

AL afraid of visa curbs

BNP leaders tell Gabtoli rally



BNP leaders and activists at a rally in the capital's Gabtoli yesterday. The party's Dhaka south city unit organised the event as part of its one-point movement, demanding resignation of the government and general election under a non-party interim government.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political leaders and government officials are scared of US visa restrictions, despite publicly asserting that they are not concerned about the implications of such sanctions, said BNP Standing Committee member Nazrul Islam Khan yesterday.

"If they don't care, why are they talking about this? Why are pro-government academics issuing statements daily? Why hold two-three programmes every day? They are actually scared," he said while addressing a rally at Gabtoli in the capital.

BNP south city unit organised the

event as part of its 15-day programme to press home its one-point demand for holding elections under a non-partisan neutral government.

Thousands of BNP leaders and activists joined the rally which started at 3:00pm. The party men chanted various anti-government slogans, as they carried banners, festoons, placards, and portraits of the party's top leaders.

A long tailback was created on the Dhaka-Aricha Highway due to the event.

Speaking at the rally, Nazrul claimed that many senior government officials have had their US visa applications rejected recently.

Regarding party chief Khaleda Zia's health, he said Khaleda would "surrender after treatment" if allowed to travel abroad on medical grounds.

Meanwhile, speaking at another rally in Narayanganj yesterday, BNP Standing Committee member Abdul Moyeen Khan demanded "free and fair" elections under a non-partisan caretaker government, claiming the AL was afraid of public verdict.

"If the Awami League wins through a fair vote, I'll congratulate them. But they know people don't want them anymore, that's why they fear," he said.

(Our Narayanganj correspondent also contributed to the news.)

Won't allow BNP on streets

Says Quader at AL rally in Tongi



Leaders and activists of Awami League at a rally at Tongi Government School premises. Gazipur city AL organised the programme yesterday. The event was part of a series of rallies the ruling party rolled out to counter BNP's demonstrations on the streets.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said they will not allow BNP to take to the streets during the 36-day ultimatum they have issued to the opposition.

On September 25, Quader issued the ultimatum.

The current parliament expires on January 29 and the national election must be held during the final 90 days of the parliament's tenure. The 90-day countdown begins on November 1, which was 36 days away on September 25.

"Every area would be under the control of the soldiers of Awami League, soldiers of Sheikh Hasina,"

said Quader.

He was speaking at a rally held at Tongi Government School premises in Gazipur.

Gazipur city unit of Awami League organised the "peace rally", as part of the ruling party's series of rallies to counter BNP's programmes.

Regarding BNP's threat that they will make the government resign by October, Quader said, "They (BNP) said Hasina's term is over... our term is over. They said October will be the last... We saw 15 such 'Octobers'. Hasina will remain in power."

"You (BNP) are now plotting to occupy Dhaka. We are waiting to see who will occupy Dhaka and how," he said.

Regarding Hasina's leadership, he said, "Captain is coming. She is now in Washington, and asked us to get ready."

Quader also said there is no alternative to Hasina.

Addressing the BNP secretary general, he said, "Now Mirza Fakhrul is crying, crying out of despair... He failed as a failed secretary general. They could not even wage a movement for Khaleda Zia..."

Pointing towards the US, he said, "Why are you so worried about a small country like ours?" President Biden, you stay in power, we have no issue. But stop Trump first. Trump is still ahead in popularity in your own country."

Repeal CSA, it's anti-people

Says rights group

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Forum for Freedom of Expression, Bangladesh yesterday demanded that the government repeal the newly-enacted Cyber Security Act 2023, saying the new law is "anti-people" and repressive like the now-repealed Digital Security Act.

In a statement, the forum members said the government enacted the act "hurriedly" and without taking sufficient opinion of people.

It said the repressive DSA has been repealed in face of demand from people. However, a similar law in the name of CSA has been formulated overlooking people's expectations.

In the new law, almost all repressive provisions from the DSA have been incorporated, the forum said.

As a result, there is scope that the use of the new law could be "misused" and curb people's fundamental rights, it said.

The forum said offences under the new law are ambiguous and not sufficiently defined. Besides, the law lacks standards for different international cybercrime-related agreements.

Also, the new law does not ensure "judicial accountability" of law enforcement agency members in case of misuse, the forum said.

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MINORITY RIGHTS PROTECTION

Form separate ministry, commission: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government needs to form a separate ministry and a commission for the welfare and protection of the country's minority community, said speakers at a discussion yesterday.

Although minorities are considered valuable voters during different elections, issues related to their fundamental rights and protection are largely ignored, they said.

Pro-Liberation War platform Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee organised the discussion on "The 12th National Parliamentary Election: Protection of Religious Minority Communities" at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh in the capital, said a press release.

We have been demanding enactment of a new law for the protection of minorities, but our demand was not realised.

RANA DASGUPTA
GS, Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad

Rana Dasgupta, general secretary of Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad, said they have been demanding enactment of a new law for the protection of minorities, but their demand was not realised.

Still, people from minority

communities face discrimination and oppression in the country, he said.

He urged the ruling party to implement the pledge of forming a "national minority commission" and a ministry in this regard.

Although minorities are considered valuable voters during different elections, issues related to their fundamental rights and protection are largely ignored.

Echoing the same, Aroma Dutta, an AL lawmaker from reserved seat, added the country's minority people need to be united ahead of the next parliamentary election.

Nirmul Committee President Shahriar Kabir said the government and the Election Commission must ensure that every citizen will be able to cast their vote peacefully and without fear during the next election.

He urged pro-Liberation War organisations to form a "preventive committee" consisting of social and cultural activities in the country's minority community-dominated areas.

Historian Prof Muntassir Mamoon said minority community people are oppressed everywhere across the globe and continue to struggle to ensure their rights in their own countries.

Case backlog a major concern

Says chief justice

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan yesterday urged all concerned, including judges and lawyers, to work towards clearing the huge backlog of pending cases.

"Multiple cases are generated from a single case due to the loopholes of law. There are 1,800 plus judges for 35-40 lakh cases pending with the courts across the country," he said.

"The rate of case disposal has increased in recent years. Even up to 125 percent of cases have been disposed of by some courts. If this trend continues, the backlog will be reduced to some extent in a few years," he said.

He was speaking as chief guest at a programme organised by Greater Mymensingh Association, Dhaka, at the National Museum. The event was held to accord citizens' felicitation to the CJ.

Hassan was sworn in as 24th chief justice on September 26.

The CJ said competent translators are needed to correctly translate the laws, which are written in English, into Bangla. He also said the SC has installed apps to turn the English verdicts into Bangla, but the translations are not up to the mark.

"I request the IT department to take necessary steps in this regard," he said.



493 girls raped in last 8 months

Says Advocacy Forum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 493 girls in 23 districts were raped between January and August this year while 329 were sexually harassed nationwide, according to a National Girl Child Advocacy Forum presentation.

The data was presented by Nasima Akter Jolly, editor of the forum, at a press conference organised to unveil a report titled "Overall status of girl child: Bangladesh context 2021-2022".

The event was held at Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Of the victims, 72 girls were gang raped. Besides, 104 were kidnapped and trafficked while two others were victims of acid attacks. Meanwhile, 30 girls were victims of child pornography.

During this period, 260 girls were victims of early marriage and 101 were subjected to attempted rape. However, a few perpetrators were arrested and many accused were bailed.

Some 26 domestic violence cases were recorded during this time and 36 girls had to face physical and sexual abuse at educational institutions. Also, 181 girls died by suicide, 136 were killed, and 11 were abandoned during this period.

Dr Badiul Alam Majumder, president of the forum, said, "Women and girls have come a long way, but they are still subjected to various forms of torture and discrimination. We need to invest more in their development."

Nasima Akter Jolly said, "Girls are deprived from birth. It's regrettable that the number of victims is huge while the number of offenders who were punished is negligible."

The presentation recommended prevention of political and administrative asylum to offenders, setting up a designated children's department, and an increase in the social safety net budget.

Country lacks 'true politicians'

Sultana Kamal tells discussion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

There is no true politician in the country at present, said Sultana Kamal, rights activist and Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon president, yesterday.

She made this remark while addressing the programme "Tourism by protecting haors, hillocks and forests", marking World Tourism Day, at a seminar hall in Sylhet city in the afternoon.

The programme was jointly organised by Waterkeepers Bangladesh, Bapa and Environment and Heritage Conservation Trust.

Speaking as the chief guest, she said, "Politicians are the policymakers. But there is no politician with whom we can share what people are really thinking... They lack goodwill. If they consider the upcoming election as an election, then, we might have a chance. If that happens, if the politicians come to seek votes, we will have the chance to inform them of what people are thinking."

Sultana Kamal said unplanned constructions at tourist spots are having an adverse effect on the environment.

"A working paper must be prepared on behalf of the people so that we can present demands to politicians or policymakers [in this regard]. We have to instil goodwill in them," she added.

The programme was presided over by architect Zerina Hossain, a trustee of Environment and Heritage Conservation Trust while Sharif Jamil, coordinator of Waterkeepers Bangladesh, presented the keynote speech.

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Dr Mohammad Jahirul Hoque, vice chancellor of Sylhet Metropolitan University, spoke as a special guest while Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Bapa Sylhet chapter, moderated the discussion.

In the programme, journalist Ujjal Mehedhi gave a speech on "haor tourism" while architect Rajon Das delivered a speech on "urban tourism".



An array of pick-up trucks, parked illegally beneath the Mouchak-Moghbarz flyover, takes up a significant part of the Panthapath-Tejgaon link road. The photo was taken recently near the flyover's Karwan Bazar end in the capital.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ