

IMF all praise for Bangladesh Says finance minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal yesterday said the International Monetary Fund had praised Bangladesh's economic progress as "outstanding".

"The IMF opened its heart and described Bangladesh's achievements as outstanding," he said at an award-giving ceremony for the top VAT payers at the InterContinental Dhaka.

When the Awami League government came to power in 2009, Bangladesh's GDP was \$100 billion. This has increased almost four and a half times and now stands at \$465 billion. The per capita income increased from \$686 to \$2,866.

"Bangladesh has reached this position because of the contribution

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RUSSIAN DRONE ATTACK

Ukraine's Odesa without power

US vows to disrupt Russia-Iran defence ties, declares more aid for Kyiv

AGENCIES

The southern Ukrainian city of Odesa was left without power yesterday following a night-time attack by "kamikaze drones" launched by Russia, authorities said, as the US announced new military aid for Kyiv and vowed to disrupt Russian ties with Iran.

"As of now, the city is without electricity," Kyrylo Tymoshenko, deputy head of the presidential administration, said on messaging app Telegram. Only critical infrastructure including hospitals and maternity wards had access to electricity.

The Black Sea port of Odesa was a favourite holiday destination for many Ukrainians and Russians before President Vladimir Putin sent troops to pro-Western Ukraine on February 24, reports AFP.

Maksym Marchenko, the governor

of the region of Odesa, said Russia had attacked the city with "kamikaze drones" overnight. "As a result of the strike, there is no electricity in almost all districts and communities of our region," he said.

Two drones were shot down by Ukrainian air defence units, Marchenko added.

In Washington, White House national security spokesman John Kirby told reporters that US was very concerned about the "deepening and burgeoning defence partnership" between Iran and Russia, and would work to disrupt that relationship, including on drones.

Washington was sending a \$275 million package of aid to Ukraine to strengthen air defences and defeat drones, he said.

Britain's UN Ambassador Barbara Woodward said Iran had sent hundreds of drones that Russia had used in Ukraine, reports Reuters.

"Russia is now attempting to obtain more weapons, including hundreds of ballistic missiles," she told reporters. "In return, Russia is offering Iran an unprecedented level of military and technical support."

The Iranian and Russian missions to the United Nations did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Russian President Vladimir Putin earlier said Moscow would probably do a deal over Ukraine one day but that Russia's near-total loss of trust in the West would make an eventual settlement, which he did not elaborate on, much harder to reach.

Russia has clamped down on dissent since it invaded Ukraine in February, and a Moscow court on Friday sentenced opposition politician Ilya Yashin to eight and a half years in prison on charges of spreading "false information" about the army.

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Man killed after Argentina, Brazil fans clash

STAR REPORT

A man was killed in Habiganj's Bahubal upazila yesterday following an altercation between supporters of Argentina and Brazil football teams.

After Brazil lost to Croatia in the World Cup match on Friday night, the supporters of Argentina brought out a procession.

Shah Md Rukon Mia, a supporter of Argentina, locked in an altercation with Sajib Mia, a supporter of Brazil, in the procession, said Prajit Kumar Das, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Bahubal Police Station.

Although locals immediately stopped their fight, supporters of Brazil attacked Rukon's father Shah Md Abdus Shahid, 55, around 11:00am yesterday, he added.

He succumbed to his injuries at the Bahubal Upazila Health Complex, the OC further said.

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A part of the crowd of the BNP rally on Golapbagh Road. Tens of thousands of people attended the rally in Golapbagh ground in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



Awami League General Secretary and Minister for Road Transport and Bridges Obaidul Quader addressing yesterday's AL rally on the premises of Radio Colony Model School and College in Savar.

PHOTO: STAR

Peaceful BNP rally brings sigh of relief

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Mosharraf condemned the arrests of BNP Secretary General Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, Standing Committee member Mirza Abbas, and other leaders and activists.

He denounced what he said were vandalism at the BNP headquarters and the killing of a party worker on Wednesday.

A man died and over 100 others got injured as BNP activists and police clashed in the capital's Nayapaltan on Wednesday.

Mosharraf then declared the 10-point demand that also included formation of a non-partisan caretaker government in line with sections Kha, Ga and Gha of article 58 that was incorporated in the constitution in 1996; formation of a new Election Commission under the caretaker government; scrapping of convictions of Khaleda Zia and the other opposition leaders and activists; withdrawal of all "false cases" against them; and repeal of the Digital Security Act and other repressive laws.

As he announced the next programmes, the crowds demanded blockade and strike. Mosharraf then paused for a moment and said, "Such programmes would be announced at

the right time."

The rally has been the talk of the country for the last few days. Persisting stalemate over the venue raised doubts as to whether the BNP would be able to hold the event at all. For days, the authorities insisted that the event be organised at Suhrawardy Udyan while the BNP refused to hold it anywhere but Nayapaltan.

Wednesday's clash, which raised the spectre of violence on the streets, took place amid negotiations between the BNP leaders and Dhaka Metropolitan Police. Fakhrul, Abbas and other top leaders were sent to jail the next day in a case filed over the clash in Nayapaltan.

Even though the DMP gave the party permission to hold the rally on Golapbagh ground on Thursday afternoon, the general public were still concerned over the likelihood of further violence. The largely desolate roads in the city were a reflection of the unease that people felt over the rally.

The capital was almost cut off from the rest of the country as long-haul buses were hardly operational. At various entry points, cars and motorcycles were thoroughly checked. Law enforcers also checked

people's phones.

Addressing the rally, BNP Standing Committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury said the law enforcement agencies were used as cadres "to prevent people from joining the rally".

He said the ruling party spoke of following the constitution. "Such talks of obeying the constitution do not suit them because they assumed power illegally."

Referring to the resignation of BNP lawmakers, Standing Committee member Gayeshwar Chandra Roy said, "They have shown you the path. You [AL] should follow it."

BNP lawmaker Golam Mohammad Siraj said, "I have been in parliament for three years, but have never heard the ruling party lawmakers speak of people's sufferings. There are only praises for Sheikh Hasina at the sessions.

"The ruling party has snatched people's fundamental rights ... I'm resigning from this illegal parliament."

The BNP rallies in different cities were held to protest the price hikes of daily essentials and fuel.

BNP Dhaka City (North) Convener Amanullah Aman chaired the event.

Quitting JS won't help BNP much

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the 11th parliament still has a year of its tenure left.

Speaking to The Daily Star, political analysts and parliament experts said the BNP, instead of the government, will be the loser in this situation as, with only seven MPs, the party will not be able to make any considerable impact on the government or parliament with this decision.

At yesterday's rally in the city's Golapbagh field, the BNP said its MPs have resigned as per the party's standing committee decision.

Rumeen Farhana, BNP reserved seat MP and the party's international affairs secretary, announced the decision.

"All seven lawmakers have emailed their resignation letters to the Speaker of the House. As parliament is closed today [yesterday], we will physically submit our resignations tomorrow [today].

"We're not benefiting from being MPs. We joined parliament to see how much space we get. But it's all the same ... So we have announced our resignations," she said.

"We wanted to raise our voice in parliament in support of the people. But we were barred from speaking time and again. There's no point in staying in this parliament," she added.

Apart from her, the other MPs are Md Zahidur Rahman of Thakurgaon-3; Md Mosharof Hosen of Bogura-4; Gulam Mohammad Siraj of Bogura-6; Md Aminul Islam of Chapainawabganj-2; Md Harunur Rashid of Chapainawabganj-3, and Abdus Sattar Bhuiyan of Brahmanbaria-2.

Gulam Mohammad Siraj was the first to announce his retirement at the rally.

Later, Zahidur Rahman, Mosharof Hosen and Aminul Islam followed suit amid thunderous cheers from the party activists.

The resignations of Harunur Rashid and Abdus Sattar Bhuiyan were also announced on stage.

Speaking to The Daily Star over the phone from Australia, Rashid said, "I have already signed my resignation letter as per the party's decision."

According to article 67 (2) of the constitution, a member of parliament may resign his seat by writing under his hand addressed to the Speaker, and the seat shall become vacant when the writing is received by the Speaker or by the Deputy Speaker, if the office of the Speaker is vacant or the Speaker is for any reason unable to perform their functions.

On October 30, Mirza Fakhrul Islam

Alamgir, BNP secretary general, had announced that the party lawmakers were ready to resign.

Meanwhile, the BNP at the rally urged Jatiya Party, the main opposition in parliament with 26 MPs, to resign and join the ranks of the people.

The BNP-led Jatiya Oikyafront won eight seats in the 2018 national election.

Of them, six were won by the BNP and two by the Gonoforum. The BNP later got another MP in the reserved seats for women.

After much drama, the BNP MPs, except for Mirza Fakhrul, joined parliament. Gulam Mohammad Siraj won in the by-election in Fakhrul's seat (Bogura-6).

At that time, the BNP had said it will not join parliament since it wasn't formed through a proper election.

However, the party later thought it reasonable to continue the struggle in parliament and the streets simultaneously to demand the restoration of voting rights and democracy, and the release of its Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

WHAT EXPERTS SAY

Prof Nizam Ahmed, a parliamentary affairs expert and a former teacher of public administration in Chittagong University, said the BNP will be the loser here as the resignation of just seven MPs won't mean much pressure on the government or parliament.

"At least they had a formal platform from where they could speak on issues against the government. With the resignation, they will lose this platform as well."

He added that the BNP could not yet take its anti-government movement to a point where the resignations could mount pressure on the government.

He said the prime minister has already announced the next election will be held in January 2024, and the BNP can't seem to force the government to hold it earlier.

"In that case, why lose the opportunity to speak in the parliament?"

Nizam, however, said there might be some level of international pressure on the government due to the BNP's move.

Eminent political analyst Al Masud Hasanuzzaman, professor of government and politics at Jahangirnagar University, said that as part of its anti-government movement, the BNP decided to resign from parliament as this move will be publicised nationally and internationally.

"The party made this move to create pressure on the government to realise its demand. But the number of their MPs is so insignificant that their resignations will not have any direct impact on the parliament activities."

Badiul Alam Majumder, secretary of Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan), said time will say whether the BNP's decision was right or wrong.

JP SAYS NO TO BNP

Jatiya Party yesterday rejected the BNP's call to resign from the House.

"We don't have any relations with the BNP's call for us to resign from parliament," JP Secretary General Mujibul Haque Chunnun told The Daily Star.

"The BNP has its own politics and strategy. Ours and theirs are not the same."

Meanwhile, Obaidul Quader, Awami League general secretary, at an AL rally in Savar, yesterday said the seven BNP lawmakers will regret announcing their resignations.

"There is no reason to think that the Jatiya Sangsad will be paralysed if the seven of you [BNP MPs] leave."

Their rallies

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"We have got news this [Saturday] morning that the United States has imposed treasury sanctions on 40 individuals and entities across nine countries. But Bangladesh is not on the list," said Quader.

"It's good news for Bangladesh, but bad news for the conspirators."

AL presidium member Jahangir Kabir Nanak said the BNP lawmakers were resigning as they felt ashamed for failing to hatch a plot centring their rally yesterday.

AL Joint General Secretary Mahbubul Alam Hanif said, "You [BNP lawmakers] have the democratic right to resign. But the resignations must be submitted before parliament Speaker, not at any field."

He also urged the BNP men to give up on their movements and return home.

Dhaka district AL organised the rally protesting "the propaganda and conspiracy by BNP Jamaat". Savar upazila AL president Hasina Daula presided over the rally, where Muhammad Abdur Razzaque, AL presidium member and agriculture minister, and several other senior leaders also spoke.

(Our Savar and Jahangirnagar University correspondents contributed to this report.)

France see off England in nail-biter

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This, remarkably, was the first meeting of these two great rivals in a major tournament knockout game, with Croatia's victory in extra time preventing England from joining France in the final four years ago.

England had found their stride after a sluggish start in the last-16 win over Senegal and it was no surprise to see Southgate name an unchanged side, with Bukayo Saka and Phil Foden either side of Kane in attack.

That meant he resisted any temptation to revert to a back five in an attempt to counter the threat posed by Kylian Mbappe, the tournament's top scorer with five goals.

There is no shortage of goal threats in the French side but few could have predicted that the opener would come from Tchouameni, the midfielder who is just 22 and had scored only once for his country before this game.

There was a touch of controversy to the goal, as it came from a France break which started with what looked like a foul by Dayot Upamecano on Saka.

Brazilian referee Wilton Sampaio waved play on, and Mbappe cut

inside from the left before Ousmane Dembele and Griezmann combined to set up Tchouameni to hit a superb shot from 25 metres that curled away from Jordan Pickford and into the corner.

France had looked the more dangerous team before that, but England grew into the contest after falling behind.

Kane spun away from Upamecano in the box but was denied as his Tottenham teammate Hugo Lloris came out to dive at his feet.

Another moment of controversy followed as England thought they should have had a penalty when Kane was clearly fouled in a tangle of legs with Upamecano.

However, a VAR check ruled out a spot-kick with the officials judging that any infringement took place outside the box.

Not to be discouraged, Kane forced Lloris to tip a shot behind just before the half-hour mark and the France goalkeeper — winning a national record 143rd cap — was called into action again just after the restart to tip over a Jude Bellingham volley.

The pressure eventually told when Saka was brought down by Tchouameni in the area seven minutes into the second half and this time a spot-kick was given.

Kane stepped up to beat Lloris and score his 53rd goal to equal Wayne Rooney's record England tally.

The holders may not have been rattled, but England had the upper hand, and Harry Maguire headed agonisingly wide from a free-kick.

France had created nothing in the second half, but then Giroud forced an excellent save from Pickford following a Dembele knockdown, and moments later they struck.

Griezmann whipped in a tremendous cross from the left for Giroud to head in with the aid of a touch off Maguire.

That was not game over, as Theo Hernandez was penalised for a shove on substitute Mason Mount when the referee gave a spot-kick following a VAR review.

But this time Kane — with his country's outright goal record in sight — blazed over, and England's World Cup dream was over too.