




11 parties of BNP-led alliance form new combine

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A new political platform called "Jatiyatabadi Samamona Jote", involving 11 parties of the BNP-led 20-party alliance, was formally launched yesterday.

Fariduzzaman Farhad, chairman of the National People's Party (NPP) and coordinator of the new alliance, made the announcement at the Jatiya Press Club.

"We have united to form a nationalist like-minded alliance today [Wednesday]. The name of this alliance is Jatiyatabadi Samamona Jote."

He said the alliance has been formed to strengthen the simultaneous anti-government movement, build a Bangladesh with the people's aspirations in mind, and resolve the country's political crisis.

The parties in the new platform are National People's Party-NPP; Jagpa (Khandkar Lutfur); Democratic League (DL); Bangladesh NAP; Bikalpa Dhara (Nurul Amin); Samyabadi Dal; Gono Dal; NAP-Bhasani; Islami Oikya Jote; People's League and Bangladesh Minority Janata Party.

Farhad said the alliance will join the simultaneous movement, extending support to the BNP's 10-point demand and the 27-point structural reform unveiled to repair the structure of the state.

The development comes just four days after an alliance was launched with 12 parties of the 20-party alliance on December 22.

The 12 parties included Jatiya Party (Kazi Zafar); Kalyan Party; Labour Party; Jatiya Dal; Bangladesh LDP; Jatiya Democratic Party-JAGPA (Tasmia Pradhan); NDP; LDP

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A trawler, which is usually used for fishing purposes, carrying a microbus, a motorcycle, and some more small and medium sized vehicles, along with people, on the Bhairab river near Kheyaghat in Khulna's Phultala. The unusual amount of weight it is carrying could lead to a tragic accident any moment.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Bangladeshi scientist recognised by Lancet



Senjuti Saha

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Senjuti Saha, an eminent microbiologist of Bangladesh, has been recognised by renowned science journal Lancet which uploaded her profile to its website.

This is the first time any Bangladeshi has been featured there this way.

The journal shared the profile of the microbiologist with praise on their website delineating her role in the genome sequencing of the deadly coronavirus pathogen and others like

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Russia intensifies attacks on east Ukraine, Kherson

REUTERS, Kyiv/Bakhmut

Russian forces stepped up mortar and artillery attacks on the recently liberated city of Kherson in southern Ukraine yesterday, Ukraine's military said, while also exerting constant pressure along front lines in eastern regions of the country.

Russia fired 33 missiles from multiple rocket launchers at civilian targets in Kherson in the 24 hours to early yesterday, the General Staff of Ukraine's Armed Forces said in its morning report. Russia denies targeting civilians.

Heavy fighting also persisted around the Ukrainian-held city of Bakhmut, now largely in ruins, in the eastern province of Donetsk, and to its north, around the cities of Svatove and Kreminna in Luhansk province, where Ukrainian forces are trying to break Russian defensive lines.

Air raid sirens also sounded across Ukraine yesterday morning, officials said. Ukrainian social media reports said the nationwide alert may have been declared after Russian jets stationed in Belarus took off. Reuters was unable to immediately verify that information.

Britain's defence ministry said in its latest update on the military situation in Ukraine that Russia had likely reinforced the Kreminna section of the frontline as it is logistically important to Moscow and has become relatively vulnerable following recent Ukrainian advances further west.

There is still no prospect of talks to end the war, now in its 11th month.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is vigorously pushing a 10-point peace plan that envisages Russia fully

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2.5cr pry textbooks won't reach students on time

NCTB cites high prices of paper, power outage, work order delay as key reasons

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The authorities won't be able to deliver 25 percent of the primary textbooks on January 1, the first day of the next academic year thanks to the high price of paper, load-shedding and delays in placing the work orders.

The delay, however, will not cause many problems as not all students show up on the first day of school to collect all their textbooks, said Farhadul Islam, chairman of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board.

"We are trying hard to deliver the textbooks," he said, adding that almost all secondary books will reach the upazilas on time.

All primary and secondary students are expected to get their full set of textbooks by January 10, Islam added.

Until yesterday noon, 62 percent of 10 crore primary textbooks and 80 percent of about 24 crore books for secondary students have reached the upazilas.

The books appear to be printed

on low quality papers and have poor printing quality, said teachers of different districts.

"This is because of the global virgin pulp crisis," Islam said.

The paper crisis was a big issue but several printing companies that won the tender for printing primary textbooks did not sign a contract with the NCTB, said NCTB member

Until yesterday noon, 62 percent of 10 crore primary textbooks and 80 percent of about 24 crore books for secondary students have reached the upazilas.

Moshiuzzaman.

"We have to follow the procedures for awarding the work to second bidders if these printers don't go ahead with the work," he added.

After much delay, the work of printing primary books began on December 1.

However, they could print so

many books within a short period as the number of pages of a primary book is less than in the secondary books.

Previously, the government used to distribute free textbooks only at the primary level, which turned out to be difficult for many students belonging to low-income groups or disadvantaged communities.

Besides, printers would often create an artificial crisis by not printing and distributing books on time. In some cases, books used to hit the stalls in March-April or even later that year.

Since 2010, the government has been distributing free textbooks to both primary and secondary students at the very beginning of the academic session.

So far, about 400 crore free textbooks have been delivered for free, garnering praise from home and abroad.

The success has led to significant improvements in enrolment at the primary and secondary levels as well as a decrease in the dropout rates, NCTB officials said.

The man on a mission to plant 5m trees in 5 years

AGENCIES



A man in southern Senegal has set himself the ambitious task of planting five million trees over the next five years.

This visionary project came to Adama Diémé when he returned home to the Casamance region in 2020 after a few years working in Europe.

The 48-year-old was shocked that in villages that were populated with hundreds of gigantic trees in his youth, only a handful, if any, now remained.

"In some villages, you can't find one tree. They cut them but they don't think about planting again," he told the BBC recently.

Across Africa desertification is one of the reasons blamed for deforestation but, in this area, along the sweeping expanse of the Casamance River, the trees are more likely to have been cut down for construction purposes like building houses, or to make charcoal.

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BERNICAT'S CONVOY Court orders further probe into 2018 attack

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday ordered further investigation into the case filed over the attack on former US ambassador to Bangladesh Marcia Bernicat's convoy in the capital's Mohammadpur in August 2018.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Shahidul Islam passed the order after Public Prosecutor Md Abdullah Abu submitted an application in this regard.

In the application, the PP said the complainant and five others had earlier given depositions before the court and three of them mentioned the name of Ishtiaque Mahmud, brother-in-law of complainant Badiul Alam Majumdar, as the culprit.

The investigation officer, however, did not include his name in the charge sheet and so further investigation is needed to

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Workers of a printing press in the capital's Matuail area readying textbooks to be handed out to students on January 1 -- the first day of the new academic year. Like every year, the government will be distributing these textbooks for free among all primary and secondary school students across the country. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

2 E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS Explain inaction over refunding Tk 13cr to clients HC asks authorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday questioned the authorities' inaction over giving back Tk 13 crore to the people who paid ecommerce platforms Dalal Plus and E-Orange but never received the goods they ordered.

The court issued a rule asking the respondents to explain in four weeks why their inaction to refund the money should not be declared illegal.

It issued another rule asking why the authorities inaction on disposal of the applications seeking the money back should not be declared illegal.

Secretaries at the ministries of commerce, home, and law; governor of Bangladesh Bank; inspector general of police; head of Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) and officers concerned of Dalal Plus and E-Orange are respondents to the rule.

At the same time, the HC directed the commerce secretary to dispose of the applications submitted by the customers in 60 days.

The bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Biswajit Debnath issued the rules and orders following two separate writ petitions filed by a man named Al Amin on behalf of 42 customers, who paid the money to the e-commerce organisations.

Petitioner's lawyer Abu Sadat Mohammad Sayem Ali Pathan told The Daily Star that 42 customers including Al Amin have deposited Tk 9.58 crore to "Dalal Plus" and

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