



# Stop crackdown on protesters

6 int'l human rights organisations urge govt in joint statement

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Six global human rights bodies yesterday urged the government to immediately cease violence against protesters and ensure their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

They also demanded the speedy and unconditional withdrawal of all politically motivated cases, the release of all arbitrarily detained activists and opposition members, and ensuring a fair and transparent judicial process.

Robert F Kennedy Human Rights, Capital Punishment Justice Project, The United Against Torture Consortium, Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances, Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network, and the International Coalition Against Enforced Disappearances are the bodies that issued the joint statement just weeks ahead of the national polls.

They also called for a thorough and impartial investigation into the gross human rights violations, particularly cases involving deaths and torture allegations.

They said since late October, the government resorted to violence to suppress protests and political dissent. The crackdown resulted in 17 people being killed, including a journalist, and 8,249 opposition leaders injured.

The government arbitrarily detained more than 20,000 individuals identified or perceived as the opposition, they said, adding that the arrests are related to 837 fabricated

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Sale of the national flag has picked up with the Victory Day approaching. The photo of the women making the flags was taken at a small garment factory in the capital's Kadamtoli yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

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# Police bar BNP's Hafiz from going abroad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police stopped BNP Vice Chairman Major (retd) Hafizuddin Ahmed from travelling to India yesterday.

The 79-year-old opposition leader said he was scheduled to undergo surgery at a Delhi hospital tomorrow.

He told The Daily Star that he and his wife were about to board a plane at Dhaka airport and their bags were already checked in around 12:00pm when immigration police told them to wait.

After nearly three hours, he was told that there was a travel restriction for him. "The authorities did not tell us why. My wife was allowed



# Four people shot dead in Khagrachhari

Cops yet to identify them; UPDF claims they were its members

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Police yesterday recovered the four bullet-hit bodies from Khagrachhari's Panchhari upazila.

Their identities could not be ascertained as of yesterday evening, said Mukta Dhar, superintendent of Khagrachhari police.

"We are investigating the incident," she told The Daily Star.

However, United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), a regional organisation, claimed that the victims were its members. They were shot dead by their rivalson Monday night, alleged UPDF leaders.

They said the deceased are Bipul Chakma, 32, organising secretary of Democratic Youth Forum (DYF); its Khagrachhari district unit Vice-President Liton Chakma, 29; Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP) Vice-President Sunil Tripura, 32; and UPDF member Rohin Bikash Tripura, 49.

The DYF is the youth front of UPDF and the PCP is its student body.

UPDF leaders also claimed that three other activists went missing after the attack. They are Nil Dutta Chama, 34; Milon Tripura, 28; and Horikamol Tripura, 32.

In a statement yesterday, the UPDF announced that it would enforce a strike in Panchhari on December 17 and a blockade in Khagrachhari district the next day, protesting the killings and demanding arrest of the killers.

Contacted, UPDF Spokesperson Aongya Marma said their organisation was scheduled to hold a programme at Anilpara yesterday. As part of the preparatory work, seven activists were staying there on Monday night.

Aongya added that members of their rival group attacked them around 10:00pm, shot four of them dead on the spot and abducted three others.

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# Aid distribution to Gaza largely halted

Says UN humanitarian office as Israeli warplanes, tanks pound southern Gaza Strip

AGENCIES

Israeli warplanes and tanks pounded southern Gaza overnight and yesterday and the UN said aid distribution to Palestinians facing hunger had largely stopped because of the intensity of fighting.

Gaza death toll rises to 18,412, with nearly 50,000 injured

Only 11 of 36 hospitals partially functional: WHO

UNGA set to vote on draft resolution demanding ceasefire

Israeli forces kill 4 Palestinians in West Bank

A World Health Organization official warned that only 11, or less than a third, of Gaza's hospitals remain partially functional and pleaded for them to remain intact.

"In just 66 days the health system has gone from 36 functional hospitals to 11 partially functional hospitals - one in the north and 10 in the south," Richard Peepkorn, WHO representative for the Occupied

Palestinian Territory, told a UN press briefing by videolink from Gaza.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said he was concerned about the prolonged checks of medical supply convoys in the Gaza Strip and the detention of health workers after such an incident led to the death of a patient in critical condition.

The UN humanitarian office (OCHA) said limited aid distributions were taking place in the Rafah district, but "in the rest of the Gaza Strip, aid distribution has largely stopped over the past few days, due to the intensity of hostilities and restrictions of movement along the main roads".

Aid flows were also restricted by a shortage of trucks in Gaza, a continuing lack of fuel, communications blackouts, and growing numbers of staff unable to travel to the Rafah crossing with Egypt because of the intensity of hostilities, it said.

Fighting raged yesterday, with Hamas saying clashes had taken place in central Gaza and witnesses reporting deadly Israeli strikes in the south of the territory, reports Reuters.

Israeli air strikes killed at least 22 people in the southern city of Rafah near the border with Egypt, where tens of thousands of people are seeking shelter, official Palestinian news agency Wafa said.

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# 36HR BLOCKADE 2 buses, lorry set on fire 3 detained while vandalising vehicles

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two buses and a lorry were set on fire and three vehicles were vandalised yesterday, the first day of BNP and its allies' 36-hour nationwide blockade.

Police arrested three BNP men while they were vandalising two trucks and a human haulier in Jhenaidah yesterday.

In the capital's Gulistan, arsonists set fire to a bus of Bahon Paribahan under the Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover around 12:15pm, firefighters said, adding that no one was injured in the incident.

Although traffic on city streets was almost normal, very few buses left for other districts.

The blockade ends at 6:00pm today.

At a virtual press briefing yesterday afternoon, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said democratic countries around the world want Bangladesh to have a fair election.

"The Awami League government does not believe in participatory polls," he said.

The only way a free and

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# Meteor shower to light up night sky tomorrow

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The last meteor shower of the year will light up the night sky tomorrow, giving sky gazers a chance to see the celestial display without staying up too late.

The Geminid meteor shower, which returns every December, is expected to peak some time during the night of December 14 and will be visible until the early morning of December 15.

Called a "meteor storm" because of its intensity, the shower is known as one of the most spectacular and consistent meteor showers.

Up to 150 meteors are expected to be visible per hour, peaking at about 7:30pm, and, with the moon entering a new phase, the dark skies will help stargazers catch the sight.

Dr Minjae Kim, research fellow in the physics department at the University of Warwick, said: "The Geminids meteor shower will be peaking this week, offering views of one of the year's most prolific meteor showers against the darkness of the winter's sky."

"An interesting feature of the Geminids is that their radiant point, where the meteors seem to originate from, rises in the mid-evening."

"This means you can start watching this shower earlier in the night than most other meteor showers," Kim said.

The Geminids originate from a rocky asteroid called 3200 Phaethon with a comet-like orbit and were first observed in 1862.



# DHAKA AIRPORT 11 int'l flights diverted due to dense fog

Mild cold wave may hit several areas in north, south

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mild cold wave may sweep over some places in the northern and western regions today, says the Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

According to the BMD weather forecast, night temperature may fall by one to three degrees Celsius and day temperature may remain nearly unchanged in the 24 hours from 9:00am yesterday.

The temperatures in Rajshahi, Rangpur, Mymensingh, Sylhet, and Khulna divisions and western parts of Dhaka division may drop further. Some places of these divisions are likely to experience a mild cold wave today, said Md Abul Kalam Mallik, a BMD meteorologist.

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The grandmother of Palestinian baby Idres Al-Dbari, who was killed in an Israeli strike, holds the lifeless body of her grandchild at Abu Yousef al-Najjar hospital in the southern Gaza Strip. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# COP28 forced into overtime

Negotiators engage in shuttle-diplomacy to seek new draft deal as countries wrangle over fossil fuels

REUTERS, Dubai

The COP28 climate talks went into overtime yesterday and countries engaged in shuttle-diplomacy to seek a new draft agreement and try to close a rift over ending the world's use of fossil fuels.

Many nations criticised a draft text for a deal released on Monday for failing to call for a "phase-out" of oil, gas and coal. The United Arab Emirates' COP28 Director General Majid Al Suwaidi said the aim of the text was to "spark conversations".

"By releasing our first draft of the text, we got parties to come to us quickly with those red lines," he told reporters. Negotiators from the nearly 200 countries at the Dubai summit are attempting to agree a global plan of action to limit climate change fast enough to avert more disastrous flooding, fatal heat and irreversible changes to the world's ecosystems.

Al Suwaidi said the COP28 presidency aimed for a "historic" result that included mentioning fossil fuels - but that it was up to countries to agree.

Deals at UN climate summits must be passed by consensus. Then individual countries are responsible for delivering the deal, through national policies and investments.

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