



P6 'Eager to work in Bangladesh'



P7 Turkey offers economic aid in quake zone



P11 Transition facing Hathrusingha



B4 IT export surges 36pc in first half

Under strain, govt may go for inclusive polls

AL will face BNP on streets while efforts will be there to have the opposition party join polls

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and PORIMOL PALMA

Feeling the pressure from the West for fair and participatory polls and the economic stress at home, the government may go all out to get the BNP and like minded parties to participate in the next national election.

Even though the Awami League decided to dominate the streets and have counter programmes for the BNP's agitations, it is considering behind the scene talks with the opposition party to ensure the latter's participation in the polls, ruling party sources said.

The AL will take an initiative to bring the BNP to the table sometime in April, added the sources.

In recent months, the West, especially the US, the UK, the European Union, and Japan, made critical remarks about the 2018 national polls and pressed for fair and inclusive polls.

They spoke about alleged widespread irregularities during the polls in which the AL led grand alliance won by a landslide.

The AL's softer tone when talking about the opposition became apparent after Law Minister Anisul Huq last Sunday said there was no legal bar preventing BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia from engaging in politics.

He said the government did not impose such conditions when it suspended her sentence.

Khaleda, a three-time prime minister, was convicted and imprisoned in a corruption case in 2018. She was released in March 2020 with an executive order and with the condition that she would not leave the country and must receive medical treatment in the country.

Until recently, the AL had been using strong words when it came to Khaleda's and her son Tarique Rahman's return to politics.

Tarique, acting chairman of the BNP, is convicted in the August 21, 2004, grenade attack case. The attack was on an AL rally on Bangabandhu Avenue. At least 24 people were killed and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was injured among others.

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Not even the iron bars can stop some motorcyclists from riding on the footpath in front of Dhaka Polytechnic Institute in Tejgaon. Very few footpaths in the capital are free of this menace. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

No scope to go to power with foreigners' favour: PM

UNB, Dhaka

There is no scope for the BNP to go to power with the support of foreigners now, said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday.



"It seems that they [BNP] are dreaming that someone would come from outside of the country to put them in power. Perhaps they once were able to do so by currying favours [with others]. Now, there is no scope to go to power anymore taking outside favours," she said.

The premier said this while chairing a discussion arranged by Bangladesh Awami League at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in the city, marking the Martyrs' Day and International Mother Language Day 2023.

Hasina, also the AL president, said her party was not allowed to stage processions and rallies during the BNP regime. The AL faced obstacles everywhere and its leaders and activists were tortured. Even the AL women were beaten and their clothes were torn down on the streets at that time.

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Govt doctors can see patients after hours

Pilot programme to begin next month

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

Doctors in 83 public hospitals would be able to run private practice after office hours at their institutions from March as the government looks to get more use out of the existing healthcare infrastructure.

The programme, which will begin on a pilot basis next month, will be rolled out in all public hospitals by August.

Doctors would be able to provide consultation service at their own workplace from 3 pm to 9 pm every day except holidays for a fee, according to the draft plan titled "Institutional Practice Guidelines".

To see a senior doctor, the fee would be Tk 300. Of the Tk 300, the doctor will get Tk 200, their attendant Tk 50 and the public hospital Tk 50.

The fee is Tk 150 for a junior physician, with the attendant getting Tk 25 and the hospital Tk 25.

Besides, the fees at the district and upazila-level hospitals will be Tk 150.

Any professor-, associate professor- and assistant professor-level physician can serve patients after hours twice a week at the private chambers.

Physicians will serve twice a week by rotation and they will also be allowed to serve at private healthcare institutions or anywhere else, according to the plan prepared by a high-level committee led by Saidur Rahman, additional

secretary (administration) at the health services division at the health ministry.

Of the 83 hospitals chosen for piloting, 50 will be from the upazila-level hospitals, 20 from the district level, eight from the divisional level, and five from the specialised hospitals in the country.

Three more meetings would be needed to finalise the protocol, said Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, member of the committee and Director General of Health Services (DGHS).

The 26-member committee will sit in a meeting "to finalise" the guideline this morning at the ministry, according to a circular issued on Monday.

The issue of institutional practice came to the fore on January 22 when Health Minister Zahid Maleque came up with the announcement following a meeting with a six-member committee that recommended the private chamber facility at public hospitals.

Health system experts, however, said the move will not bring any qualitative change as long as the government physicians can get away by serving at private healthcare organisations or their own chambers.

However, physicians at public hospitals in the country are allowed to practice at various private hospitals, clinics or pharmacies after their scheduled office hours.

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PRIVATE PRACTICE FOR PUBLIC PHYSICIANS

Tk 300 fee to see senior doctors

Tk 150 for junior doctors

Consultation, diagnosis and surgical services can be obtained

Pilot to start in March

Full-fledged roll-out in August

'Don't use the judiciary to chill critical reporting'

UN experts urge govt to drop charges against journo Rozina

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UN experts have called for the Bangladesh government to review its prosecution policy for journalists and the use of the colonial-era Official Secrets Act and the more recent Digital Security Act.

They also said it should ensure the laws and practices are in line with its international human rights obligations. "The judicial system should not be instrumentalised to chill critical reporting, undermine press freedom, and encourage a culture of self-censorship," said the experts.

Noting that independent, uncensored and unhindered press is a cornerstone of a democratic society, they called on the government to drop the charges against investigative journalist Rozina Islam and withdraw other protracted cases against journalists, editors, and human rights defenders.

"We are seriously concerned that the criminal charges and the prolongation of the investigation against Ms Islam appear to be in direct retaliation for her investigative reporting," said the experts in a statement yesterday.

The UN experts include Irene Khan, special rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Mary Lawlor, special rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Reem Alsalem, special rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences; and Margaret Satterthwaite, special rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers.

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Teen killed in Laxmipur AL factional clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A teenager was killed and 10 others were injured in a clash between two Awami League groups over establishing supremacy in Laxmipur's Raipur upazila yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Rasel Hossain, 14.

Police and locals said there has been a longstanding feud between Shahjalal Rahul and Nazrul Islam over control of the Miah'r Hat boat terminal in Charkachhia village.

They both have also been trying to occupy khaas land there, they said.

Shahjalal Rahul is the joint general secretary of Char Rajbangshi union AL under Raipur upazila, while Nazrul Islam is a member of the union parishad and a local AL leader.

Their followers clashed in the boat terminal area in the morning. Both groups

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US President Joe Biden attends a Bucharest Nine (B9) meeting chaired by Polish President Andrzej Duda at the Presidential Palace in Warsaw, Poland yesterday.

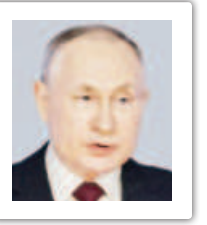
PHOTO: AFP

Ties reaching 'new milestones'

Putin, China's top diplomat pledge to deepen co-op; Biden rallies Nato over Ukraine

AGENCIES

China pledged to deepen cooperation with Russia yesterday as US President Joe Biden met leaders of Nato's eastern flank - highlighting geopolitical tensions ahead of the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



Within Ukraine, schools took their classes online for the rest of the week for fear of an upsurge of Russian missile attacks a year on from Moscow's February 24 all-out assault, which failed to topple the government and has long been bogged down.

Russia is due to begin military exercises with China in South Africa on Friday and has sent a flagship frigate equipped with new generation hypersonic cruise missiles. A Russian officer said yesterday Russia would fire artillery, but not the missiles, whose speed makes them difficult to shoot down.

Making the highest level visit to Russia by a Chinese official since the countries signed a "no limits" partnership weeks before the invasion, China's top diplomat Wang Li told President Vladimir Putin that Beijing was ready to enhance ties.

A time of crisis required Russia and China "to continuously deepen our comprehensive strategic

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