

NEXT NAT'L POLLS Govt playing 'old tricks' to get rid of opposition

Alleges Fakhru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday alleged that the government started playing its "old tricks" to create an empty field ahead of the next parliamentary elections.

The party's Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir made the allegation at a press conference held in the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office.

"The way the ruling party took over the 2014 and 2018 elections to ensure the results were in its favour, in the same way it has started a 'process of rigging' by removing the opposition from the field."

He added that before the announcement of the election schedule in 2018, the ruling Awami League had started filing cases against opposition activists and arresting them.

"But this time, they started it much earlier. The government's plan is to hold a farcical election. The main goal is to drive the opposition out of the field and then come back to power. They are working towards that goal."

He, however, said that the ruling

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

DSA wasn't made to gag journos: Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said the government enacted the Digital Security Act (DSA) to ensure digital security, not to restrict the freedom of expression.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has ensured unchecked freedom of expression for everyone including journalists, he said in a statement.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, a vested quarter has been hatching conspiracies by spreading anti-state propaganda on digital platforms, he said.

He said the government formulated the DSA to curb all kinds of crimes, including anti-state activities on digital platforms, he said.

Quader said this while criticising a statement recently made by BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir.

He accused Alamgir of siding with cyber criminals by making comments against the DSA.



The call of the vendor, clad in a lungi and a shirt, carrying a tin hamper that had a yellow bulb on, introduced me to Dhaka's most famous street food. The hot-patties-wallah as he was portrayed, invariably visited the quaint neighbourhood of Purana Paltan, where my grandmother's lovely two-storied house was located, in the afternoons during siesta time.



HOT PATTIES!

RBR

Crispy puff pastry triangles, stuffed with beef mince and sautéed with onions, were kept warm in a tin box with the aid of the light. The box was tied around the man's neck with a gamcha.

This was years ago when the options for street food were limited to a few items. However, the shuti kabab and bakarkhani vendor and the hot-patties-wallah were two favourites, and their memory still lingers on.

Patties were Dhaka's favourite. Most of the bakeries still carry this snack. Around the mid-eighties, two pastry shops – Coopers and Sorrento – introduced the round-shaped chicken patties. It was in the shape of a savoury, small muffin with a tiny puff pastry dot. The patties looked like a small pastry with a cherry on top. Stuffed with a yummy, soft chicken filling, it instantly won the hearts of Dhakaites and that somehow spelled the end of the triangle beef patties era.

However, recently these old gems are



making a rare comeback. "Hashem Chacha" is one figure who vends these old-style patties at the Faculty of Fine Arts or Charukala. With a nonchalant face and a carefree demeanour, he hands out the hot,

crispy puff pastry wrapped in torn newspapers.

A bite of the snack takes you back in time. He sells this for Tk 20 per piece and every festival or on any random day, he sits under the canopy of a big tree beside the pond and his presence invariably makes the synergy of Charukala so exhilarating.

Bismillah Misti Mukh & Bakery Ltd in Uttara has also mastered the art of making perfect hot patties. The pastry is kneaded and folded by alternating the layers of butter and dough many times over to get that right puff, which is then filled with a stuffing of beef mince and baked.

The result is hot patties that are light and flaky and with every bite you can feel the crispy crunch. For Tk 80 a piece it is worth a try if you can brave the Uttara traffic.

These modern-day patties are done in many shapes and sizes and the fillings vary according to the shop's exclusivity but what we crave are the age-old triangle beef patties sold in a tin box with a light on and that tastes the same throughout the ages.

Swechchhasebak League leader hacked to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

Misceants hacked a local Swechchhasebak League leader to death in Malgram area of Bogura yesterday.

The dead is Nahid Hasan, 30, organising secretary of the proposed committee of Bogura city unit Swechchhasebak League, said Ariful Bari Ananjil, vice-president of the unit.

A group of criminals stabbed Nahid indiscriminately around 8:30pm. Locals then rushed him to Bogura Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead.

The murder might have taken place over previous enmity, said the victim's family members.

Police are trying to identify the criminals, said Snigdha Akter, additional superintendent of Bogura police.

3 schoolboys drown in M'singh, Thakurgaon

STAR REPORT

The bodies of two schoolboys were recovered from the Brahmaputra River in Ishwarganj upazila of Mymensingh on Monday night.

They are Prithibi, 12, son of Sirajul Islam, and Foyal, 16, son of Abdul Kadir of Balurghat area, reports our Mymensingh correspondent.

Prithibi, a seventh-grader at Uchakhila High School, drowned in the Brahmaputra river at Moricharahr Balurghat Monday afternoon.

Foyal, a tenth grader of the same school, saw his and jumped in to save Prithibi but also drowned.

Meanwhile in Thakurgaon, a 13-year-old boy drowned in a pond after he went swimming with his friends in Bahadurpara of Sadar upazila yesterday afternoon.

Lukman Mehedi Luban, son of late Mostafijur Rahman, was an eighth-grader at Thakurgaon Government Boys' High School, reports our Thakurgaon correspondent.

On information, firefighters recovered his body and took it to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital, where the on-duty doctor declared him dead.

BSF seizes 51 gold bars at Petrapole

2 Bangladeshis arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

India's Border Security Force (BSF) seized 51 gold bars from a Royal Maitri International bus at India's Petrapole checkpoint and arrested the Bangladeshi bus driver and helper on Monday.

Driver Md Mostafa and helper Maitur Rahman Akand were arrested by BSF members of Petrapole 145 Battalion.

They also found 6.95 kg of gold inside the bus's engine at the checkpoint.

Benapole checkpoint ICP BGB Camp Commander Md Mahub Hossain said BSF members found the gold when the coach – number 412 – crossed the no man's land and entered the Indian side through the Petrapole border.

The Royal Maitri bus runs on the Tripura-Dhaka-Kolkata route.

The estimated price of the gold bars is Rs 4 crore, he said.

A case was filed with Petrapole Police Station.

A third of power capacity

FROM PAGE 1

cubic feet of gas a day (mmcf) to the national grid, of which 1,000 to 1,100 mmcf is going to power plants.

This seems to be inadequate as the PDB already wrote to Petrobangla to increase gas supply.

Petrobangla bought four consignments of LNG from the spot market last week. It was buying one or two since Bangladesh resumed buying LNG from the market in February after a seven-month pause.

The gas crisis hit the power plants in Ghorashal, Haripur, Ashuganj, Bheramara, and Sirajganj. Due to the coal crisis, the Rampal power plant in Bagerhat remained shut since April 23.

A 307MW power plant in Barguna also remains shut due to a coal shortage.

By analysing PDB and PGCB data, it was found that at least 100 out of the 154 power plants in the country do not produce electricity as per their capacity.

Among the gas-based power plants, 5,846MW was produced out of the total capacity of 11,094MW.

Furnace oil-based power plants produced 2,660MW when they have a capacity of 5,925MW.

Private diesel-fired power plants produced 230MW of electricity on average. They have a capacity of 1,286MW.

Bangladesh imports 1,160MW of electricity from India, which supplied around 1,011MW of electricity on average.

"The overall economy has failed the power sector, not the power sector itself," said Mohammad Tamim, dean of the Chemical and Materials Engineering Faculty at Buet.

Two coal-based power plants and three LNG-based power plants are ready to start commercial operation but are unable to due to a fuel crisis.

The fuel crisis is due to the dollar shortage, he added.

But it is the consumers that continue to suffer.

Take the case of Hamida Akhter, a housewife in Netrakona's Purbadhala area. For the last couple of days, there have been power outages at least seven

to eight times a day.

"We forgot to retain water in our tank. In the meantime, the power outage happened, leaving us without water for at least three hours," she added.

In Bogura, the power outages increased over the last three days. There were 30-minute power outages every two hours during the day, said locals.

Rezaul Karim, owner of Reza Engineering and Metal in Bogura BSCIC, is running up operations costs by using power generators.

Yesterday, the power demand was 15,300MW while 13,752MW was generated.

On May 8, the gap between the electricity demand and supply of Bangladesh Rural Development Board (REB), which supplies power to 55 percent of all consumers in rural areas, was 1,483MW, the highest since April 15.

The highest shortage, 352MW, was in the Mymensingh zone on Monday.

All the zones of REB including Cumilla, Khulna, Rajshahi, Rangpur, Sylhet, Dhaka and Barishal faced loadshedding for about one to three hours that day.

PGCB's hourly power-cut data showed that 1,582MW load was shed at 12:00am yesterday.

That means that urban areas were getting better electricity supply.

The government had a plan to produce at least 16,000MW of electricity a day as per demand from April to June, the warmest time of the year.

But since the first of April it failed to do so.

The PDB generated a record 15,648MW on April 19. Even then, PDB was not able to meet the country's demand of 16,096MW and had to shed 428MW load in Mymensingh, Cumilla, Sylhet, and Rangpur areas.

Daily production decreased since then.

But in recent days, when the temperature started to increase, power generation did not increase proportionally.

The country's total electricity generation capacity is 22,566MW.

Imran arrested

FROM PAGE 1

Khan supporters in Karachi and Lahore, while protesters blocked roads in the capital Islamabad, Peshawar, and other cities.

One of Khan's supporters was killed and at least 12 people, including six policemen, were injured in Quetta during clashes.

Authorities in three of Pakistan's four provinces imposed an emergency order banning all gatherings.

Pakistan's telecommunications watchdog told Reuters that mobile data services were being suspended on interior ministry orders, while Netblocks said access to Twitter, Facebook and YouTube had been restricted.

Hours after Khan's arrest, the Islamabad High Court declared the move legal, reports Dawn online.

The top diplomats of the US and Britain together called for adherence to the "rule of law" in Pakistan after Khan's arrest triggered nationwide violence.

"We just want to make sure that whatever happens in Pakistan is consistent with the rule of law, with the constitution," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told a joint news conference in Washington.

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly, speaking alongside Blinken, noted that Britain enjoyed "a longstanding and close relationship" with Commonwealth member Pakistan.

"We want to see peaceful democracy in that country. We want to see the rule of law adhered to," Cleverly said.

Khan faces dozens of charges since being ousted – a tactic analysts say successive Pakistan governments have used to silence their opponents.

Video broadcast on TV channels showed Khan – who has a pronounced limp since being shot during an assassination attempt last year – being manhandled by dozens of paramilitary rangers into an armoured car inside the Islamabad High Court premises.

"As we reached the court's biometric room to mark the attendance, dozens of rangers attacked us," said Ali Bukhari, a

lawyer with Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. "They beat him and dragged him out," he told AFP.

Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah said Khan had been arrested by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), the country's top anti-corruption body.

"This arrest is in accordance with the law," he said. "NAB is an independent body and not under government control."

It was not immediately clear where Khan was taken.

The arrest comes a day after the military warned Khan against making "baseless allegations" after he again accused a senior officer of plotting to kill him.

The rebuke late Monday underscored how far Khan's relations have deteriorated with the military, which backed his rise to power in 2018 but withdrew its support ahead of a parliamentary vote of no confidence that ousted him last year.

"The timing of the arrest is striking," said Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center.

"The senior army leadership is uninterested in repairing the rift between itself and Khan, and so with this arrest it's likely sending a message that the gloves are very much off."

Anticipating his arrest, party officials later released a pre-recorded video by Khan in which he urged supporters to come out in support of "true freedom".

Pakistan is deeply mired in an economic and political crisis, with Khan pressuring the struggling coalition government for early elections.

At a weekend rally in Lahore, Khan repeated claims that senior intelligence officer Major-General Faisal Naseer was involved in an assassination attempt last year during which he was shot in the leg.

The military's ISPR wing said in a statement that "this fabricated and malicious allegation is extremely unfortunate, deplorable and unacceptable".

An exponent of economic rationale for independence

FROM PAGE 1

2:15am local time on Tuesday.

Prof Nurul migrated to the US in 1987. His neighbour in the US, Ahmad Ahsan, who is also an economist, said Prof Nurul died of complications associated with old age.

He left behind a son, a daughter and a host of relatives to mourn his passing, Ahmad told The Daily Star last night.

Debapriya Bhattacharya, distinguished fellow of Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said Prof Nurul was a leading architect of the economic rationale for Bangladesh's independence.

"He epitomised the most gainful alignment between the civil elites and political elites. He was also in many ways the leading teacher of a new generation of economists during the pre-independence period. He was also the mentor of both academics and researchers," Debapriya said.

He led a brilliant group of economists as a first deputy chairman of the Planning Commission, Debapriya added.

Prof Nurul also became a person of authority in international food policy. He was an assistant director general of UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, served as an adviser to the International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington DC, and later became an Emeritus Fellow of the institute.

Dr Zahid Hussain, former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office, in a message wrote, "Professor Nurul Islam's work on the Bangladesh economy preceded the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent nation. He consistently flagged the economic discrimination between the then East and West Pakistan and the policies that were causing the transfer of resources from the East to the West Pakistani business tycoons."

"Bangladesh's First Five Year

Plan was prepared under his supervision. The document is often used as a textbook on Bangladesh economy in the 70s... Whenever outsiders approach me for a reference document on the history of the Bangladesh economy, the two publications I refer to are the First Five Year Plan and his book 'The Making of a Nation: An Economist's Tale'."

Prof Nurul was the first deputy chairman of the first Planning Commission after the independence of Bangladesh.

After graduating in economics from Dhaka University and earning his PhD from Harvard University, he joined the former institution as a lecturer and played an active role in the struggle for economic justice for the then-East Pakistan.

In his tribute, Binayak Sen, director general of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), wrote that Prof Nurul narrated the economic disparity between East and West Pakistan.

He contributed to the Awami League manifesto for the 1970 election, he added.

"Very few social scientists and economists can match his sharp intellect and deep wisdom. His demise is an irreparable loss."

He was the first Bangalee to become the director of Pakistan Institute of Development Economics and was the first chairman of BIDS.

Eminent Economist Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud wrote on Facebook that said Prof Nurul was an undisputed guru of two generations of economists.

Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh, said the current planning commission was Prof Nurul's brainchild because he had vast experience being the head of the then Pakistan Institute of Development Economics.