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'No pressure will work on me'

Says PM, rules out chance of talks with BNP before next polls



AGENCIES, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said no pressure will work on her and it has never worked.

"There is no pressure which can be put on Sheikh Hasina. Keep it in mind," she said at a press conference at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

The PM was responding to a question if she felt any international pressure regarding the next general election, reports UNB.

The event was organised to inform the media about the outcome of the premier's recent official visit to Qatar, where she attended the 5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC5) from March 4-8.

Hasina said the source of her strength is only the people. She said nothing would happen no matter who exerts whatever pressure. "We will do whatever is required for the welfare of the people."

In this context, she said her government constructed the Padma Bridge with its own finances, facing all hurdles and ignoring many pressures.

The PM said she received numerous phone calls from ambassadors to foreign ministers of different countries to keep a person as the managing director of a bank.

In reply to another question, Hasina ruled out the possibility of talks with the BNP ahead of the next general election.

"With whom will we hold talks? We held a dialogue before the 2018 election. What was its result? They did nothing except making the election questionable," she said.

The Awami League chief said the BNP nominated 700 candidates in 300 parliamentary constituencies in the 2018 national election but later withdrew their nominees in exchange for money, and made the election questionable.

Referring to another incident, Hasina said she went to Khaleda Zia's home to console her after her youngest son Arifat Rahman died, but she was denied entry to the house. "What meeting will be held with them after such a humiliation?... What is the point of sitting for a dialogue with those who don't have the minimum courtesy?"

She said, "Attempts are being made to create an unstable situation. But I believe that no one will be able

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Around 7km of the Turag covered in oil after an oil tanker collided with another vessel on the river near the capital's Gabtali area on March 11, according to locals. Two days on, the authorities are yet to clear the oil. Like the Turag, at least 56 rivers of the country are suffering from extreme water pollution owing to various reasons such as chemical waste discharge, dumping of garbage and oil spills. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

RIVER POLLUTION

It's now all over the country

A year-long survey finds at least 56 rivers victims of extreme pollution

PINAKI ROY

Around two decades ago, river pollution was confined to mega cities like Dhaka and Chattogram. It has now spread to every town in the country.

According to a new study, at least 56 rivers flowing through different parts of the country are suffering from extreme pollution during the lean period – when natural flows of rivers are at their lowest.

Conducting a year-long physical survey and testing the water from 56 selected rivers in Dhaka, Khulna, Sylhet, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Barisal and Chattogram divisions, the Rivers and Delta Research Centre (RDRC) has found that each one of them is polluted.

The RDRC, a non-government organisation

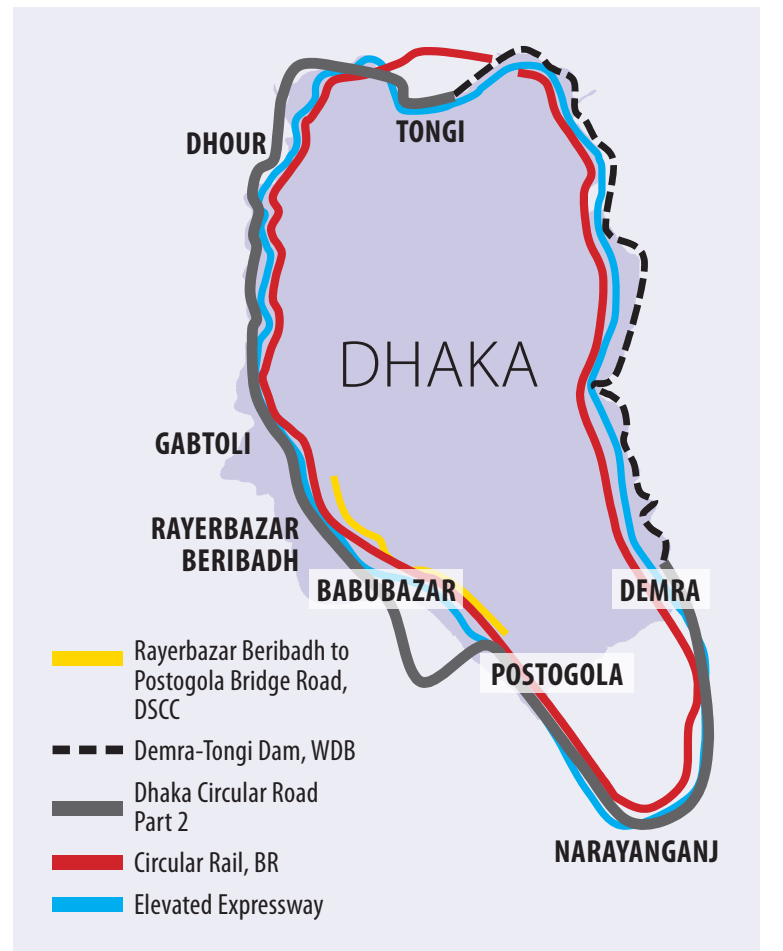
working for rivers, carried out the survey from February 2022 to February this year. It selected the rivers based on various newspaper reports.

The organisation tested the levels pH, dissolved oxygen (DO), chemical oxygen demand (COD) and biological oxygen demand (BOD) of each river water sample at a Gazipur laboratory.

The COD is the amount of oxygen, the standard of which is 200mg per litre, required to chemically oxidise organic materials, while the BOD represents the amount of oxygen, the standard of which is 50mg, consumed by bacteria and other microorganisms. The pH is the quantitative measure of the water's acidity, which should ideally range between 6-9.

Mohammad Azaz, chairman of RDRC, said,

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No observers from EU if next polls not participatory
Says EU envoy

PORIMOL PALMA

The European Union will not send election observers if the next parliamentary polls are not participatory.

The message was communicated to the BNP during a meeting in Gulshan on Sunday by an eight-member European Union delegation led by EU Ambassador to Bangladesh Charles Whiteley.

The rest of the delegation comprised EU heads of the missions from Denmark, Italy, Germany, Spain, France, Sweden and the Netherlands.

"We will not send election observers to Bangladesh if the elections are not participatory or inclusive," Whiteley told The Daily Star yesterday.

"That's what we told the BNP delegation," he said.

The BNP delegation included its Secretary General Fakhru Islam Alamgir, Standing Committee member Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, Organising Secretary (Dhaka division) Shama Obaid, and Human Rights Affairs Secretary Asaduzzaman Asad.

During the meeting, the

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EXPANDING 14-PARTY ALLIANCE

AL's left partners say 'no' to Islamist parties

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and ASHIK ABDULLAH APU

Left-leaning parties in the ruling Awami League-led 14-party alliance yesterday took a firm stance against any possible inclusion of Islamist political parties in the combine.

Even an Islamist political party, Bangladesh Tarikat Federation, opposed inclusion of any other Islamist party in the alliance.

Partners of the 14-party alliance expressed their reservations in this regard at a meeting at the New Eskaton house of the combine coordinator Amir Hossain Amu in the capital.

Alliance partners criticised the AL government for failing to control the price hike of essentials, the ruling party's unilateral election campaign, seeking vote for its electoral symbol "boat", and not taking any initiatives to make the alliance effective at the grassroots, said meeting sources.

Representatives of Workers Party, Tarikat Federation, Communist Kendra and Bangladesh Samyabadi Dal expressed their reservations about possible inclusion of any Islamist party in the combine.

In response, Amu assured them that no Islamist party will be included in the alliance since it was formed based on specific principles.

He pledged that the 14-party alliance will remain intact and participate in the national polls unitedly, said sources.

Tarikat Chairman Syed Nazibul Bashar Maizbhandari said the parties who were contacting the AL to forge an alliance with it were against the spirit of the Liberation War.

Workers Party President Rashed Khan Menon said ideologies of those political parties are against those of the 14-party alliance, and forging an alliance with them is not possible.

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Ahead of the Father of The Nation's birthday, about 1400 marginal farmers get 'AB Bank Smart Agri Loan' at Sheikh Mujibur Rahman University College, Tungipara

"Our aim is to strengthen the country's ongoing development"

-Tarique Afzal

President and Managing Director, AB Bank Limited



AB Bank Limited disbursed agricultural loans to about 1400 marginal farmers at Tungipara, the birth place of the Father of The Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The

program was organized at Govt. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman University College. Mr. Sheikh Abul Bashar, President, Tungipara Upazila

League was present as chief guest. Mr. Sheikh Tozammel Haque Tutul, Mayor, Tungipara Municipality, Mr. Md. Babul Sheikh, General Secretary, Tungipara Upazila

League and Mr. Sheikh Sukur Ahmed, Chairman, Patgati Union Parishad were present as special guests with Mr. Tarique Afzal, President and Managing Director of

AB Bank Limited presiding. Local senior leaders of Bangladesh Awami League along with other officials of the bank also attended the program.

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