tuesday in a Group C encounter.

Meanwhile, Denmark hit the woodwork in the second half as they were held to a 0-0 draw by Tunisia in their Group D World Cup opener that smouldered and sparked, but never quite caught fire at the Education City Stadium on Tuesday.

Russia unveils new icebreaker in push for energy markets

AFP, Saint Petersburg

President Vladimir Putin yesterday oversaw the launch of a new nuclear-powered icebreaker as Russia pushes to develop the Arctic and seeks new energy markets amid sanctions over Ukraine.

Addressing a Saint Petersburg ceremony for the launch of the Yakutia icebreaker by video link, Putin said such vessels were of "strategic" importance for Russia.

In addition to floating out the Yakutia, authorities also symbolically raised a flag on another nuclear-powered icebreaker, the Yul.

The Yul and the Yakutia are part of a fleet of nuclear-powered icebreakers that are meant to ensure Moscow's dominance over the melting Arctic.

The Kremlin chief vowed to develop his country's nuclear fleet despite current difficulties in Russia's economy and production in an apparent reference to Western sanctions over Moscow's offensive in Ukraine.

"We will increase the capabilities of our nuclear icebreaker fleet," Putin said.

He said this should be achieved "using domestic equipment and components".

The Yul is expected to become operational in December, while the Yakutia will join the fleet in late 2024, Putin said.

The vessels are designed to resist extreme weather conditions in the Far North, have a length of 173 metres (568 feet) and can smash through ice up to 2.8 metres thick.

The Russian leader said the ships were part of Moscow's efforts "to consolidate Russia's status as a great Arctic power".

He once again stressed the importance of developing the so-called Northern Sea Route, which allows ships to reach Asian ports up to 15 days faster than via the traditional Suez Canal.

"This very important corridor will allow Russia to realise its export potential in full, and establish an effective logistics route to South East Asia," Putin said.

Moscow has for years heavily invested in the route.

But Putin's military campaign in Ukraine and subsequent Western sanctions have given new urgency to plans to redirect energy exports to Asia.

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I am kidding about that being the big story of course. The major news of the day clearly is Timothy Weah. The first son of a sitting head of state, the legendary Liberian footballer and current Liberian president George Weah, to play in and score in the World Cup finals. Timothy plays for team USA, and I am sure will show up in sports quiz questions for years to come.

Though I jest about Weah being the highlight of Day 3 in Qatar also. I am waffling because I cannot decide how to address today's real headline. Seriously, the probability that the Saudis were going to do what they did was less than 9%. From a statistical

standpoint, this qualifies as the biggest upset in World Cup history. Perhaps the most astonishing thing is that it was not a fluke. Recognising that stretching the field would just be playing into the hands of the more gifted and experienced Argentine players, Saudi Arabia's manager Herve Renard employed a highly risky defensive high-line strategy, which allowed his players to compress the field. It was a bold plan executed with brilliant energy by his players. The rewards are legion.

After two days of highly underwhelming performances by tournament underdogs, and the news being constantly dominated by off-the-field matters, it was finally good

to have something to talk about from the football pitch. Saudi Arabia's first-half performance alone would have been a story on other days. But they raised the stakes magnificently, and today we are reminded, in the most dramatic manner possible, why football is beautiful.

I sincerely hope that Argentina are able to pull themselves together. An early Albiceleste exit takes a lot out of the tournament for a neutral, especially in Bangladesh. And I seriously hope that my fellow Bangladeshis didn't go overboard with their despair and glee. Tomorrow's headlines should just be about what happened in ninety minutes plus added time.