

No restrictions on Khaleda engaging in politics

Law minister reiterates

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia can't participate in elections because of her convictions in corruption cases, said Law Minister Anisul Huq.

However, there was no such condition that she would not be able to engage in politics, he added.

The minister was talking to local reporters after attending the centenary celebrations of Jamsheerpur High School in Badoir union of Brahmanbaria's Kasba upazila yesterday.

"As Begum Khaleda Zia has been convicted in two cases, she is barred from contesting elections under Article 66 of the constitution."

Anisul, the chief guest at the event, said one of those cases was heard in trial court and the other in the High Court following an appeal, and she was convicted.

"The trial court in one case handed a jail sentence of five years, which was later increased to 10 years by the High Court following an appeal. In the other case, she was sentenced to seven year's imprisonment by the judicial court."

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

RMP finds kidnappers' torture cell

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Detectives in Rajshahi have busted a torture cell, used by kidnappers, in the city's Hetomkhan area and arrested four suspects.

Bijoy Basak, additional commissioner of Rajshahi Metropolitan Police, said police came to know about the torture cell while investigating a kidnapping case.

Police arrested four members of a kidnapping gang during a special operation on Friday, and recovered locally-made weapons, the official said during a press conference at the RMP's Detective Branch office yesterday.

The four — Arefin Ahad Khan alias Sunny, 42, Mostaq Ahmed alias Fahim, 22, Md Parvez, 27, and Sabbir Sarkar, 25 — were picked up from different areas of Rajshahi city.

Two cases were filed with Boalia Police Station in connection with the incident.

Yesterday, a local court sent the arrestees to jail after they were produced before it.

According to police, the arrestees kidnapped a hawkler, Delwar Hossain Mondol, from Rajarhata area on the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6



In a day-long drive in the capital yesterday, traffic police at the Sonargaon intersection seized rickshaws illegally running on the Nazrul Islam Avenue.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Russia sanctions busters to 'face severe costs'

Warns G7; no G20 joint statement after China objections on Ukraine war

AGENCIES

G7 leaders issued a stern warning to any country abetting Russia's war in Ukraine, as G20 finance ministers, facing objections from China, again failed yesterday to agree on a joint statement on the global economy.

The G7 leaders, who were joined by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, issued the warning in a virtual call marking the first anniversary of Russia's invasion, while members added a raft of new sanctions on Moscow and its supporters.

"We call on third countries or other international actors who seek to evade or undermine our measures to cease providing material support to Russia's war, or face severe costs," the Group of Seven leaders said in a joint statement.

The statement came as both Moscow and Kyiv seek to restock their forces for intensified fighting in what analysts expect will involve offensives by both sides along the long front lines in Ukraine.

In New Delhi, current G20 president India issued a "chair's summary" which

said "most members strongly condemned the war in Ukraine" and that there were "different assessments of the situation and sanctions" at the two-day meeting in Bengaluru.

A footnote said two paragraphs in the summary about the war, which it said were adapted from the G20 Bali Leaders' Declaration in November, "were agreed to by all member countries except Russia and China".

Spain's representative Nadia Calvino had said earlier that because of "less constructive" approaches by some unspecified countries at the talks among the world's top 20 economies, agreeing on a statement was "difficult".

China wanted to change the language of the statement from November, officials told AFP, with one saying on condition of anonymity that Beijing wanted to remove the word "war".

Previous meetings of G20 finance ministers and central bank chiefs have also failed to produce a common communique since Russia, a member of the grouping, invaded its neighbour last February.

China has sought to position itself

as a neutral party in the conflict while maintaining close ties with strategic ally Russia.

Top Chinese diplomat Wang Yi was in Moscow on Wednesday to meet President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, who is due at a G20 foreign ministers meeting in New Delhi next week.

Chinese state news agency Xinhua quoted Wang as saying China was willing to "deepen political trust" and "strengthen strategic coordination" with Russia.

On Friday, the first anniversary of the invasion, China published a 12-point paper calling for a "political settlement" to the crisis that was met with scepticism from Ukraine's allies.

G20 host India has also refused to condemn Russia, which is New Delhi's biggest arms supplier and has become a major source of oil for India since the invasion.

Western countries — including the United States, Germany and France — had insisted the language in any joint statement could not be weaker than the communique issued by G20 leaders in Indonesia in November.

Condemned convict dies at DMCH

UNB, Dhaka

A convict in the BDR mutiny case died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital early yesterday.

Deceased Abdul Baten, 70, was given the death penalty.

Inspector Bachhu Mia, in-charge of Dhaka Medical College Hospital police camp, said Baten fell sick around 1:30am in Dhaka Central Jail and was taken to the hospital, where the doctors declared him dead.

Seventy-four people, including 57 army officials, were killed in the mutiny in the capital's Pikhana headquarters of the erstwhile Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) on February 25 and 26 in 2009.

A total of 58 cases, including one for murder and looting and the rest for mutiny, were filed in connection with the incident.

Some 152 people were sentenced to death and 423 others to different jail terms in the case. Besides, 277 accused were acquitted.

Siblings killed in Sirajganj road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A woman and her brother were killed and two others injured when a truck hit a CNG-run auto-rickshaw in Sirajganj Sadar yesterday.

The dead were identified as Lipi Khatun, 28, and her brother Mukul Hossain, 25, who passengers of the CNG run auto-rickshaw.

Md Humayun Kabir, officer-in-charge of Sirajganj Sadar Police Station, said the accident took place around 1:00pm when a Sirajganj-bound speeding truck hit the three-wheeler in Kurulia area near Simanto Bazar.

Lipi died on the spot while Mukul died on the way to Sirajganj General Hospital.

The two others injured, including the CNG driver, were admitted to the hospital for treatment.

Police rescued the victims and seized the truck. The driver of the truck, however, had fled after the accident, the OC said.

Magnitude 5.5 earthquake strikes central Turkey

DEUTSCHE WELLE

A magnitude 5.5 earthquake struck Central Turkey yesterday, the European Mediterranean Seismological Center (EMSC) said.

The quake was at a depth of 10 kilometers (6.2 miles), EMSC said, while the local AFAD disaster agency said it occurred at 12:27 pm local time (10:27 GMT).

The Kandilli earthquake monitoring center said the epicenter was located in the district of Bor, in the province of Nigde.

Nigde is some 350 kilometers (217 miles) west of the Turkish-Syrian border region that was struck by two major quakes on February 6.

Mayor Emrah Ozdemir told state broadcaster TRT that no damage was reported yet.

Teams are on site to assess the aftermath, Turkish Vice President Fuat Oktay wrote on Twitter.

Prior to this, at least seven tremors over magnitude 4 had been recorded since Friday evening in Turkey, including the quake-hit south, according to AFAD.

14-party

FROM PAGE 1

came to formation of the [current] government, we were left out," he said.

Five candidates of Workers Party of Bangladesh, a key ally of the 14-party alliance, took part in the last national elections in 2018 under the banner of the grand alliance with Awami League's electoral symbol "boat".

"We stood together with the Awami League during BNP Jamaat's anti-government movement, during the war crimes trials, and the movement by Hefazat-e Islam in 2013.

"Again in 2014, we resisted the arson attacks by BNP-Jamaat coalition."

Menon said his party had then initially refused to join the cabinet but later changed its mind.

"And again, we took part in the national polls taking responsibility of joining a poorly participated election [2018]," he said.

As another national election is approaching, the ruling Awami League is saying that it would join the polls under the banner of 14-party alliance, he said.

"Recently, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressed a rally in Rajshahi and sought vote for boat, the symbol of the Awami League. Where is hammer? Is the Awami League seeking vote for hammer?" Menon said.

"Is this the 14-party coalition that we forged on the basis of national consensus in the light of the 14-party's 23-point charter?"

"We won elections with our own symbol, but when we participate elections with boat, the Awami League voters choose to vote for either BNP or Jatiya Party," he continued.

"This can't be an ideal coalition politics," he said.

Menon said Workers Party general secretary Fazle Hossain Badsha, who is the MP of Rajshahi Sadar, would certainly take part in the next elections with his party symbol "hammer".

Liakat Ali Liku, president of Rajshahi district unit of the party, chaired the rally.

Dollar crunch raises spectre of load-shedding

FROM PAGE 1

doubled in 2021-2022 fiscal year, compared to the year before.

Since a majority of the private or independent power producers (IPPs) rely on liquid fuel, the price of electricity sold by them rose by 77.43 percent.

Even after spending so much money, the plants sat idle in summer last year due to shortage of fuel, leading to the worst power outages the country had seen in years.

Besides, even if the government cannot supply enough dollars to the banks to meet the demands of the IPPs, it is legally obligated to continue paying capacity charges.

Between 2019 and 2021 capacity payments made to IPPs accounted

for as much as 45 percent of the total cost of the electricity purchased from them, according to an analysis by this newspaper.

The government currently owes more than Tk 14,000 crore, or about \$ 1.4 billion, in unsettled bills to IPPs, according to PDB sources.

This year, Orion Power with its four HFO-run power plants would require over \$ 197 million for fuel.

Last year, a plant of Orion Power's Dutch Bangla Power and Associates Ltd in Siddhirganj had a plant load factor (PLF) of just 19 percent.

PLF is the ratio between the actual energy generated by the plant to the maximum possible energy that can be generated with the plant working at its rated power and for an entire year.

Islamic University halls run by BCL diktat

FROM PAGE 1

Alam said he was not aware that Phulpori was staying at the dormitory.

Asked whether a fresher needs to have BCL's permission for staying at the hall or getting a seat, he said, "Chhatra League has nothing to do with this. Rather, the hall administration allocates seats."

He said it is usual that first-year honours students would get seats at the end of their academic year or the second-year students would be allocated seats.

Established in Kushtia in 1980, Islamic University has now 15,893 students, including 5,172 females. There are eight dormitories, including three for females.

Although the eight halls have a total of 3,282 seats, 4,876 students are now staying in them.

University authorities and residential students said about 800 students now live in Deshratna Sheikh Hasina Hall against its capacity of about 450. At least 40 students are living in the prayer room of the dormitory. There are nine "gono rooms" in the hall.

A "gono room" student from Lalon Shah Hall said 17 students stay at his room. They usually cannot read properly in the overcrowded room.

"These gono rooms are controlled by Chhatra League activists. We haven't seen any student getting a seat without the permission of Chhatra League," said Emanul Shohan, president of the

IU unit of Bangladesh Chhatra Union.

Ashiqur Rahman, Bangladesh Chhatra Maitri IU unit president, said as many students do not get seats in halls, they stay in different places of Kushtia and Jhenidah, about an hour's journey from the university. He said expenses of guardians also increases as students need to rent homes.

Asked about the allegations, Chhatra League IU unit President Faisal Siddike Arafat refuted all of them. He claimed that they never control any "gono room" or halls.

"There is an acute accommodation crisis at the university. If any students from outside Kushtia contact us, we try to help them."

He said they never force anyone to join their political programmes.

Vice Chancellor Prof Shaikh Abdus Salam said it is really tough for freshers to get a seat in halls.

"As far as I know, second-year students are allocated seats at dormitories."

He said constructions of four new halls were underway. Once those are opened, the accommodation crisis would ease as each of them will accommodate 1,000 students, the VC added.

Asked about the allegation of Chhatra League controlling the "gono rooms" and compelling students to join political programmes, Salam said, "I can't give you the answer. The hall

administrations have to work with many people. Our main concern is that there should be no indiscipline."

Death toll

FROM PAGE 12

accessing them.

"I have eight children. We are living in a tent. There is water on top (of the tent) and the ground is damp. We are asking for more tents and they don't give them to us," Melek, 67, who was waiting in a line to collect aid outside a high school in the town of Hassa.

The school was being used as an aid distribution center by a group of volunteers called Interrail Turkey. One volunteer, Sumeyye Karaboccek, said the shortage of tents remained the biggest problem.

Erdogan's government has endured a wave of criticism over both its response to the devastation and what many Turks say were years of non-enforcement of construction quality control.

The Turkish government's initial plan now is to build 200,000 apartments and 70,000 village houses at a cost of at least \$15 billion, he said. US bank JPMorgan had estimated rebuilding houses and infrastructure will cost \$25 billion.

The UNDP said it estimated that the destruction has left 1.5 million people homeless, with 500,000 new homes needed.

Over 100 hurt in clashes with police, AL men

FROM PAGE 1

Sadar Police Station, however, said the BNP men attacked them first.

Police charged baton to disperse the procession and detained 16 BNP activists, he added.

In Patuakhali, at least six BNP activists were injured when they clashed with police in the town.

Police charged baton on the BNP activists as soon as they started the road march, said Snehanshu Sarker Kutti, member secretary of the district unit BNP.

Contacted, Moniruzzaman, OC of Patuakhali Sadar Police Station, said they only freed the road when the BNP men blocked it illegally.

In Bagerhat, police foiled the BNP's programme and picked up some 30 party activists, said Obaidul Islam, education affairs secretary of the BNP's central committee.

Shahadat Hossain, additional superintendent (Sadar circle) of Bagerhat police, said both the Awami League and the BNP had programmes at the same time.

"We requested the BNP to hold their programme later but they did not comply. Thus, we detained their 30 men," he said.

In Netrakona, 23 BNP men were injured as the ruling party men swooped on them when they were gathering for the road march.

Motorcycles and minibuses were vandalised and set ablaze during the clash.

Police fired two bullets to bring the situation under control and detained five BNP activists.

The ruling party men attacked the BNP activists in Kurpur area when the latter were gathering for their procession, said Rafiqul Islam Hilali, member secretary of the district BNP.

At that time, several crude bombs exploded, and banners and festoons

were snatched from the BNP men, he added.

Refuting the allegation, Shamchur Rahman, general secretary of the district unit AL, said the vandalism could be a result of the BNP's factional conflict.

Khandaker Shaker Ahmed, OC of Netrokona Model Police Station, said the held two BNP men as the party activists tried to create chaos in several places.

In Gazipur, the BNP activists had to cut short their programme when police obstructed them.

Meanwhile, chase and counter-chase took place between the BNP and the ruling party men in Nilphamari. The parties blamed each other for the chaos.

Police eventually intervened and brought the situation under control, said Abdur Rauf, OC of Nilphamari Police Station.

[Our Bagerhat, Pirojpur and Pathuakhali correspondents contributed to this report]

Ex-UP member

FROM PAGE 1

Three men visited the 70-year-old chairman and Awami League leader around 6:00am. After talking to Harunur for a while, the men opened fire, said Shibpur AL General Secretary Shamsul Alam Bhuiyan.

He added that security camera footage showed the men fleeing the neighbourhood in a motorcycle.

Local AL leaders and activists blockaded a regional highway in the afternoon to protest the incident.

Harunur was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with two bullet injuries on his back, said Civil Surgeon Nurul Islam.

Police are looking for the gunmen, said Narsingdi Additional Superintendent of Police (Crime), Anirban Chowdhury.