

## 'Not in the mood to respond to AL's lies'

Says Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

B N P yesterday said it is "not in the mood" to respond to Awami League's lies.

Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, the party's secretary general, made the remark in response to a question at a press conference at BNP's Nayapaltan central office.

When a journalist asked questions about the government's move to hike electricity prices, Fakhrul said, "I have already sent a statement in this regard. Today, I am not here to respond to Awami League leaders."

BNP organised the conference to announce a 10-day programme to

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It had been a cold and windy start to the day. By the time this correspondent met Aleya in the capital's Khilgaon area yesterday, the 65-year-old was trying to catch some sleep sitting on a footpath. However, all she had was a thin blanket to keep her warm, which was proving inadequate to battle the elements. Homeless people are the worst sufferers of the biting cold wave that has been sweeping the nation for the past few days.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Awami League always fulfils election pledges

Says Hasina

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister and President of ruling Awami League Sheikh Hasina yesterday firmly said her party always keeps the election pledges made ahead of any national election.

"Before every national election, Awami League places its election pledges and Awami League always keeps its election pledges, this is the reality," she said.

The prime minister said this while delivering her introductory speech at the joint meeting of the Awami League National Committee, Central Working Committee and Advisory Council at her official residence Gono Bhaban.

She said the government is working for the country and its people as per its election pledges. "We work for the welfare of the nation and people are getting results of those."

Lambasting a section of people who always criticises the government unnecessarily, she said, "There are some people who don't feel good although we have developed the country a lot."

Regarding corruption, she mentioned that she has

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## Women edge out men in mobile phone use: report



PHOTO: COLLECTED

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In terms of access to mobile phones, the country's women have beaten men by 0.1 percentage points, according to the latest survey of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS).

The proportion of mobile phone use for men and women in the last three months is 89.9 percent and 90 percent, respectively, said the report.

The BBS has recently published this preliminary report on the "Survey on ICT Use and Access by Individuals and Households 2022".

Besides, women have also beaten men in terms of the frequency of internet use at least once a day.

A total of 68.9 percent of women and 67.7 percent of men use the internet at least once a day.

However, men have beaten women in regards to the frequency of internet use at least once a week, and the ratio is - male 25.5 percent and female 24.1 percent.

The survey said the percentage of internet users in the total population rose to 38.9 percent in 2022 from 6.7 percent in 2013.

The survey also found that the number of computer users is the highest in Chattogram at 15 percent and the lowest in Barishal at 4 percent.

It said around 52.2 percent of Bangladesh's population have smartphones. Division-wise, the percentage of household internet use is highest in Dhaka at 54.2 percent and lowest in Rajshahi at 19.7 percent, found the latest survey.

The rate of mobile use also increased to 89.9 percent in 2022 from 81.7 percent in 2013.

## 'Legally protect domestic workers'

Demand trade union leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Trade union leaders and civil society members yesterday demanded an end to the torture of house helps and to legally protect them in the country.

Besides, they also demanded compensation for domestic workers who faced violence, their proper treatment and exemplary punishment of the culprits.

They made demands during a human chain in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club, organised by Domestic Worker's Rights Network (DWRN), said a press release.

The participants said rights violation of domestic workers has increased alarmingly in the country in recent years. Recently, two domestic workers faced violence in Dhaka and Cumilla.

They further said such incidents took place one after another as the country's "Domestic Workers' Protection and Welfare Policy, 2015," hasn't been implemented properly.

Besides, perpetrators feel encouraged to commit such violence time and again because of a culture of impunity in the country, they added.

DWRN acting coordinator Abul Hossain presided over the programme. Among others, Vice Chairman of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies Amirul Haque Amin; Executive President of Jatiya Sramik Jote Abdul Wahed; and acting General Secretary of Bangladesh Mukto Sramik Federation Shahidullah Badal were present.

**Perpetrators feel encouraged to commit such violence time and again because of a culture of impunity in the country.**

## RADIO SILENCE

Bangladesh Betar's external service inoperative for three years

SAJJAD HOSSAIN and ARAFAT RAHAMAN

The external service of Bangladesh Betar has remained disconnected from the rest of the world for over three years due to a mechanical fault, depriving a vast diaspora of foreign listeners.

The worldwide service, which was accessed through mobile apps and the web, shut down on March 3, 2019, as a valve, a major part of the voice-transmitting machine, went out of order, according to the director of Betar's external service department.

The lone state-run radio station used to broadcast programmes for eight and a half hours daily for its foreign audience from Dhaka's Kabirpur station.

It covered news and different development and cultural programmes in Europe, the Middle East, South Africa, and neighbouring countries, in five languages - Bangla, English, Hindi, Nepalese and Arabic.

The long closure has put a question mark over the country's future in providing proper services to people who tune into Betar, said experts.

Mentionable, Betar's external service was launched in 1972.

After the Liberation War, the station became a voice of the country for locals and foreigners. Since then, Bangladesh Betar established itself as one of the



### AT A GLANCE

- ➔ Voice transmitting valve went out of order in 2019
- ➔ French supplier Thomson was supposed to provide technical support for 15 years, till 2024
- ➔ Authorities couldn't reach Thomson despite several attempts
- ➔ Insufficient funds from govt lead to lag in repairs

most high-profile and popular international radio broadcasters, according to officials.

Nasrullah Md Irfan, additional director general of Bangladesh Betar, said they have been unable to repair the machine as the supplier did not cooperate in this regard.

He said Betar authorities tried to communicate with Thomson,

the French company that supplied the machine and was supposed to provide technical support for 15 years, till 2024.

"We've communicated with them many times, but they aren't supplying the parts," Irfan said recently at a programme.

The Daily Star sent a mail and text message to Thomson for comments, but it did not respond.

Abdul Alim, sub-assistant engineer of the Kabirpur radio station, said as the machine is not working, there is no alternative way of sending audio outside the country.

Md Masud Bhuiyan, the chief engineer of Bangladesh Betar, said a new valve would cost them around Tk 1.40 crore.

"But we have a budget of Tk 1.20 crore," said Bhuiyan. "Besides, it normally takes more time to buy such equipment as we have to follow international tender processes."

Over the suspension of transmission, Shams Ibne Obaid, station chief of Radio Bhumi, said, "The government has been spending a lot of money in this sector. But being one of the richest departments, Bangladesh Betar has only been counting losses for years, instead of serving anything good for the people."

Shahanaj Begum, director of Bangladesh Betar's external service department, refused to comment on this matter when contacted over the phone.

## Dhaka, Tokyo for 'strategic partnership'

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has said Bangladesh and Japan now have an ideal opportunity to take bilateral relations to new heights through closer and deeper "strategic partnership".

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and late Shinzo Abe, former prime minister of Japan, elevated the relationship to a "comprehensive partnership" in 2014, he said.

Momen was speaking as chief guest at the inaugural ceremony of the second International Hybrid Conference on "Japanology in New Era", organised by the Department of Japanese Studies, University of Dhaka at the institution's Senate Auditorium yesterday.



"Our excellent bilateral relations have been enriched in content and dimension in recent years under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who visited Japan five times," said the foreign minister.

The PM is likely to visit Japan in April this year. After Japan's prompt recognition of Bangladesh's independence on February 10, 1972, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman undertook a historic visit to Japan in October 1973 and laid the foundation of today's exemplary bilateral relations, Momen said.

Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman, vice chancellor of DU, chaired the discussion.

Iwama Kiminori, ambassador of Japan to

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Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, and Romo Rouf Chowdhury, one of the directors of Mediaworld Limited, along with journalists and employees of the newspaper, celebrated Staff Day with much enthusiasm yesterday. On the occasion, many were recognised for their outstanding performance in the last year.

PHOTO: STAR

## Star celebrates Staff Day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country's leading English newspaper, The Daily Star, yesterday celebrated its Staff Day, with much enthusiasm and a pledge to continue upholding the standard of journalism.

The day-long programme was held on the rooftop of the capital's The Daily Star Centre.

The event began with a "Pitha Utsab" and cultural performances, in which multi-talented staff members of the newspaper participated.

The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam paid rich tribute to founding editor SM Ali and other founding directors. He recalled late Mediaworld chairperson Latifur Rahman as an inspiration and guide.

He spoke about the challenges that emerged in the era of social media and pledged that The Daily Star will overcome all the challenges and continue its journalism without fear or favour.

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