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It is people's participation that matters

Says PM about next nat'l polls

STAR REPORT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said that to her, a participatory election is the one participated by the general public.

"It is absurd that the polls would be considered valid only if they [BNP] join it..." she told reporters at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

"Now, whose participation is considered participation? The vote thieves? Or is it the participation of the corrupt and money launderers? The August 21 grenade attackers, killers of the Father of the Nation, and war criminals of 1971? Is this what people want?" she asked while briefing journalists on the outcome of her recent visit to the 15th BRICS Summit.

"Didn't the people participate in the local government elections and many parliamentary by-elections spontaneously? People participated in those. Those elections were participatory."

Referring to the BNP, she said the party got only 30 seats in the 2008 national election, and since then, it



DANCING IN THE RAIN ... Three college girls dancing and laughing as they make the most of the afternoon rain on their way back home. The photo was taken near the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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Economy headed in wrong direction

Say 70pc respondents in Asia Foundation, BIGD survey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As much as 70 percent of the respondents in a recent survey think Bangladesh's economy is heading in the wrong direction, and they cite high prices of products as the basis for their viewpoint.

The disclosure was made in the study titled 'The State of Bangladesh's Political Governance, Development and Society: According to Its Citizens' jointly conducted by The Asia Foundation in Bangladesh and the Brac Institute of Governance and Development.

The latest report, which was unveiled yesterday, used a divisionally representative survey conducted from November 2022 to January 2023 in all 64 districts with a sample size of 10,240 men and women.

Similar surveys were conducted in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

The percentage of people who thought the country was heading in the right direction across all three domains of a citizen's life is significantly lower than what it was in 2019, indicating a considerable

deterioration in public perceptions about the country's future.

For instance, in 2019, 28 percent said the country was heading in the wrong direction from an economic perspective.

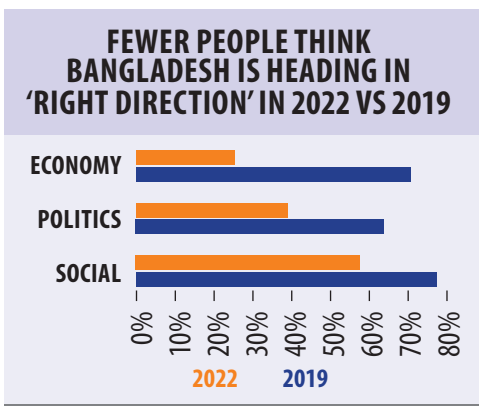
While the majority of the respondents across all income groups say Bangladesh is going in the wrong economic direction, respondents among the highest income group are the most pessimistic.

As much as 87 percent of the respondents from the highest income group said Bangladesh is going in the wrong direction from an economic perspective.

For the 70 percent of the respondents who say Bangladesh's economy is heading in the wrong direction, the reasons are: the high price of products (84 percent), poor economic conditions (35 percent), increased scarcity of necessary goods (25 percent), lack of employment opportunities (16 percent), lower pay compared to workload (10 percent), decent employment opportunities (8 percent), and business is down (8 percent).

For the quarter of the respondents who say the

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"It is absurd that the election would be considered valid only if they [BNP] join it..."

PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HASINA

doesn't really participate in any elections. Rather, it does business by selling nomination forms in the name of election.

"Through nomination trade, some money will go to the [BNP] office at Paltan, some to the office at Gulshan, and a lot to London. This is how they participate in elections."

Asked what is going on and what is going to happen in the country, the PM replied it is the people who will decide what will happen to the country.

"People will vote in the election, and those who get elected will assume power."

Commenting on the speculations regarding Bangladesh's possible membership in BRICS, Hasina said Dhaka made no attempt to be a BRICS member now.

"We didn't think about getting the membership now or that we would get the membership going there for the first time. We neither made any attempt nor did we tell anyone [to give us membership]."

"It's not like Bangladesh wants something, but doesn't get it. We have at least raised our dignity on the global stage."

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Logging disappearances Rights groups, activists face legal hassles

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Human rights organisations and activists, who work to document incidents of enforced disappearances, operate under the burden of judicial harassment as they face a bevy of legal cases and police investigations.

Md Abdul Kaum of Mymensingh works to document cases of human rights violations, and more specifically enforced disappearances, as the district representative of several national organisations.

In a case filed under section-23 of the Digital Security Act on January 17, 2022, Kaum is accused of publishing defamatory posts on three Facebook pages that he does not even own.

If convicted on all charges, Kaum could be sentenced to 22 years in prison and fined Tk 30 lakh.

A local madrasa teacher is suing him. Some of the posts are about him.

"I have never made those posts. This case is being pursued because I organise different programmes about enforced disappearances and I am in close contact with victims," claimed Kaum.

His claim is supported by the forensic report provided by the Criminal Investigation Department of police. The police found that Kaum was in no way related to the Facebook pages, and the websites corresponding to the Facebook pages were simply accessed by him as a user.

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Imran's graft conviction suspended

His detention at Attock Jail to continue in cipher case

REUTERS, Islamabad

A Pakistani court yesterday suspended former prime minister Imran Khan's recent conviction on corruption charges, his lawyer Naeem Panjutha said, but it will not lead to his release as a judge has ordered his detention in the cipher case.

The 70-year-old former cricket hero has been at the centre of political turmoil in the crisis-ridden nuclear-armed state since his ouster in a parliamentary vote of confidence in April 2022, and his relations with Pakistan's powerful generals have deteriorated badly over the past year.

Khan was imprisoned on August 5 after being sentenced to three-year jail for unlawfully selling state gifts during his tenure as prime minister from 2018 to 2022. As a result of the conviction, and with a national election expected in coming months, Pakistan's Election Commission also barred Khan from contesting elections for five years.

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**ASIA CUP
STARTS
TODAY**

Pakistan will host Nepal in Multan as the 16th edition of the Asia Cup gets underway today, with the opening Group A match of the six-team competition scheduled for a 3:30pm start. India, the defending champions and the other team of the group, will play their first match against Pakistan in Kandy, Sri Lanka on September 2. Meanwhile, Bangladesh will start their campaign tomorrow, taking on co-hosts Sri Lanka in a Group B match in Kandy.



A shell-shaped railway station is being built on a 29-acre land in Jhilongjha union's Hajipara area, just 3km from Cox's Bazar beach. The station is expected to be completed in September and will have a shopping mall, hotel, canteen, and lockers in which tourists can leave their luggage to explore the area. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN