

Fakhrul hopeful about success of one-point movement

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir has expressed optimism that their planned one-point movement will lead to the fall of the government.

"We are very hopeful that we will be able to defeat this government and force it to step down, dissolve parliament and arrange the next election under a non-party neutral government through our one-point movement as the people are now united," he said.

The BNP leader made the remarks while talking to reporters after a meeting with the liaison committee of a faction of the Gonoforum and People's Party at the BNP chairperson's political office in Gulshan yesterday.

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He said they discussed in the meeting the next course of action on the ongoing simultaneous movement. They also talked about how and when the one-point movement can be launched.

Gonoforum General Secretary Subrata Chowdhury said there will be no election without a non-party neutral government and the people will not participate in any polls under the incumbent government.

"That's why we are going to launch the one-point movement soon."

Subrata said they reached a consensus with the BNP on presenting a joint statement on their movement within a short time and then intensifying their anti-government movement.

"A public opinion has been formed in favour of holding a fair election under a neutral government. We are also getting cooperation from the international community in this regard," he said.



Sudan paramilitaries loot, 'terrorise' remote town

Say witnesses; fresh fighting reported in Khartoum, Darfur

AFP, Wad Madani

Gunmen from Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces were accused of attacking a remote town yesterday before going on a shooting and looting rampage that witnesses said "terrorised" its people.

For nearly three months, the RSF commanded by Mohamed Hamdan Daglo has fought the regular army under General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan in a war that has claimed the lives of at least 3,000 people and displaced millions.

The RSF was "looting banks and public buildings" in Bara, 50 kilometres (30 miles) northeast of El Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan, a witness in the town said.

"We're being terrorised: they shoot and loot, and the army and police are nowhere to be seen," said another resident, Abdelmohsen Ibrahim.

"Even if the army tries to come from El Obeid, the RSF are in control of the El-Obeid-Bara road."

El-Obeid, 350 kilometres south of Khartoum, is a strategic logistical and commercial hub, with an airport and huge warehouses for the storage of foodstuffs.

The fighting since April 15 has been centred on the capital Khartoum as well as North Kordofan and the vast western region of Darfur, where the United Nations has warned of possible "crimes against humanity".

Many civilians have accused the RSF of carrying out acts of violence against them, while

also charging that the armed forces have done little to protect them.

Since the war erupted, the RSF has established bases in residential areas while the army has struggled to take advantage of its air superiority.

The RSF has been accused of forcing civilians out of their homes, seizing their vehicles, robbing them and raping women as they flee to neighbouring countries.

Fresh fighting was reported on Thursday in Khartoum and Darfur, including air strikes, heavy shelling and fighting on the ground.

The RSF paramilitary group traces its origins to the Janjaweed – feared Arab militiamen who committed widespread atrocities against non-Arab ethnic minorities in Darfur starting 2003.

Saudi Arabia and the United States brokered several ceasefire deals at talks in Jeddah that were suspended last month after both sides violated the truces.

Nearly 2.8 million people have been displaced since the start of the fighting in mid-April, including almost 650,000 who have crossed into neighbouring countries, according to the latest UN figures.

According to a report published last week by Heritage For Peace, a cultural heritage NGO in touch with local researchers and archaeologists, at least 28 cultural and archaeological sites around the country have been targeted or suffered collateral damage, reports Reuters.

WEST BANK RAID 2 Palestinians killed by Israeli security forces

REUTERS, Nablus

Israeli security forces yesterday killed two Palestinians suspected of carrying out a shooting attack against police this week, Israel's military said.

Israeli forces raided the occupied West Bank town of Nablus, the military said, and "both terrorists were killed following an exchange of fire."

The official Palestinian news agency WAFA said Israeli troops had cordoned off a house where the two had holed up and that they had been "executed". It reported that clashes with residents later broke out.

Yesterday's raid into Nablus followed a two-day Israeli operation earlier this week in the densely populated Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank, which has been a flashpoint in a wave of Israeli-Palestinian violence that has convulsed the West Bank for more than a year.

Next year's HSC exams on short syllabus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Next year's Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) exams will be held on a revised or short syllabus, said Education Minister Dipu Moni yesterday.

Replying to a question, the minister said the decision was taken as the candidates who would appear for the exam were not getting enough classes to cover the full syllabus.

So, the syllabus will be revised for next year's HSC exams scheduled to be held in August, she added while interacting with journalists at Chandpur Circuit House around noon.

On July 7, a circular signed by the inter-boards coordination committee president Tapan Kumar Sarker said the HSC and equivalent examinations in 2024 will be held on the revised syllabus formulated in 2023. Tests will be held on all subjects. Each examination will be three hours long and will carry full marks, it added.

Barguna fisherman drowns in Payra river

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A fisherman drowned in the Payra river in Barguna's Taltali upazila yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Md Zakir Hossain, 40, of Zakirtabak area, said Shahidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Taltali Police Station.

According to locals, Zakir fell into the water from a fishing trawler in the Tetulbaria area and went missing around 9:00am.

His foot had gotten tangled in the anchor rope of the trawler before it was dropped into the river.

After two hours of searching in the river, locals recovered Zakir's body.

Taltali Upazila Nirbahi Officer Sifat Anwar Tumpa said the local administration will provide financial assistance to the family of the deceased.

Man dies, brother hurt as train hits trolley

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A man was killed and his brother was injured when a train hit a tractor trolley near the Guakhora rail station area in Pabna's Chatmohar upazila yesterday afternoon.

The deceased is Abdul Karim, 35 from Faridpur upazila. He was driving the tractor trolley that hauled goods.

The accident took place at the Bejjara area near the Gakhora station at around 1:30pm when a Dhaka-bound intercity train Chilahati Express was crossing the area.

Chatmohar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Selim Reza said the train hit the trolley when its driver Karim along with his brother Likhon was crossing the rail line without noticing the train.

Karim died on the spot while his brother Likhon was injured, who was taken to Chatmohar Upazila Health Complex.

There was no authorised level crossing in the area.

Just the previous day, two men, who were also brothers, died as a train hit their motorbike in Santhia upazila.



The chassis of a lorry is left on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway while its body is being repaired at an automobile workshop, *not in picture*, by the road. This poses a risk of accidents. The photo was taken in the capital's Matuail yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

PM brings

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"Papon bhai and Mashrafe bhai were big, big factors. Mashrafe bhai took me along and Papon bhai was with me. The Prime Minister has given me one-and-half-month time off in case I require treatment or if I need to get mentally free. I can do that and play the games there are after one-and-a-half months," he relayed.

The BCB president also briefed the media on the incredible developments. He had said on Thursday that he still considered Tamim the captain of the ODI team as he had not received a letter of resignation. However, the letter in question arrived on Friday morning.

"I had a feeling from seeing his [Tamim's] press conference that he took a decision from an emotional point of view. I felt that if we could sit with him then maybe we could find a solution."

"Today, through the honourable Prime Minister's involvement, we could sit with him. And, as he has told you, he is withdrawing his letter of retirement," Hassan said.

"Yes a letter arrived today. Since he is not physically or mentally fit yet, that's why he is taking time off. In these one-and-a-half-months, he will go for rehab and we are hoping he will return to cricket soon. It's a relief for everyone. If our captain is not there, how will we play?" he further said.

Mashrafe later told The Daily Star that the responsibility bestowed on him by the Prime Minister was accomplished. Tamim, as it stands now, will return to the team ahead of the Asia Cup in September.

Mashrafe felt the issue of captaincy was best left to Tamim and the BCB president. "I don't quite know about that [whether Tamim would take on captaincy again]. It's up to them and they have discussed it. The main thing is that the Prime Minister wanted Tamim to play the World Cup. That's final and that's what happened," he remarked.

Amidst the backdrop of an extraordinary evening, meanwhile, the Bangladesh cricket team, under Liton Das' captaincy, prepared for the must-win second ODI against Afghanistan at Chattogram's Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium, hoping to level the series with a win.

A project riddled with anomalies

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project cost rose by Tk 2,493.95 crore and the deadline was set for June 2027.

Project authorities cited the Dhaka Elevated Expressway construction over the rail line in the capital, complexities over land acquisition, the Covid 19 pandemic, and the hold up in starting the physical work as the major reasons behind the delay.

WHAT THE IMED REPORT SAYS

According to the recently released IMED report, the project saw 63.75 percent progress till May this year, against the revised target of 86.36 percent by this time.

The report stressed how this project was taken up without any feasibility study, while such a study is vital for any project.

On the other hand, the project's original Development Project Proposal (DPP) was approved without identifying and specifying the work scope, the report said.

The DPP was then revised twice, with the latest revision done last month, documents show.

Asked, Project Director Nazneen Ara Keya admitted that the project indeed was taken without a feasibility study and the work scope was not fixed beforehand.

As per a provision included with the project, a detailed design was done and thus, the work scope was widened after that, she said.

The IMED report suggested conducting proper feasibility tests before taking up any project and that DPPs be prepared considering reality to avoid time and cost overrun.

POOR MATERIALS & TEST NEGLIGENCE

The report said an inspection of the site found a laboratory with insufficient facility, rendering it incapable of ensuring quality of the material.

The team observed the curing management of concrete cubes and a fixed date for testing but found that no initiative was taken for cube testing even after its maturity date had passed, it said.

The responsibility for such negligence or working against the

contract falls on the consultants, engineers and contractor, the report further said, adding that the project implementing agency cannot avoid its responsibility either.

The non-performance of the concrete cube test within the stipulated time raises a question about whether the structure was constructed as per the quality mentioned in the contract, it said.

The report recommended that a third party test samples from the infrastructure and the results be scrutinised by the BR's design department.

However, the project director denied the allegations and said they

TIME & COST OVERRUN Original deadline: June 2015 Revised deadline: June 2027 Original cost: Tk 848.60cr Revised cost: Tk 3,342.55cr OTHER ANOMALIES Work scope not fixed before taking up project 20pc ballasts were oversized Negligence in concrete cube testing Insufficient facility in lab to test material

were based on a "wrong perception".

She also claimed they have done the test on time and following due procedure.

The report also said that when, during a field visit, it was found that 20 percent of the ballast used were oversized, the project consultant could not properly explain why it was so.

"Proper compaction is not possible if there is abundance of oversized ballast," it said.

Less compacted ballast worsen the riding quality, which may cause the rail to bend and may even lead to train accidents, the report said, adding that it appears that the contract provision was violated in this regard.

The report further said the rail line installation work from Tongi to

Joydebpur was completed but the thickness of ballast on the section was found to be 20 percent less than the estimate.

The project director said, "How did they [IMED] determine that 20 percent of the ballast were oversized? They are saying it based on an assumption. We have checked and not more than five percent of ballast were oversized – which is permitted as per the contract."

Besides, the project work has not been completed yet and they will be able to add ballast, if necessary, she said, adding that they have already asked the contractor and consultants to recheck.

The report further said meetings of the Project Steering Committee and Project Implementation Committee were not being held regularly.

REASONS FOR DELAY, COST ESCALATION

Project Director Nazneen Ara said the Dhaka Elevated Expressway being constructed over the rail line in the capital was the main reason behind the delay in implementation, adding that the physical work of the railway project from Banani to Kamalapur could not begin because of this.

The expressway authority, in a letter sent to the rail authority, said it would clear the rail line up to Mohakhali, Tejgaon Station and Malibagh by July and August this year and March of next year respectively, she said.

"So, we have to plan our work accordingly," Nazneen said, adding that the expressway authority is yet to say when they will clear the Malibagh-Kamalapur section.

About land acquisition complications, she said the problem is "almost solved". Besides, the Covid-19 pandemic and the long delay in starting the physical work are other reasons behind the time extension, she added.

Meanwhile, the increase of work, redesign of the Turag Bridge, a spike in land acquisition costs, and the strong dollar were the major reasons behind the cost escalation, the project director said.

3 metro rail stations

FROM PAGE 1

from Agargaon to Motijheel successfully," ABM Arifur Rahman, a project manager of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL), told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the train took 43 minutes to reach Motijheel from Agargaon as it was operated at a speed of 10 to 15km per hour on section and 5km per hour in station areas.

The Uttara-Agargaon section of the country's first metro rail line, formally known as MRT Line 6, was opened in December last year.

Since then, the demand for trains on the Agargaon-Motijheel route has increased as the major catchment area runs through Mirpur to Motijheel.

At that time, it was announced that commercial operations on Agargaon-Motijheel route would begin in December and on the Motijheel-Kamalapur route in June 2025.

But Quader at a programme on June 18 said the prime minister will inaugurate the metro rail services on the Agargaon-Motijheel route in October. Till June this year, this section saw 95.20 percent progress, shows the DMTCL monthly

progress report.

Speaking at a brief programme at the Agargaon Metro Station yesterday, Quader said they were going to cross another milestone as the performance test or test run of the metro rail on the Agargaon-Motijheel route is going to start.

He said different types of tests, including system integrity test, and trial run will be carried out till October 15 and the PM will inaugurate the services in late October.

Tests will be conducted every day, the minister said, adding the tests will be done in daytime on Fridays and at night on the other weekdays.

Quader later boarded a train for moments and got down before flagging it off at 4:30pm.

Road Transport and Highways Division Secretary ABM Amin Ullah Nuri, DMTCL Managing Director MAN Siddique and Project Director Atabuddin Talukder were present at the programme.

The government is implementing the fast-track project to build the 21.26km elevated metro line from Uttara to Kamalapur at a cost of Tk 33, 472 crore.

HC rejects Rahul's plea

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Janata Party (BJP), Purnesh Modi, after comments he made in 2019 were deemed to be insulting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other people surnamed Modi.

"How come all thieves have the name Modi?," Gandhi had asked in an election campaign speech, referring to two fugitive businessmen, both surnamed Modi.

Gandhi, the scion of a dynasty that has given India three prime ministers, was sentenced to two years' imprisonment but the jail term was put on hold and he was given bail.

Gandhi also lost his parliamentary seat following the conviction since lawmakers sentenced to jail terms of two years or more are automatically disqualified.

They are also barred from running for election for six years after the end of the two-year jail term.

Gandhi has separately challenged the conviction in a district court, which is yet to hear the case.

Justice Hemant Prachchhak of the Gujarat High Court said in his order yesterday that a stay of conviction is not

a rule but an exemption to be resorted to in rare cases.

"The refusal of stay of conviction would not in any way result in injustice to the applicant," the judge said.

"There is no reasonable ground to stay the conviction of the applicant in view of the facts and circumstances of the case."

There was no immediate response from Gandhi to the verdict.

Congress spokesperson Jairam Ramesh said the judgment would be studied. "The judgement only redoubles our resolve to pursue the matter further," Ramesh tweeted.

During the hearing of the case, Gandhi's lawyer Abhishek Singhvi had argued that the crime for which Gandhi had been convicted is not "serious" and not being allowed to contest elections for eight years is "virtually semi-permanent in politics".

Gandhi is only the second lawmaker in India to be disqualified from parliament after being convicted. The other case was in January this year, but the lawmaker was subsequently reinstated.