



BNP wants to destabilise the country

PM tells expatriates in Rome

UNB, Rome

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has alleged that the BNP doesn't want election, rather it seeks to create an unstable situation in the country.

"The election will definitely be held as per the constitution. The BNP knows that people will not vote for them. Why would the people vote for those who were driven out [of power] due to vote rigging?" she said.

Hasina was addressing a community event at her place of residence in Rome on Tuesday. She had been in Rome to attend the UN food summit.

The PM questioned how the BNP can seek votes after "killing people through arson".

"They don't want election. They lick the boots of some of their foreign lords and they want to make the people of the country suffer by them [the foreign lords]. They want to hamper the trend of development of the country and its people."

Stressing that the Awami League will have to come to power to build the country as Smart Bangladesh, Hasina sought votes for "boat", the AL's electoral symbol, again in the next general election.

Referring to the US sanctions on Rab officials and its visa policy, the PM said, "Sanction has been imposed on those who have curbed terrorism and militancy. We can't understand its mystery."

"Those who did not support our Liberation War now want to play with our country in different ways. They can't be allowed to play. The people of the country will have to remain united," she added.

Hasina asked the expatriate Bangladeshis to send remittance home through legal channels, and look for foreign partners to invest in Bangladesh.

The PM also urged them to abide by the laws of their host countries. She discouraged the overseas jobseekers from migrating to foreign countries through illegal channels.



Showing brazen disregard for safety, a bus bound for Signboard in Narayanganj drops off passengers in the middle of the Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Kanchpur yesterday. Three-wheelers also ply this part of the highway violating traffic rules. The Kanchpur Highway Police Station is nearby.

PHOTO: SAURAV HOSSAIN SIAM

El Nino weather pattern set to heat up temperatures

Southeast Asia prepares for haze crisis

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

Southeast Asian nations are gearing up to tackle the threat of a tougher-than-usual "haze" season together, as the El Nino climate phenomenon raises the risk of soaring temperatures.

Ministers and officials from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) met in Singapore last month, where they vowed to ramp up monitoring of wildfires and efforts to prevent air pollution, and finalise a new plan to boost cooperation.

During the dry season in Indonesia - usually starting in August - slash-and-burn clearance of forest and peatland to expand palm oil, farming and pulp and paper production covers much of Southeast Asia in a choking haze for months most years.

Yet environmentalists are concerned that this haze season could be the worst in years, after the World Meteorological Organization warned that temperatures are expected to surge across large parts of the world following the emergence of El Nino in the tropical Pacific for the first time since 2016.

"The prediction is that we are due for a strong El Nino," said Helena Varkkey, an associate professor of environmental

politics and governance at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur. "Fires, once they occur, will likely be sustained over long periods and move across national boundaries."

After a few haze-free years - due to the Covid-19 pandemic and wet weather - a new regional roadmap to address the issue will prove vital ahead of the upcoming season, Varkkey said.

"It's important to focus on data standardisation, sharing and use - (of) air quality indexes, hotspot data - to support cross-border coordination," she added.

With the prospect of prolonged hot and dry weather raising the risk of widespread haze and air pollution if the burning of forests and peatland is uncontrolled, ASEAN is seeking to avoid a repeat of recent haze crises like those in 2019 and 2015.

In 2015, between June and October, about 2.6 million hectares (6.4 million acres) of land burned in Indonesia, mainly on Sumatra and Borneo islands, according to a 2016 World Bank report. The fires cost the country about USD16 billion, it found.

A Harvard University study linked the 2015 haze to more than 100,000 premature deaths in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.

During previous haze seasons, Southeast Asian nations often failed to work together, experts said, with governments publicly blaming each other and taking little cross-border action, while any ASEAN policies were seen as too weak to make a real impact.

Mushtaq Memon, coordinator of chemicals and pollution action for Asia-Pacific at the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), said the ASEAN haze-free roadmap will likely be adopted in August and set out a strategy for the rest of the decade.

It will improve implementation and science-based targets, beef up local action and empower communities, and include a new sub-regional strategy, he said, without giving further details.

"Strengthening institutions and coordination with ASEAN member states and other institutions is a must," Memon said.

"At the national level, monitoring the onset of forest fires, open burning or peatland fires is critical, as well as ensuring immediate, on-the-ground actions to prevent spreading of these fires," he added.

When Indonesia faced regional pressure during the 2015 haze crisis, its focus changed from containing fires to prevention.

BB orders bringing down

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directors from a single family has long been a demand from experts and multilateral lenders as it can lead to concentration of power and compromise on corporate governance.

The banking sector's health deteriorated further after the amendment to the Bank Company Act 1991 that allowed four directors from the same family.

At the end of March, the banking sector's defaulted loans stood at Tk 131,621 crore, up 16 percent from a year earlier, according to data from the BB.

This is the second highest volume of defaulted loans in Bangladesh's history. The highest volume of soured loans was registered at the end of September last year: Tk 134,396 crore.

In 2022, Bangladesh had the second-highest defaulted loan ratio in South Asia, just behind Sri Lanka.

The new Act has extended the tenure of directors to 12 years from nine years, a provision that will deal a huge blow to the financial health of banks as they will have more control over management, experts have warned

BNP moves rally to Friday, so does AL

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was tense as several parties had scheduled rallies in the capital for today and they were waiting for police permission.

People began expressing concerns on social media about what would happen today. Many feared violence.

The BNP picked today for its grand rally on July 22 and the same day Jubo League announced that it would hold a rally on July 24 at the south gate of Baitul Mukarram.

But the next day, the youth wing of the AL, in a press release said it would hold the rally today instead.

Aggravating the situation, Islami Andolon Bangladesh on July 25 said it would arrange a rally today at the north gate of Baitul Mukarram.

The two gates are roughly 300 metres apart.

Around noon yesterday, DMP Commissioner Khandker Golam Faruq said, "I will ask all political parties to hold rallies without causing sufferings to the people. Maybe a time will come when people will be fed up and we may be forced to ban these programmes."

A few hours later, the DMP said that the BNP would not be allowed to hold the rally at Nayapaltan or at Suhrawardy Udayan on Thursday.

Faruq said that they offered the BNP the Golapbagh ground and would grant permission if the party was interested.

The opposition party held its December 10 rally at Golapbagh. But before that, a BNP activist was killed, around 100 were hurt in clashes, and dozens were arrested, including party stalwarts.

After the DMP's announcement, BNP standing committee members held an emergency meeting where they decided to reschedule the rally for tomorrow.

A large number of law enforcers, with riot trucks and water cannons at their disposal, were deployed in the Nayapaltan area yesterday.

Several hundred BNP leaders and activists had gathered in front of their party office around 5:00pm but they left following the instructions from senior leaders.

ARRESTS
A few hundred BNP leaders and activists were arrested across the country yesterday and on Tuesday.

At least 95 BNP men were arrested from Dhaka and Narayanganj yesterday.

Of them, 86 were detained between Tuesday night and yesterday and have been sent to jail yesterday, said court sources.

At least 21 were shown arrested under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, under which cops can arrest anyone without a warrant.

The rest of the detainees were held under various cases filed with police stations in the capital, sources said.

They think the BNP may go for violent activities to resist the election just like the party did in 2013, they informed.

In a statement, AL general secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday called upon the BNP to refrain from such conspiracy and face the people by participating in the elections. "The Awami League will deal with them (BNP) if they try to opt for terrorism and violence in the name of a movement," he said.

The field level police officials in the DMP were instructed to keep their eyes and ears open ahead of the BNP grand rally.

The officials were told to maintain close communication with local ruling party leaders and exchange information to know whether anyone

Charges of involvement in vandalism, arson attacks, and obstructing police were brought against 65 arrestees, they said.

The Daily Star learnt some details on the arrests of some BNP men in the capital.

Pallabi police stopped Ariful Islam, youth affair secretary of Bogura's Sherpur upazila unit BNP, and three local Jubo Dal activists as they arrived in Dhaka's Mirpur in a car around 3:30am yesterday.

Police went through their phones and after being sure of their political identity implicated them in a case filed with Pallabi Police Station in Dhaka on September 18 last year.

"Police implicated them in a ghost case to harass them. They were not in Dhaka when the case was filed last year. Their only crime is they are involved in the BNP," said Imtiyaz Parvez Setu, Arif's cousin.

Talking to The Daily Star at a Dhaka court, Moushumi Islam Khan said a team of Kadamtoli police picked up her husband Monirul Islam, joint convener of Cumilla City North Unit Jubo Dal from their Jurain home around 2:00am yesterday.

"My husband, a kidney patient, has been suffering from dengue for the last couple of days. I showed police the medical reports but they told us that they have been ordered to arrest him," she told The Daily Star.

would cause any untoward incidents.

A DMP official confirmed the instructions to The Daily Star.

The crime division under the DMP already held several meetings and they increased their vigilance to trace BNP leaders and activists against whom arrest warrants had been issued, and who might enter Dhaka to join the rally, the official said, requesting anonymity.

Another DMP high official said that they had requested some Thana-level AL leaders to assist them in providing information regarding BNP leaders who were evading arrests, or who might cause trouble at the rallies.

"We have requested for assistance to ensure public safety," said a police official, requesting anonymity.

Allegations of bribery

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Locals across Pallabi claimed the same for their respective areas.

On the pretext of cracking down on the drug trade, the policemen often detain people, sometimes at random; board them in vans and then release them only in exchange for bribes.

Locals further alleged that the drug menace is not leaving Pallabi as the police are gaining from it.

People chose to speak out against the errant cops after a girl died by suicide during a raid where the law enforcers tried to detain her mother from their Pallabi home for allegedly refusing to pay bribe.

On Monday night, Baishakhi Akhter, 16, was found dead in a room on the second floor of the four-storey building owned by their grandparents.

A police officer locked the room from the outside after she threatened to take her own life if her mother was detained, alleged her 11-year-old sister.

During a visit to the house yesterday, this correspondent found family members, relatives and neighbours grieving. They expressed anger towards the police for provoking Baishakhi's death by suicide and demanded justice.

Her mother Lovely Begum said that on Friday a police team, led by SI Anwar, went to their home and told them to pay Tk 50,000. They threatened to implicate the family in a case if they failed to do so. The next day, another police team went there and took Tk 10,000 from them.

Contacted, SIs Anwarul, Zahir, ASI Haripada denied the allegations, terming them "baseless".

Anwar claimed he, SI Mahmudul and ASIs Haripada and Abul Kalam went to the house following a tip-off regarding narcotics possession but did not find any drugs in the house.

"The allegations [against me] are baseless. As a girl died by suicide, they are bringing allegations against police. They [the locals' claims] have no merit. They never said anything before."

On Monday night, a separate team, led by SI Zahir and ASI Ferdous, raided the house and demanded Tk 5 lakh.

"They claimed we run a drug business here. But they did not find any drugs," Lovely said, adding that police threatened to take her away when she refused to pay the money.

However, SI Zahir denied the bribery

IU students suspended sans due procedure: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday observed that due procedure was not followed in suspending five students from Islamic University for torturing a female student at a dormitory in February.

The vice-chancellor of Islamic University, Kushtia, is supposed to take the decision about punishing its students for any offence under the relevant provision of the Students Code of Conduct, 1987. The discipline committee of the university will examine the VC's decision and if the committee is not satisfied with the VC's decision, then the committee itself will hand out punishment.

But the discipline committee has suspended the five students without the decision of the VC which is violation of the relevant procedure, the HC bench of Justice JBM Hassan and Justice Razik-Al-Jalil said during hearing of a writ petition relating to this issue.

The bench cancelled the suspension order and ordered the university authorities to take action against the five students maintaining due procedures and to submit a report after complying with the order to this court by August 23.

College student found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Police yesterday recovered the body of a college student near the outer signal area of Bhanugach Road in Sreemangal.

The deceased was identified as Shanta Debnath, an eleventh-grader at Moulvibazar Government College. He is the son of Nikhil Debnath of Rajnagar village.

Police found the body on the rail tracks. Shanta's both hands were found severed, said Rakibul Islam, sub-inspector of Sreemangal Railway Police Station.

He said the cause of death will be determined after an autopsy. The body was sent to Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

Two get death penalty for killing man

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A Joypurhat court yesterday sentenced two men to death for killing a man over previous enmity in 2008.

The two are Kafi Uddin and Sadiqul Islam of Altafnagar village under Dupchanchia upazila of Bogura. The court also fined them Tk 10,000 each.

Abbas Uddin, judge of Additional District and Session Judge's Court 2, delivered the verdict in presence of the accused.

Nripendranath Mondal, public prosecutor of the court, said Kafi and Sadiqul killed Sabuj Ali on August 1, 2008. Later, police recovered his body from Khanjanpur area of Joypurhat municipality area next day.

Intelligence report behind police refusal

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Golapbagh sits on the edge of the city so it would be easier for the law enforcing agencies to disperse the protesters if there was any anarchic situation.

Earlier in December last year, police gave BNP permission to hold its grand rally at the Golapbagh ground although the party had sought permission for its Nayapaltan headquarters. The BNP rally took place at the ground on December 10.

Queried about the possibility of BNP staging a sit-in, Kh Mahid Uddin, additional commissioner (crime) of DMP, told The Daily Star yesterday that the police are ready to face any kind of situation.

"We will take necessary measures

depending on the situation," he added.

Police also requested Islami Andolon Bangladesh (IAB) not to hold its planned rally at the north gate of the Baitul Mukarram national mosque.

IAB presidium member Mosaddek Billah Al Madani told the DMP that it was not possible for them to postpone the rally. Therefore, he said, the party would shift the venue and hold its rally in front of its Purana Paltan headquarters at 3:00pm.

In the last couple of days, the ruling Awami League leaders also talked among themselves about the possibility of BNP's sit-in, said AL sources.

The ruling camp leaders are also fearing the possibility of recurrence of a Shapla Chattar-like incident.

EU spl envoy

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Furthermore, the rights activists said they do not want any trade-related sanctions or restrictions, adding that when the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) was taken away from Bangladesh, it not only hurt the industry, but also directly affected the workers.

All the union representatives present at the meeting iterated they want the GSP to be brought back.

They also spoke about new laws in formation that would criminalise "illegal" strikes and how those would have negative impacts on labour rights. They further mentioned how workers are automatically fired, or considered "resigned", if they are absent for over 10 days, as per the law.

The activists told Gilmore how the labour law must be changed to allow trade unions inside special economic processing zones.

They described at length how factory owners infiltrate unions and spoke about the prevalence of such "yellow unions".

Unions and federations represented in the meeting include the National Garments Workers Federation, Bangladesh Garments Industrial Workers Federation, Awaaz Foundation, Solidarity Centre among others.

Representatives of Bangladesh Legal Aid Services Trust were also present.