

BNP has no expectations from new president

Says Fakhrul

UNB, DHAKA

BNP has no expectations from the new President Md Shahabuddin as the party thinks he will not be able to play a courageous role in ensuring a credible national election.

“We know what role he [president] may play...He has no chance to go beyond the constitution, and we don't think he has that courage,” said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Talking to reporters at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office yesterday, he also said they do not have confidence in the new president. “People do not know him. So, we can't say much about it.”

“The existing election process is not democratic. Everything will become meaningless if the opposition can't participate in the election and if an election-time impartial government is not formed. So, we're focusing on the matter,” he said.

Asked whether BNP would join if the president initiates dialogue to resolve the political crisis, he said, “If the government wants it, then the president will do it. The government has clearly said it won't engage in talks on caretaker government. So, there's no question of dialogue,” he said.

Bangladesh will keep its mission in Sudan open

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite the turmoil in the African country, Bangladesh will continue to have its mission in Sudan operational, considering the needs of some 1,500 Bangladeshis living there.

“We have our consulate in Sudan. We asked our mission to take precaution, but as we have many citizens, we will keep our mission there,” Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told journalists during a media briefing at the ministry yesterday.

Depending on the situation, Dhaka will take a decision later, he said.

“We advised them to keep enough rations [food]...as long as we have our citizens there,” he said.

Bangladeshi citizens were advised not to travel to Sudan.

As of April 21, at least 413 people have been killed and 3,551 wounded in the unrest there, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).



PHOTO: BSS

Mohammad Shahabuddin taking oath as the new president of Bangladesh at the Bangabhaban's Darbar Hall yesterday. Speaker of the House Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury administered the oath of the office of the president, in the presence of outgoing president M Abdul Hamid. *Right*, Outgoing president M Abdul Hamid and his wife Rashida Hamid leave the Bangabhaban yesterday in a ceremonial motorcade under the supervision of SSF, as onlookers bid him farewell. His was the biggest farewell ever given to a president in an independent Bangladesh.



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

EID HOLIDAYS

31 lives lost on roads

STAR REPORT

At least 31 people have been killed and many others injured in road accidents in 15 districts during the Eid holidays between Friday and yesterday.

In Netrakona, three people died when two motorcycles collided head-on in the Kharnoi area under Kalmakanda upazila on Saturday at 3:00pm.

On the two bikes, there were six people; of them, three died, said police.

In a separate accident, two passengers of an auto-rickshaw died on the spot when the three-wheeler collided head-on with a truck in the district's Sadar upazila on Saturday around 7:00am.

In Chapainawabganj, three people were killed in two separate accidents in Sadar upazila yesterday.

Two men died after a motorcycle hit a roadside tree in the Paschim para area under Shahjahanpur union.

Another woman died after she got hit by an auto-rickshaw in the Ram Chandrapur area of the upazila.

In Jhenaidah, a motorcyclist and his pillion passenger died after their bike hit a roadside tree in Kaliganj upazila yesterday.



In Gaibandha, four people died when a bus collided with a CNG-run auto-rickshaw on the Dhaka Rangapur highway in Gobindaganj upazila on Friday.

In Bogra, two motorcyclists died when they collided with each other in Nandigram upazila on Saturday.

In Barishal, two people riding on a motorcycle died after being hit by a bus on the Barishal-Jhalakathi highway in the city's Rupatoli area on Saturday.

In Jamalpur, two motorcycle riders died and three pillion passengers were injured in separate accidents in Sadar and Islampur upazilas on Sunday.

In Lalmonirhat, a college student died after he crashed his motorcycle into a roadside tree in Kaliganj upazila on Sunday.

In Kurigram, a ninth-grader died on the spot after he also crashed his motorcycle into a roadside tree in Rajarhat upazila on Saturday.

In Dhaka city, four people died in separate road accidents in Motijheel, Kazipara, Hatirjheel, and Savar between Friday and Sunday.

Besides, five people died in separate road accidents in Chuadanga, Gazipur, Jashore, Feni, and Tangail between Saturday and yesterday.

[Our district correspondents contributed to the report.]

Temperature likely to rise over next two days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) predicted that the mercury may rise one or two degrees Celsius in the next two days before dropping by month's end.

According to the Met office bulletin, “Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty/squally wind are likely at a few places in Khulna, Barishal, Chattogram, Mymensingh and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places in Rangpur, Rajshahi and Dhaka divisions with isolated hails.”

Many parts of the country, including Dhaka, may get rain due to the impact of the nor'westerly on April 26 and 27, said meteorologist Bazlur Rashid of the BMD, adding that the temperature will drop then.

According to the BMD, the country's highest 34.5 degrees Celsius was recorded in Sandip on Sunday while on Friday the highest was 38 degrees Celsius in Mongla and Jessore.

Rain and thundershower during the Eid holidays brought a sigh of relief as people had been sweltering in a heatwave for weeks.

Man killed in clash over Eid jamaat timing

UNB, Kishoreganj

A man was killed on Saturday morning in a clash between two groups over the timing of Eid jamaat in Kishoreganj's Hossainpur .

More than 50 people were also injured in the incident that took place at Bir Katihari village of Jinari union of the upazila around 7:30am.

The deceased was identified as Nazrul Islam, 45, of the same village.

On Friday, two groups decided to offer Eid prayers in two separate jamaats.

But on Eid morning, there was an argument between the two sides, which later turned into a clash.

Blasts kill 8 in Pakistan

REUTERS, Peshawar

Two explosions rocked a counter-terrorism office in northwest Pakistan yesterday, killing at least eight people, police said.

Provincial police chief Akhtar Hayat said it was not clear yet what caused the explosions in northwestern Swat valley, which was previously long controlled by Islamist militants before they were flushed out in a military operation in 2009.

Hayat said there was an old ammunition store in the office, and police were probing whether that caused the explosions or if it was a militant attack. No one has so far claimed responsibility.

Cop killed as criminals attack his home

UNB, Dhaka

A police constable was killed on Sunday after criminals attacked his house in Cumilla's Daudkandi upazila.

Raisul Amin Badan, 30, of Basra village, was posted at the Noakhali District Police Lines.

He was taken to the emergency department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where he was declared dead at 2:00pm.

Memories of horror

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family, it also left her vulnerable to loss of money by theft and deceit.

“During this most recent visit, we found she needed a much improved mattress which will be arranged. Over the years, she tried to keep her two daughters in school as long as possible, but at our visit this year, we found her older daughter (17) to be five months pregnant while her younger daughter already had two children. Brac assistance within recent months has resulted in improved facilities in her home, including a modern and appropriate bathroom, and a new CRP-built wheelchair.”

Sobujan was on the path to rehabilitation until the pandemic struck.

She was rescued from the ruins of the building after nine long hours. Sobujan was first taken to Lab Zone Hospital but her stay there was cut short because her husband found the costs too high. He took her home but the laceration on her right leg from the hip to the ankle became infected.

“She was 40 when we first met in CRP's patient hostel in November 2013. After having received antibiotic treatment and an improved diet, she recovered to the level where she was able to participate in therapy and the one-month shop-keeping training at the CRP's vocational training institute.

“Once established at home with funding to develop an inventory, her shop became a popular addition to their village. With her husband and her adult son, she managed it successfully for several years. Sadly, Sobujan's husband died of cancer a few years ago and the Covid epidemic negatively impacted the income from the shop, as it has done for so many shopkeepers. Many other RPD [Rana Plaza Disaster] survivors in her village have benefited from assistance from Brac but she has not and her situation is currently very fragile,” Scott said.

Rubina, who was working at Rana Plaza as a garment finisher at the age of 30 for Tk 7,000 a month, lost consciousness for about four hours before she was rescued. She required surgery and skin grafts to her leg

and foot at the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation.

“The results are imperfect and she has recurrent pain as well as problems sitting, squatting and standing for any length of time. In November 2014, we met Rubina in her home on the day following her return from the CRP after a long absence ... With compensation money, they bought cows and the land on which their very modest house sits.”

She opted to take no vocational training during her time at the CRP.

“Sobujan, Saima, and Rubina had a long friendship and left their village to go to work in Savar at the same time, sharing accommodation and experiences,” Scott said.

“The differences each experienced as a result of their injuries, and the differences in compensation caused great stresses in their relationships. Only recently have we noticed improvements.”

When still a teenager, Jehanara started working as a “helper” on the eighth floor of Rana Plaza, earning about Tk 6,500 a month. Her mother also worked there.

Jehanara was rescued after three hours. Her mother's body was recovered 18 days later.

“Jehanara suffered a lumbar spinal cord compression injury and spent two months in treatment at the CRP. After returning to her village, she married and the couple lived with his parents and began planning for a family.

“Unfortunately, she has experienced multiple miscarriages. During our visit in January, she was about three months pregnant. Her father received Tk 3 lakh as compensation for the loss of his wife,” Scott said.

Al Amin has to live with the memory of spending two and a half days under the rubble before he was rescued.

He was then just 23 years old. Although university-educated, he was unable to find a good job, so he took the work at Rana Plaza earning Tk 4,500 per month for a 10-12 hour work day, Scott said.

He had been working there for only 23 days when the disaster occurred and was taken to the Cantonment Hospital

where he was diagnosed with potential spinal damage and, after about six hours, transferred to the CRP.

“He spent one month under treatment and then one month in vocational training. Both he and his wife completed their studies and tried, unsuccessfully, to find local work as primary school teachers or in government service.

“Their 10-year-old daughter lives with her grandparents while they work in the garment industry near the Dhaka EPZ. Like so many others, their shop failed during the Covid epidemic. He still suffers physical pain from his injuries but earlier this year, Al Amin was planning to find work in Malaysia,” Scott said.

She said, “These are only a few of their stories; several live in one very small and remote village in Naogaon. Others were interviewed in and around Rajshahi, Gazipur and Savar. It is estimated that almost all of these survivors demonstrate symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) including depression, anger, poor memory, anxiety and hyper-vigilance as well as insomnia.”

The bird out of the cage, at last

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became acceptable to everyone, including political parties like the BNP. All respect the charming, cordial and friendly man.

Throughout his political career that began in 1959, Hamid was admired by everyone for his simplicity, honesty and his witty speeches.

However, in 2018, when he commuted top criminal Tofayel Ahmed Joseph's life sentence for murder, it drew huge criticism.

Even though he was vocal against corruption, corrupt politics, poor image of student politics, university teachers in politics, and loan defaulters, Hamid stayed mum on the controversial one-sided national election in 2014 when more than half the MPs were elected unopposed.

He also did not say anything when there was a bizarre system in parliament under which the opposition was also a part of the government.

But his journey from the grassroots to the Bangabhaban was remarkable.

The only president of Bangladesh to finish two five-year terms in a row started his political career at 15 in 1959 by joining the then East Pakistan Chhatra League.

Ten years later, he joined the Awami League.

In 1970, when he was just 26, Hamid was elected a member of parliament from the Mymensingh-18 constituency.

Hamid is a valiant freedom fighter.

In independent Bangladesh, he was elected MP seven times by the people of his area, Kishoreganj.

Ending his presidency yesterday, Hamid told reporters at the Bangabhaban, “I am retired now. Those who are tired, go for retirement. Now I can engage myself in some writing. But there is no plan to be in politics actively.

“Because the people of the country gave me so much respect and made me president – the highest post of the country for two terms. If I get into politics again or take any other position, I will be humiliating the people of this country.”

When journalists asked him how he plans to be with the people after 10 years in tight security, Hamid said he loves the people but could not go near them or express his love. “Now I will be able to express it to many people.”

“I was the Speaker [of parliament]. I had no desire to come here. I was more

comfortable in parliament. Because I considered myself free there. I knew that I will fall into many traps when coming here. Anyway, I have spent 10 years here.

“I think I have served the longest time as president in this subcontinent.”

According to the constitution, no one can hold the office of president for more than two terms.

After the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, 16 others have served as president.

Hamid became the president in-charge on March 14, 2013, when then president Zillur Rahman was under treatment in Singapore.

After Zillur's death, he became the acting president on March 20 that year.

He was elected president unopposed on April 22 and was sworn in on April 24.

Hamid was elected president a second time on February 07, 2018, and took the oath of office on April 24.

On his successor, Hamid said, “He will fulfil his constitutional duties properly. This is the expectation of the whole nation and my expectation as well.”

Yesterday, Hamid moved into his home in Nikunja in the capital.

Shahabuddin sworn in as the 22nd president

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The president exchanged greetings with guests after he was sworn in.

President Shahabuddin's family members, including his wife Rebecca Sultana and son Arshad Adnan Rony, while outgoing President Hamid's family members, including his wife Rashida Khanam and son Engineer Rezwan Ahammad Taufiq, MP, among others, attended the function.

Deputy Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad Shamsul Haque Tuku, deputy leader of the opposition in parliament GM Quader, whips, members of parliament (MPs), heads of the diplomatic missions, chiefs of different international agencies, state ministers, chief election commissioner, supreme court judges, heads of the different tribunal or commission or institute, political leaders, chiefs of the three services, principal secretary to the prime minister's office, inspector general of police, diplomats, senior journalists, including editors, and high-ranking civil and military officials witnessed the ceremony.

Earlier, the 73-year-old politician was elected as the 22nd president of Bangladesh on February 13, 2023.

Shahabuddin was born on December 10, 1949, in Shibrampur's Jubilee Tank area of Pabna town.

He obtained his MSc degree from Rajshahi University in 1974, and he later passed the LLB and BCS (law) examinations.

Shahabuddin was the general secretary of the Pabna Edward College unit of the Chhatra League and president of the Pabna District Chhatra League and Jubo League. He was the joint secretary of the Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League (BaKSAL) of the district unit and publicity secretary of the Awami League district unit.

Shahabuddin actively participated in the Six-Point Movement in 1966, the Bhutta (Maize) Movement in 1967, the mass uprising in 1969, the election of 1970 and the Liberation War in 1971.

He was the frontline organiser of the Pabna district movement and raised protests soon after the brutal incidents on August 15, 1975. Subsequently, he was imprisoned for three years and subjected to inhuman torture by the then-military dictators.

The president was also involved in journalism (Dainik Banglar Bani) and a good number of his articles were also published in different vernaculars.

During his career, he served as a district and sessions judge and the Anti-Corruption Commission's (ACC) commissioner.

The head of state also served as the director of the Prime Minister's Office and the coordinator assigned to the Ministry of Law, Justice

and Parliamentary Affairs in the Bangabandhu Murder Case.

He was elected secretary general of BCS (judiciary) association twice in a row. After retirement from service, he was engaged in the legal profession at the High Court.

Many Dhaka dwellers

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Meanwhile, State Minister for the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid asked the city dwellers not to panic.

On his verified Facebook page, he told citizens not to be concerned about the complaints of gas leaks. “City dwellers are requested not to be panicked,” he said.

Gas transmission company – Titas has already taken the necessary measures. “Situation is completely under control,” he added.