



Country will be destroyed if any other party comes to power: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said that the country will be destroyed if any party other than the Awami League comes to power.

She asked the AL leaders and activists to work together to bring her ruling party back to power to sustain the momentum of development.

The prime minister said this at a meeting of leaders and activists of Dhaka Metropolitan North Awami League at her official residence Ganabhaban.

She said that everyone should be vigilant so that anti-state, murderous, fundamentalist groups and anti-liberation war forces do not come to power.

“We have proved that when Awami

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Hasina sends mangoes for Mamata

UNB, Benapole

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday sent 1,200kg of mangoes as a gift for India's West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

The mangoes were sent through Jashore's Benapole land port.

The shipment arrived at the Benapole-Petrapole checkpoint around 12:00pm, said Tanvir Ahmed, Benapole customs house deputy commissioner.

Kawsar Sarowar, administrative officer (Accounts) of the Deputy High Commission of Bangladesh in Kolkata received the consignment.

Last year, PM Hasina sent two trucks of Haribhanga mangoes to her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi and Mamata Banerjee.



Migrants return inland after being prevented from boarding smugglers' boats by French National Police on the beach of Gravelines, northern France yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

BANGLADESHI PEACEKEEPERS UN should enhance screening before appointing them

Says HRW ahead of UN under-secretary-general's Dhaka visit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Human Rights Watch yesterday urged the UN under-secretary general for peace operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, to publicly voice concerns over the abuses by the government security forces during his upcoming visit to Bangladesh.

Bangladesh security forces, particularly the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), have long been implicated in serious human rights violations, said HRW Chief Advocacy Officer Bruno Stagno Ugarte in a statement yesterday.

“Lacroix should emphasise that if Bangladesh is to maintain its role as the top contributor of peacekeeping troops, it should appropriately apply the UN human rights screening policy, which requires governments, alongside the UN, to ensure their nationals serving with the UN have not violated human rights laws,” the HRW official said.

He said poor enforcement of this

policy fails to ensure Bangladeshi troops, who “engaged in abuses at home”, are not deployed with UN missions abroad.

“In Bangladesh, systematic human rights screening by the UN is applied only at higher ranks and otherwise left to the National Human Rights Commission, which has limited purview over security forces,” read the statement.

The rights body said Bangladesh's weak enforcement of this policy reinforces a message that grave rights violations will not preclude one from service under the UN flag, presenting a moral hazard for the UN.

When reviewing Bangladesh's record in 2019, the UN Committee against Torture recommended an independent vetting procedure, “to ensure that no person or unit implicated in the commission of torture, extrajudicial killing, disappearances or other serious human rights violations is selected for

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Saber made spl envoy to PM on environment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the environment, forest and climate change ministry, has been made the prime minister's special envoy on environment and climate change.

The Cabinet Division yesterday issued a gazette, signed by Cabinet Secretary Md Mahub Hossain, in this regard, saying that the appointment will take immediate effect.

This post will be honorary, the gazette said.

Saber has been playing a key role in climate negotiation on behalf of the country.

He was the first Bangladeshi to become the president of Inter-Parliamentary Union, an international organisation of national parliaments.

The Awami League lawmaker had served as deputy minister for ports and shipping and local government, rural development and cooperatives from 1999 to 2001.



DSA CASE Prothom Alo reporter Shams's bail extended

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday extended the bail of Prothom Alo reporter Samsuzzaman Shams till submission of the probe report in a case filed with Tejgaon Police Station under the Digital Security Act.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Mehedi Hasan passed the order.

On April 9, Shams got ad-interim bail from a different Dhaka court.

Shams also secured bail in another case filed with Shahbagh Police Station under the same act on April 3.

On March 29, Shams was picked up from his home in Savar by law enforcers wearing plainclothes around 4:00am, triggering widespread criticism.

On March 26, the Prothom Alo made a “photo card” to post a report written by Shams on Independence Day on social media. The card had a quote from a day labourer named Zakir Hossain juxtaposed against a photo of an adolescent boy.

He was detained less than two hours after a Jubo League leader filed a DSA case with Tejgaon Police Station.

Woman's body found in ditch

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police recovered the body of a woman from a ditch in the Barabkunda area of Sitakunda upazila in Chattogram yesterday.

Selina Akter, 24, a local resident, was the mother of a one-year-old baby.

Local police said they detained her husband Md Arif, who during primary interrogation, claimed Selina was mentally ill.

Selina went missing after she went out for shopping on Sunday evening, said Officer-in-charge of Sitakunda Police Station Tofail Ahmed, quoting family members.

On Monday morning, locals found her body in a ditch and informed police.

“There were no visible injury marks on the body,” the OC said.

Her body was sent to Chattogram Medical College Hospital Morgue for an autopsy, he added.

“We are investigating the matter,” said the OC.

Gold bars worth Tk 5.4cr seized at Dhaka airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs intelligence officials yesterday detained a cleaner and seized 60 gold bars weighing nearly 7kg at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

The market value of the gold bars is around Tk 5.4 crore.

Jamal Bhuiyan admitted to carrying and hiding the gold bars in a waste dumping area near Boarding Bridge 9.

A case will soon be filed against him, said Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate (CIID) Deputy Director Sunjida Sharmin.

She said they had information that a large quantity of gold arrived at the airport on a flight from US Bangla Airlines.

Ex-Italian PM Berlusconi dies at 86

REUTERS, Milan

Silvio Berlusconi, the billionaire media mogul and former Italian prime minister who transformed the nation's politics with polarising policies and often alarmed his allies with his brazen remarks, died yesterday aged 86.

Berlusconi, Italy's longest-serving premier who counted Russian President Vladimir Putin as a friend and gained notoriety for his “bunga bunga” sex parties, had suffered from leukaemia and recently developed a lung infection.

He died at Milan's San Raffaele hospital, where he was admitted on Friday. Four of his five children and his brother Paolo were at his bedside, ANSA reported shortly before his death was announced. A state funeral will be held in Milan tomorrow.

Backed by huge wealth and a media, real estate and football empire, Berlusconi launched into politics in 1994, upending traditional parties and becoming premier. Another businessman, Donald Trump, would mirror that approach in the United States two decades later.

Berlusconi's Forza Italia party is now a junior partner in Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's right-wing coalition, and although he himself did not have a role in government, his death may bring fresh realignments in Italian politics.

His business empire also faces an uncertain future. He never publicly indicated who would take full charge of his MFE MFEB.MI company following his death, even though his eldest daughter Marina is expected to play a prominent role.



AL's Khair prevails over own clan

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In at least seven places, supporters of councillor candidates chased each other, and AL men were seen entering the polling booths and asking constituents to vote for their candidate at three centres.

IAB leaders and Jatiya Party mayor nominee Iqbal Hossain Tapos alleged that AL activists drove their polling agents out of the polling centres and stopped some people who were going to cast their votes.

Speculations run rife over govt strategy

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attitude towards it in the wake of the new US visa policy.

Under the policy, the US can impose visa restrictions on individuals and their immediate family members if they are responsible for, or complicit in, undermining the democratic election process in Bangladesh.

A section of AL leaders believes that the US visa policy might be a reason.

“Visa policy might be a reason for allowing Jamaat to hold the rally. I think it was an embarrassing decision for the government and it had no alternatives,” an AL leader told The Daily Star wishing anonymity.

AL Joint General Secretary Hasan Mahmud on Sunday said Jamaat was allowed to have the meeting since the party is not banned and that it sought permission.

Besides Hasan, at least four ministers on Sunday tried to justify the government's decision.

Senior BNP leader Gayeshwar Chandra Roy yesterday said, “In fact, the government was forced to give Jamaat the permission [to hold the rally] because of the US visa policy.”

At several places, officials said the electronic voting machines (EVMs) were slow to read fingerprints. An EVM malfunctioned for about an hour in the morning at the Government Barishal College. BCC polls was conducted with EVMs only.

Renu Bala, 48, said she had to return home without casting her vote at Rupatali Zagua Primary School after waiting for two hours in the queue.

According to AL insiders, there are two different views within the party about the issue.

A section of the leaders believes that by allowing Jamaat to have the rally, the AL's image as a secular party has been harmed and that it sent the wrong message.

The other section feels it is a strategic decision by the government to demonstrate that it is not imposing any restriction on any organisation.

They also think if Jamaat resorted to violence as it had done before, the government's previous stance against the party would be justified in the eyes of the global community.

Al Masud Hasanuzzaman, professor at the Department of Government and Politics at Jahangirnagar University, told The Daily Star, “So far it seems it is a political strategy of the ruling party. Yes, it is a political surprise as Jamaat was allowed to hold a rally after such a long time. There are pressures from different corners of the government to allow the opposition parties to hold rallies.

“With this, the government can say that opposition parties have full

freedom to hold rallies.” Masud said the government will obviously see how Jamaat behaves in the coming days and the political equations will be clearer. “So, we have to wait a bit to get a clear picture.”

Sources in Jamaat said the party leaders found a good opportunity to make their presence felt on the streets after being denied the chance for years.

They said Jamaat took full advantage of the US visa restriction policy. Had the government denied them permission for the rally, Jamaat would have said that the government was obstructing the democratic process.

Asked about the claims of a deal made with the government, Jamaat Naye-e-Ameer (deputy chief) Abdullah Md Taher told The Daily Star that no consensus was made between the government and his party.

“We were focused on our organisational activities in the last 10 years. Now we are focusing on political activities to wage a movement for our demand for caretaker government...” , he said.

N Korea's Kim offers 'full support' to Putin on Russia Day

AFP, Seoul

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un offered his country's “full support and solidarity” to Moscow in a message to Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday, state media reported.

Kim sent the message of congratulations on the national day of Russia, one of a handful of nations that maintain friendly relations with Pyongyang.

His message, published by the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), did not directly mention the invasion of Ukraine or Moscow's involvement in an armed conflict, but praised Putin's “correct decision and guidance... to foil the hostile forces' escalating threats”.

The North Korean people, it added, extend “full support and solidarity to the Russian people in their all-out struggle for implementing the sacred cause to preserve the sovereign rights, development and interests of their country against the imperialists’

high-handed and arbitrary practices.”

This is the latest message of support from Pyongyang to Moscow since the beginning of the war in Ukraine.

North Korea has described that conflict as a US “proxy war” to destroy Russia, and condemned Western military aid to Kyiv.

In January, the United States accused North Korea of supplying rockets and missiles to the Russian mercenary group Wagner. Pyongyang denied that allegation.

And in March, Washington claimed to have proof that Moscow was looking to Pyongyang to supply weapons for its offensive in Ukraine, in return for food aid for impoverished North Korea.

As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, Russia has long held the line against increasing pressure on North Korea, which is under multiple UN and Western sanctions over its nuclear weapons and missile programmes.

Voting thru EVM proved problematic

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and elderly voters were relatively higher.

Many differently abled voters also cast their votes.

However, voters at some centres faced difficulties in using electronic voting machines which slowed down the voting.

After casting his vote, AL mayor nominee Khaleque told journalists that casting ballots using EVMs was little slow.

Morzina Begum could not cast her vote at the Nurnagar Government

Primary School polling centre as her fingerprint did not match with the one recorded with the NID database.

Voting at a booth of Pallimangal Sheikh Hatem Ali Government Primary School polling centre remained suspended for about 25 minutes as an EVM became inoperative.

Five candidates vied for the mayor post of Khulna City Corporation polls, while 136 ran for 31 general ward councillors and 39 for 10 women councillors (reserved) in the election.