

## West reaffirms support for defenders of human rights

### Missions in Dhaka issue joint statement

UNB, Dhaka

A joint statement from diplomatic missions in Dhaka yesterday reconfirmed their support and solidarity with those who work to defend and advance human rights, fundamental freedoms, and equality for all.

The missions highlighted the fundamental role democracy plays in protecting human rights and promoting development.

“Our commitment to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is unwavering,” according to the statement issued marking the International Human Rights Day being observed yesterday.

On the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the statement was signed by the embassies/high commissions of Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the delegation of the European Union.

## 16 Japanese polls observers show interest to EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sixteen Japanese observers have shown their interest to the Election Commission to observe the next national election, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reports UNB.

Besides, observers from India, Palestine, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and Arab League will observe the election, said MoFA Spokesperson Seheli Sabrin said at a weekly media briefing yesterday.

She said the four-member election expert mission from the European Union (EU) will continue to stay in Bangladesh till January 21, 2024.

She said the team had a meeting with Additional Foreign Secretary M Nazrul Islam on November 30. They met Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal on December 3, said the spokesperson.

The spokesperson said the government has been continuing its efforts to bring back Chowdhury Mueen Uddin and Ashrafuzzaman Khan, who are living in the United Kingdom and United States of America, evading death sentence awarded to them for killing the country's intellectuals during the War of Liberation in 1971.

## AL keeps its allies hanging

FROM PAGE 1

Quader told the meeting that the AL decided to allow its leaders to run as independents to make the election more participatory and have a better turnout.

Tarikat Federation Chairman Syed Najibul Bashar Maizbhandari insisted that seat sharing for top leaders of the 14-party alliance should be immediately settled. The decision on the rest of the seats could be made later, he said.

According to sources, Inu then told the meeting that AL candidates have already started campaigning but the alliance leaders are still in the dark about their fate and are unprepared.

Menon said he collected nomination papers for two seats in

Barishal and that he does not know from where he would run.

Inu raised the issue of “AL independents” and said it would be tough for alliance leaders to win if they ran.

Quader said as the 14-party candidates would run with the “boat” symbol, the AL would ensure its partners’ victory, said meeting insiders.

Inu said the “AL independents” would be problems not only for them but many AL-nominated candidates.

According to sources, at the beginning of the meeting, Quader expressed annoyance over the partners’ demand for so many seats.

He told them that they were demanding 30 seats but surveys show

that the partners were not able to put up a decent fight even.

Jatiya Party (JP-Manju) Anwar Hossain Manju then questioned the legitimacy of the AL’s surveys, said meeting insiders.

Samyabadi Dal General Secretary Dilip Barua demanded a constituency for himself. 14-party coordinator Amir Hossain Amu then questioned his party’s popularity.

BSD convener Rezaur Rashid Khan also demanded one seat for his party. The AL leaders at the meeting asked him to prove his popularity first.

At the end of the meeting, Amu asked AL’s partners to have faith in Sheikh Hasina and that she would make logical decisions on seat sharing.

## 610 BNP-Jamaat men jailed in one month

FROM PAGE 1

the backlog of cases is supposed to be cleared within a few years.

“Were the people convicted allowed to defend themselves or were the witness statements cross-examined before the sentences were handed down? Dead people have even reportedly been made accused and convicted in cases. I don’t know whether an Aladdin’s lamp is resolving these cases.”

Senior SC lawyer and BNP Joint Secretary AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon told this correspondent the sentencing and conviction of the BNP leaders and activists just ahead of the upcoming polls is sending a wrong message to the people regarding the judiciary, particularly the lower courts.

“I’m requesting the chief justice to look into whether the law ministry is controlling the activities of the courts concerned.”

Last month, Law Minister Anisul Huq told reporters that the government does not interfere in the trial proceedings of cases against accused BNP men.

“The judiciary is completely independent,” he said.

### YESTERDAY’S IMPRISONMENT

Of the 610 convicted over last one

month, 73 were convicted just yesterday. They were jailed for political violence in Dhaka’s Bangshal, Kalabagan and Kotwali areas between November 2013 and September 2018.

The charges were as before: setting fire to vehicles, gathering illegally, rioting, assaulting police and obstructing them from discharging duties.

In a case filed with Bangshal Police Station in September 2018, 25 leaders and activists of the BNP and its front organisations were each given three years’ rigorous imprisonment by a Dhaka court yesterday.

No convicts were present in the courtroom when Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Sheikh Sadi delivered the verdict.

Four prosecution witnesses testified during the trial.

According to the case documents, a large number of activists of BNP and its front organisations illegally gathered in front of Ahmed Bawani School around 4:45pm on September 6, 2018, ahead of a rally demanding release of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia. They vandalised vehicles, ransacked shops and created anarchy.

Another Dhaka Court yesterday



FARIHA AMBER

What would you gift to a foreigner – perhaps a colleague or friend – who is about to leave Dhaka after his/her trip here? Or, what presents would you take with you abroad, for those colleagues or acquaintances whose only connection with this city is you? Finding the “right” thing may pose a challenge, given that the gift should be something which represents the capital; even better, Bangladesh at large.

Well, the topmost gift could be the miniature rickshaw or auto-rickshaw. These can be found in Aarong, Jatra, Hat Bakso, and are occasionally spotted in local fairs. The vehicle being a symbol of this bustling city and the artworks with flowers, animals, and film stars in vibrant colours are unique to the metropolis. Rickshaws and rickshaw art have just recently been inscribed in the Unesco Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Who would not like a little fridge magnet? These magnets can be given away as gifts, as a beautiful nostalgic token of the trip back here. As your friend creates memories in iconic places such as Lalbagh Fort, Ahsan Manzil, Shaheed Minar, and the many historic roads of Dhaka University,



capture their essence in a fridge magnet for them to take back home. You can easily find them on online pages such as Dacca Souvenirs, BeshiDeshi, and Hat Bakso. Dhaka-themed notebooks or diaries can also be considered. Grab yourself a notebook that has the essence of the nation’s capital imprinted on its cover, capturing everything from monuments to crowded roads. These colourful notebooks can be found in Sevendaysnotes, DhakaYeah, and NeonCha, to name a few.

How about a chic piece of attire – something that screams Dhaka in full volume? Several clothing stores fashionably tell the story of this city through kurtis, T-shirts, kameezes – you name it. Boutiques offer a modern twist to classic designs with flamboyant prints. Disha’s Road Blocks will stir conversations even

among locals and Deshal is your go-to for kameez with Vespa and rickshaw imprinted on them.

As a timeless keepsake for ages to come, a Jamdani saree shall never fail. The threads weaving the fabric not only make an attire but also entwine history, as Jamdani was initially made in Dhaka and nearby areas. You can find an abundance of Jamdani sarees in stores such as NOBO and 6 YARDS STORY and several other online and offline shopping outlets.

Lastly, spending time in busy hubs such as Doyel Chottor and Shahbagh Mor has surely exposed you to the



fascinating terracotta and clay art that are sold in the junctions. Albeit these are made all over Bangladesh, the objects ranging from pots to showpieces encapsulate the charm of contemporary Dhaka and its busy streets. Dhaka has a lot to offer and although it may at times be overwhelming to absorb, these gifts can be the way to store the enchanting memories that are created in this magical city.

## RU student found dead at Shamsuzzoha Hall

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A Rajshahi University student was found dead in his room at Shaheed Shamsuzzoha Hall on the university campus yesterday.

The deceased, Fuad Al Khatib, was a student of the Department of Social Work for 2017-18 academic session and the son of Aminul Islam of Gaibandha, said hall provost Ekramul Islam.

“Fuad was taken to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) around 3:30pm, but doctors told us that he died three to four hours ago,” added the hall provost.

Fuad lived alone in a single room at the dormitory.

Ekramul Islam said a student of Fuad’s neighbouring room saw him lying on his bed at 9:00am.

At 3:00pm, when the student saw Fuad still lying in the same way, he became suspicious and informed the hall provost.

Later, some fellow students, with the help of the hall administration, took Fuad to RMCH.

Resident students of the dormitory said Fuad returned to the hall from his village home around 3:00am and went to bed.

Meanwhile, the crime scene teams of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) inspected the scene and collected evidence, said Md Ruhul Amin, officer-in-charge of Motihar Police Station.

Police are investigating the death, said the police official.

His body was sent to the RMCH morgue for autopsy, the OC said.

However, police and doctors have yet to confirm the reasons behind the death.

## French frigate downs drones over Red Sea

AFP, Paris

A French frigate shot down two drones in the Red Sea that were heading towards it from the coast of Yemen, the French military said yesterday.

“The interception and destruction of these two identified threats” were carried out late Saturday by the frigate Languedoc, which operates in the Red Sea, the general staff said in a press release.

The interceptions happened at 2030 GMT and 2230 GMT, it added, and were 110 km (68 miles) from the Yemeni coast.

Yemen’s Iran-backed Huthi rebels on Saturday threatened to attack any vessels heading to Israeli ports unless food and medicine were allowed into the besieged Gaza Strip.

The latest warning comes amid heightened tensions in the Red Sea and surrounding waters following a series of maritime attacks by Huthi rebels since the start of the Israel-Hamas war on October 7.

In a statement posted on social media, the Huthis said they “will prevent the passage of ships heading to the Zionist entity” if humanitarian aid is not allowed into Hamas-ruled Gaza.

The Huthis have recently attacked ships they claim have direct links to Israel, but their latest threat expands the scope of their targets.

An American destroyer shot down three drones last week while providing assistance to commercial ships in the Red Sea targeted by attacks from Yemen, according to Washington, which denounced “a direct threat” to maritime security.

## BNP human chains foiled in 9 districts

FROM PAGE 1

Khagrachhari, Munshiganj, Faridpur, Bhola, Thakurgaon, Mymensingh, and Jhalakathi.

The BNP, which demands election under a non-partisan interim government, has called hartals and blockades almost four days a week since October 29. The party’s October 28 grand rally ended in clashes between police and activists.

Since October 28, many BNP leaders and activists have landed in jail or have been on the run. But yesterday, BNP leaders and activists resurfaced to join the human chain.

Right after the human-chain programme ended, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi called a countrywide 36-hour blockade starting at 6:00am tomorrow.

In Habiganj, 30 people, including two reporters and six police officers, were injured in a clash between police and BNP activists in Sayestanagar around 12:30pm.

Some shops and cars were also vandalised during the clashes, according to locals.

Injured MyTV correspondent Shuvo and Desh TV correspondent Amir Hamza were sent to hospitals.

Kamal Uddin Selim, joint convener of Habiganj BNP, said police attacked BNP men when they were about to wrap up the programme.

Hasibul Islam, additional superintendent of Habiganj police, said teargas and rubber bullets were used to bring the situation under control. He said one person was detained for interrogation.

Additional police officers and water cannons were deployed in the area, he said.

In Narayanganj, pro-AL lawyers assaulted a pro-BNP Jatiyatabadi Lawyers’ Forum leader and foiled the human chain programme at the court area. They also took away the banners of the forum.

Later, detectives detained four BNP activists.

In Khagrachhari, BNP leaders alleged that their human chain was obstructed and foiled by police.

Activists were forced to conclude the programme in Munshiganj’s Mukhtarpur around 10 minutes after starting it.

In Faridpur’s Courtpar area, police took away the banner and forced the BNP activists to leave.

In Bhola, BNP men could not hold the protest programme due to police obstruction.

The human chain by the women’s wing of the BNP was obstructed by police in Thakurgaon town. In Mymensingh, police stopped the programme when it was only halfway.

In Jhalakathi, BNP activists could not even start the programmes in front of their party office as they had been surrounded by police.

In Dhaka city, the programme started around 11:00am. The human chain was about 500 metres long on Topkhana Road.

Displaying photos of the arrested relatives, family members chanted slogans demanding their release.

Addressing the programme, BNP Standing Committee member Selima Rahman claimed that failing to find BNP leaders and activists at their homes, law enforcers were picking up their family members.

“Many brothers and sisters find it impossible to sleep at home. If the government cannot locate their sons, they take their mothers, brothers, sisters, or fathers. In some instances, ransom has been demanded for their release,” she said in front of the Jatiya Press Club.

Referring to Information Minister Hasan Mahmud’s recent statement that they would give a befitting reply to the BNP, Selima said, “Who is he to say this? He became a minister through a voterless election.”

She said the government was tormenting people by deploying “muscle men and helmet-wearing forces”.

“Nowhere else in the world are human rights violated like in Bangladesh. The government has shuttered numerous offices, including the BNP’s central office,” she said.

Afroza Abbas, president of

Jatiyatabadi Mohila Dal, claimed that people associated with the current administration were behind the arson attacks on buses.

“You [journalists] have witnessed that. However, the BNP members were falsely implicated in the cases, subjected to attacks, and forcibly disappeared,” she said.

Family members of the arrested individuals and various human rights organisations also joined the event.

Manju Mridha and his wife were seen standing with the photo of their son Arif Hossain Mithu, a BNP activist from Demra, who was detained by police on November 5.

“We don’t know what our son has done wrong,” Manju said.

A huge number of police personnel were seen in and around the venue. An armoured personnel carrier, water cannon and a prison van were also seen parked across the street.

BNP’s like-minded parties also formed human chains across the country.

## W Africa leaders meet as region struggles with coups

AFP, Abuja

West African leaders met yesterday for talks with the region in deepening crisis, after four countries fell under military rule and with risks growing from Sahel jihadist conflicts.

After coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Niger since 2020, the Economic Community of West African States bloc also saw member states Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau claim attempted coups in recent weeks.

A French military withdrawal from the Sahel – the region along the Sahara desert across Africa – is increasing concerns over conflicts spreading south to Gulf of Guinea states Ghana, Togo, Benin and Ivory Coast.