

Holy Ashura today

BSS, Dhaka

The holy Ashura, commemorating the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hossain Ibn Ali (RA), a grandson of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), will be observed across the country today with due religious solemnity.

The day is a public holiday. Today is the 10th day of the month of Muharram in Hijri calendar 1445.

It is regarded as the day of Karbala, a "mourning and heartbreaking event", which has special religious significance for the Muslim community across the globe.

Muslims across the world recall the sacrifice of Hazrat Imam Hossain (RA) along with his family members and 72 followers, who embraced martyrdom in 680 AD in the desert of Karbala on the banks of the Euphrates river in Iraq while fighting for truth and justice against the Yazid forces.

On the eve of the holy Ashura, President Mohammed Shahabuddin and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday issued separate messages, paying deep respect to Hazrat Imam Hossain (RA) and other martyrs of Karbala.

Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television and private TV channels will air special programmes while newspapers and online news portals will publish supplements highlighting the significance of the day.

23 DMP CONDITIONS

Both parties broke many

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police permitted the opposition BNP and three affiliate bodies of Awami League to hold rallies in the capital yesterday on 23 conditions.

However, both parties violated many of those conditions.

BNP held a grand rally at its Nayapaltan headquarters while three AL affiliates — Jubo League, Chhatra League and Swachchhasebak League — organised a "peace rally" near the south gate of Baitul Mukarram.

According to a DMP condition, the AL affiliates were asked to confine their gatherings within Mahanagar Natya Mancha, Sergeant Ahad Police Box, Fulbaria crossing and Mukangan in the area. However, this condition was breached.

Meanwhile, BNP was told to confine its rally between the Police Hospital and Nightingale intersection in Nayapaltan, but gatherings of the party activists were noticed way outside the permitted area.

Furthermore, both AL and BNP violated many other conditions.

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People watch the wildfire on the island Ciovo, from Seget Gornji, Croatia.

PHOTO: REUTERS

More work needed to ensure space for civil society

Says visiting EU special representative Gilmore

UNB, Dhaka

Noting that the election is Bangladesh's political business, European Union's Special Representative for Human Rights Eamon Gilmore has expressed hope that the forthcoming national election will be free, fair and free of violence.

"So, our expectation will be that the elections will be without violence, and that they will be free and fair," he told UNB in an exclusive interview before leaving Dhaka last night.

Gilmore said he is not going to offer a political opinion on how the election will be organised but when they think about elections, they do not think of just about what happens on polling day. "We also think about the environment coming into the election. That's what the exploratory mission was looking at."

He said most elections in most democracies and countries in the world take place without violence. "The conduct of politics is about democratic engagement. It's about people making their case, peacefully, democratically, respectfully, and then voters making their decisions."

Gilmore said they have just had an

exploratory mission here over the last number of weeks and they did not get into a great deal of detail on it because they are waiting for the report of the exploratory mission on which a decision will be made whether or not to deploy an election observation.

He thinks that the country has more work to do on ensuring that there is more space for civil society organisations.

"We also talked about the Digital Security Act, and the concerns that we've been expressing for some time about how that act is being used to silence and to limit press freedom to work and civil society actors."

He said it was confirmed to them that the government intends to amend the DSA and the legislation to do so will be considered by the government in the near future.

"We hope that it will make a significant difference...so we will see what amendments will be produced," Gilmore added.

He said the broader space for political debate and political engagement has been shrinking. "So I'm glad that DSA is

intended to amend. We have to wait and see the details of that. But it's encouraging [that DSA will be amended]."

On the labour rights, Gilmore said they need to see some improvement in that area over time. "And I did make the point in the meetings that I had with the government that the whole environment around labour rights and around trade preferences is changing."

"That is what we are seeing, and it is one of the big changes that I've seen, I would say globally over the last four years," he added.

Gilmore mentioned that economic actors are becoming more significant and in the human rights area, consumers are becoming more aware of where a product is coming from, the conditions of which is made, whether or not workers are paid a fair wage, whether or not there is a fair price being paid for the particles when they are manufactured.

"But also investors are becoming more conscious about the word they are investing," he said.

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Security guard murdered in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Criminals slit the throat of a night guard in Biral upazila of Dinajpur early yesterday.

Jonaku Chandra Roy, 60, son of late Bishu Ram Roy of Razarampur village, was a security guard at Bhadrabazar in the upazila.

Quoting locals, police said locals found Jonaku's body in a pool of blood early yesterday and informed police.

Police recovered the body and sent it to M Abdur Rahim Medical College morgue for an autopsy.

After visiting the scene, Zinnah Al Mamun, additional SP of Dinajpur Sadar Circle, said police were yet to know the motive behind the killing and that the investigation was going on.

College student's body recovered, murder suspect held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The body of college student Hridiya Kabiraj, 22, was recovered from a canal yesterday, 21 days after he went missing in Patuakhali's Bauphal upazila.

Police also recovered his motorbike from another canal around 11:30am.

The body was sent to Patuakhali Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

Hridiya, son of Harendra Kabiraj of Daspara village of Bauphal and a fourth-year student of Nabarun Survey College, left home around midnight on July 7 after getting a phone call from one Zafar Khan.

His father filed a general diary on July 9. Police arrested Zafar and he confessed to killing of Hridiya during interrogation.

BGB hands over detained BSF member

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Border Guard Bangladesh handed over a member of Indian Border Security Force early yesterday, hours after he was detained along Bhurungamari border in Kurigram for entering Bangladesh illegally.

Shri Sanu Kumar Jetop, a member of BSF Battalion-31, was handed over to the BSF authorities around 12:15am yesterday after a BGB-BSF company commander level flag meeting, said Lt Col Abdul Mottakim, commanding officer of BGB Battalion-22 in Kurigram.

Around 10:00pm on Thursday, locals caught the BSF member from near Sonahat border of Bhurungamari upazila and handed him over to the BGB, said Lt Col Mottakim.

BNP to press on with Dhaka sit-ins today

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a non-partisan, neutral government," Fakhrul said, speaking as chief guest.

"A new Election Commission has to be formed, and the election must be held under that Commission. The aim of our one-point movement is the resignation of the current Awami League government," he said.

According to him, people have lost confidence in the election system, so there is no point in holding the election under the AL, which has been in power since 2009.

BNP acting chairperson Tarique Rahman, also elder son of BNP chief Khaleida Zia, delivered a 7:40-minute audio message from London, where he is living since 2008.

Tarique has been convicted in a number of cases in Bangladesh, including on corruption charges. The Daily Star is not publishing any of his statements as there is a High Court ban on printing or airing his speeches since 2015.

Jointly moderated by Abdus Salam, convener of Dhaka South unit BNP and Aman Ullah Aman, convener of Dhaka north unit BNP, the rally was also addressed by BNP standing committee members

Abdul Moeen Khan, Gayeshwar Chandra Roy, Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury, Nazrul Islam Khan, Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, Vice chairmen Abdullah Al Noman, Barrister Shahjahan Omar Bir Uttam, Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Barkatullah Bulu, AKM Zahidul Islam, Shamsuzzaman Dudu, Advocate Ahmed Azam Khan, Nital Roy Chowdhury, and BNP Central Organising Secretary Shama Obaid and Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal President Afroza Abbas.

Many senior leaders during their speech asked the party rank and file to take an oath not to leave the streets until their demands are met.

The stage was set up on nine trucks with the red carpets rolled out to the stage, and loudspeakers were installed at and around the venue. Two separate stages were set up for cultural activists and journalists. Pro-BNP cultural organisations performed music to keep the crowds charged up till 12:00pm.

Alleging that the government has politicised the judiciary and administration, Fakhrul said the incumbent government is conspiring to hold elections similar to those in

2014 and 2018 but the people of the country will not accept it anymore.

"Not only the people of the country, but the foreign friends also want a free and fair election in Bangladesh," he said.

He alleged that several thousands of their party activists have been arrested over the last two days, and urged police and admin officials not to carry out any illegal order from the "illegal regime" and not to stand against the people.

"We know that you people want betterment of the country. So, follow the rule of law and stop arresting and harassing [BNP men]," he said.

Portraying a gloomy picture of the country's economy, the economics professor-turned-politician, alleged that the ruling party indulged in massive corruption in the name of mega projects.

"Are you tired? You are the youth. You have to fight. The young people have to sacrifice at the crisis moment of the country," he told the rally, which was joined by a significant number of young men and women.

Apart from BNP, 36 like-minded political parties and alliances held separate rallies in different city areas

to press home the one-point demand.

Many leaders and activists of the party alleged that they had to undergo "unreasonable" security checks by law enforcement agencies at the entry points of the capital since Thursday night, which continued till Friday noon.

Delwar Hossain, a BNP supporter, said police searched him and several others at Shonir Akhra on their way to the rally from Narayanganj.

"Police arrested five of our party men who were on a microbus," he said.

BNP activist Absar Munna travelled all the way from Barishal to attend the rally.

"I came to Dhaka two days ago, fearing obstruction on the way from police and ruling party members," he told The Daily Star at the rally.

Speaking at the rally, BNP Standing Committee Member Mirza Abbas said the government used its law enforcement agencies to arrest their men who had taken shelter at hotels and the houses of their relatives during their stay in Dhaka to join their grand rally.

"What have you achieved by arresting our people? Will you be able to stop our movement?" he asked.

said they are supporters of Keraniganj Upazila Parishad Chairman Shaheen Ahmed and that they joined the rally at south gate of Baitul Mukarram national mosque.

During the programme, a scuffle broke out between them and supporters of local Awami League lawmaker Quamrul Islam. "On our way back home, the rival groups attacked us and started stabbing our men indiscriminately near Golap Shah Mazar, leaving five people injured," he said.

One of the injured, Zubair Hossain, however, is a school student. He said he had come to Gulistan to get a new cover for his mobile phone set. But he was caught in the middle of the fight, he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Smooth for AL men

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League slogans and holding pro-Awami League banners were not stopped at the check points.

At least 353 people arrested overnight were brought to Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court. Of them 284 were shown on papers as arrested in 52 cases filed with different police stations in the city, while 69 others under sections 54, 55 and 151 of the Code of Criminal Procedure.

Nure Azam Babu, president of Sariakandi upazila BNP in Bogura, said he and over 150 other BNP supporters had to "sneak into the capital".

To avoid getting arrested on the

way, the activists divided into several small groups and started boarding buses, trains and trucks on Wednesday morning.

"My bus was checked in Boghura and in the capital's Gabtoli. I lied about the reason why I was travelling," he said, adding that two members of his team named Shyamol Mahmud and Russel Iqbal were arrested at a hotel in the Fakirapool area.

Murad Kadir, secretary of Taranagar union BNP in Keraniganj, said he and 11 other BNP activists came to Dhaka in three auto-rickshaws. They were stopped by police around 10:00am.

"All of us told different stories about where we were going," he added.

Final exams at schools

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30 as the next general election is likely to be held in late December or early January next year," the minister said.

She was addressing a press conference on the results of this year's SSC and equivalent exams at International Mother Language Institute in the capital's Segunbagicha yesterday.

Keeping in mind the students' trouble during electioneering, the government has already cancelled the two-week summer vacation, and that would be adjusted with the winter vacation in December, Dipu Moni added.

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal on Thursday said that the schedule for the 12th parliamentary polls may be unveiled in the last week of October.

"If we don't announce the schedule in October, we will have to do it in November since there is an obligation to holding the election within 90 days," he said.

According to the constitution, the national election must be held within 90 days before the five-year term of a parliament expires.

The 11th parliament had begun its first sitting on January 30, 2019.

Deploy

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ambassador to ask the UN to prevent any member of Rab from being deployed in peacekeeping missions until their human rights records are investigated.

They said that the prevention should be temporary until a full and transparent investigation is done.

"The particularly egregious alleged abuses by paramilitary Rab also include torture, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings, demanding immediate condemnation," said the letter by the 14 legislators.

It was signed by Bob Good, Scott Perry, Anna Paulina-Luna, Josh Brecheen, Ralph Norman, Andrew Clyde, Eli Crane, Cory Mills, Paul A Gosar, Doug LaMalfa, Ronny L Jackson, Randy Weber, Brian Babin and Glenn Grothman on July 27.

Good tweeted, "The people of Bangladesh deserve free and fair elections. I sent a letter to the US ambassador to the UN with 13 of my colleagues, expressing concern over violence by the Bangladeshi government against peaceful demonstrators."

His office verified the authenticity of the letter to The Daily Star yesterday.

AL won't hold rallies, but will stay alert

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smuggled thousands of crores of taka out of the country."

Organised by Jubo League, Chhatra League and Swachchhasebak League, the rally started at around 2:30pm with Jubo League activists' cultural performances.

Leaders and activists of the AL affiliates, wearing colourful attires, started marching the venue after 12:00pm. Within hours, the venue was full to the brim.

The crowd spilled out on the streets around the Secretariat, National Press Club, Shikha Bhaban, Curzon Hall, Nagar Bhaban, Bangabandhu Avenue, Fulbaria, Purana Paltan and Bangabandhu National Stadium.

Speaking at the rally, AL Presidium

member Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya said, "It was a rehearsal for us. The real movement is yet to come."

AL Joint General Secretary Mahub Ul Alam Hanif said BNP wants to come to power through the "backdoor".

"BNP holds meetings with foreigners before every rally they organise. Why do they do it? They want to come to power through the backdoor. We will not let anyone do so. We don't want another 1/11," he added.

AL Joint General Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim said the AL's peace rally would continue till the next national election.

Addressing BNP, he said, "To those who want to kill democracy and start a dictatorship, those who want to seize power in crooked ways, we want

to say that we have united to fight against your anarchy, misdeeds and destructive politics."

1 KILLED IN FACTIONAL CLASH

A man was stabbed to death and at least four others were injured after one faction of an AL affiliate allegedly attacked another in the capital's Gulistan while returning from the rally, witnesses said.

The identity of the deceased, aged about 25, could not be known immediately.

The injured are Zubair Hossain, Ariful Islam, Mukasher, and Noman Hossain Roni, a Jubo League activist from Keraniganj.

Saikat Hasan Biplob, who claimed himself to be a joint convener of Keraniganj Model Thana Jubo League,