



B4 Lotkon farmers enjoying fair yields, prices



P15 'Can't accept seeing my teammates disrespected'



P10 Russia, N Korea to strengthen defence cooperation



P5 Bamboo bridge their only means

BNP moves rally to Friday, so does AL

Daylong drama over police permission, venue

STAR REPORT

After much drama and uncertainty, police yesterday denied the BNP permission for holding a rally today, and the opposition party responded by rescheduling its gathering for tomorrow at Nayapalton or Suhrawardy Udyan.

The Dhaka Metropolitan Police did not give the BNP permission, saying a rally on working day would cause immense sufferings to people.

At a press conference late last night, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said people will see hindrance to any democratic activity as an attempt to obstruct democracy and fair polls.

"We are urging the authorities concerned [to extend support] to make the grand rally a success."

Also last night, the party informed the DMP about the change of date.

Signed by its Senior Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, the letter to the DMP said the grand rally would be held tomorrow at 2:00pm either at the Suhrawardy Udyan or

at Nayapalton.

Dhaka police also refused the Awami League's associate and front organisations permission for their rally at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram citing the same reasons given to the BNP.

The Dhaka University unit of Chhatra League then sought permission from the university authorities for a rally either at the Gymnasium Ground or in the Central Shaheed Minar area.

Three associate bodies of the AL -- Jubo League, Swechhchasebak League, and Chhatra League -- eventually rescheduled their rally for tomorrow. They will hold the rally at the trade fair ground next to the Bangabandhu International Conference Center in Agargaon around 3:00pm.

Gazi Mejbaul Hossain Sachu, acting president of Swechhchasebak League, told The Daily Star yesterday, "A fair was held on that ground a few days ago and there are many holes there. The rally has to be delayed by a day as the trade fair ground is not ready yet."

All day yesterday, the political arena

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Two BNP men in handcuffs aboard a police pickup truck on the premises of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in Dhaka before being produced in front of a court yesterday. They along with many others came to the capital from Jhenidah to attend the BNP's grand rally. Police picked several of them from a Purana Paltan hotel on Tuesday night.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

PALLABI DRUG TRADE

Allegations of bribery rife against cops

Locals speak up after girl 'took own life' during police raid

SHARIFUL ISLAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Around a week ago, Sub-Inspector Anwarul Islam and Assistant Sub-Inspector Haridas Roy of the capital's Pallabi Police Station arrested a man in Adarsha Nagar on charges of selling cannabis.

They then demanded Tk 2 lakh for his release and threatened that if he failed to pay the bribe, a case would be filed against him on charges of heroin possession.

Speaking to The Daily Star, the arrestee's wife, on the condition of anonymity, said, "I immediately took a Tk 50,000 loan from a local lender with high interest, gave it to the police officers and they eventually filed a case against my husband accusing him of possessing 200gm of cannabis."

She said she was forced to pay the bribe as it takes around a year to secure bail in cases filed over heroin possession.

Like her, around half a dozen locals of Adarsha Nagar have brought up such allegations against SIs Anwarul Islam and Zahiruddin, ASIs Haridas Roy, Abul Kalam Azad and Ferdous Rahman of Pallabi police.

Three workers of the nearby Kalshi graveyard claimed there were many families running small drug businesses in Adarsha Nagar.

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BUSINESS

Exports to China fall

Bangladesh's export to China fell to a three-year low of \$677 million in the last fiscal year as entrepreneurs could not take advantage of the duty benefits extended by Beijing.

If the earnings generated in 2019-20, when the Covid-19 pandemic wreaked havoc around the world, are excluded, the receipts in 2022-23 would be the lowest in a decade, data from the Export Promotion Bureau showed.

A limited number of products in the export basket and a lack of intermediate goods and technology products are standing in the way of increasing exports to the world's second-largest economy, which offers duty-free entry to 98 per cent of the items listed in its tariff schedule.

STORY ON BI

JOINT STATEMENT ON HERO ALOM

It's a 'violation' of diplomatic norms

Shahriar tells heads of 13 foreign missions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday said the joint statement by 13 foreign missions condemning the attack on Hero Alom was a "violation" of diplomatic norms, and urged the missions to refrain from "non-diplomatic" behaviour in the future.

After a meeting with the heads of the 13 missions, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam told reporters that he reminded the envoys about the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and that "behaviour ignoring objectivity, impartiality and non-biasness will only create a crisis of mutual trust".

"We called the ambassadors who issued a joint statement to the media in violation of diplomatic norms. We have expressed our displeasure about their behaviour beyond diplomatic etiquette," he told a press briefing at the Foreign Service Academy.

He held the press meet after a briefing with the ambassadors and high commissioners or their representatives of the 13 foreign missions at the State Guest House Padma in Dhaka in the afternoon.



Shahriar said they did not summon the missions; rather, they invited them to discuss the matter.

He, however, said the ministry had indeed summoned UN Resident Coordinator Sheldon Yett in connection with a Twitter post expressing concerns over the attack on Hero Alom, whose original name is Ashraf Alom.

The 13 missions that were invited are the US, the UK, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the European Union.

In the joint statement on July 19, they called upon the government to conduct a full investigation and take legal steps against the perpetrators of the attack on Alom.

"Violence has no place in the democratic process. We call for a full investigation and accountability for the perpetrators. Everyone involved in the upcoming elections should ensure that they are free, fair, and peaceful," the statement read.

Shahriar termed the attack on Hero Alom, an independent candidate in Dhaka-17 by-polls, an "isolated" incident.

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BNP RALLY VENUE

Intelligence report behind police refusal

It hinted BNP might have been planning a sit-in

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Dhaka Metropolitan Police's decision to deny BNP permission to hold its grand rally at either of its desired venues is grounded on an intelligence report which hints that the BNP has a plan to go for a long sit-in to bring the city to a standstill.

According to the report, messages have been sent to BNP's grassroots leaders, specifically those at the district level, to bring old bedsheets and cloths with them while travelling to the capital.

Highly placed sources confirmed these findings of the intelligence report to The Daily Star yesterday.

The report also mentions that BNP's grassroots activists were asked to remain on the streets irrespective of whatever action law enforcers took.

After consulting the report, the DMP suggested the BNP hold its grand rally at the Golapbagh ground, taking into consideration the location of the ground.

According to police sources, SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

EU special envoy sits with labour unions, rights activists

Minimum wage of Tk 23,000 in RMG sector discussed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Labour unions and rights activists yesterday held a meeting with European Union's Special Representative for Human Rights Eamon Gilmore in the capital and raised their demand for a minimum wage of Tk 23,000 in the ready-made garments sector.

The RMG minimum wage has been Tk 8,000 since 2018.

Currently, negotiations are going on as a board formed by the government is reviewing the current minimum wage.

Meeting sources said the labour representatives told Gilmore to pressure buyers into giving fair prices to factories so that workers are not paid poverty wages.

They also mentioned the murder of Shahidul Islam, a union organiser from the Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Workers Federation in Gazipur.

On June 25, Shahidul was attacked by cadres outside the compound of Prince Jacquard Sweater Limited's owner in Gazipur's Sataish Baganbari area, when he was negotiating the factory workers' demands.

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BRIDGES OF NO USE Locals use a bamboo-made platform to get onto one of the two bridges over Bairati canal in Lalmonirhat's Kaliganj upazila. Two government organisations built the bridges within yards of each other, but they have no approach roads. The photo was taken recently. Story on page 6.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

BANK DIRECTORS FROM SAME FAMILY

BB orders bringing down number to 3

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The central bank yesterday instructed banks to bring down the number of directors from a single family to three in line with the Bank Company (Amendment) Act 2023 within the shortest possible time.

A maximum of four members from a family were allowed to sit on the board of a bank concurrently as per an amendment of the Bank Company Act 1991 that was made in 2018.

But the new act, which was passed in parliament on June 21, specified that the number of directors from a single family cannot be more than three.

The concerned directors should reach a mutual understanding if one of them has to resign from the board to comply with the law, said the central bank in a notice yesterday.

If they fail to reach any consensus, a lottery has to be held at a board meeting to pick the director who would have to step down, it said.

Yesterday's notice came two days after the BB advised banks to place the new law at the next board meeting.

The reduction in the number of SEE PAGE 2 COL 1