

PM reiterates call for resisting arsonists, killers

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday reiterated her call for the people to resist the arsonists and killers.



"It's not possible to win the hearts of the people through carrying out arson attacks and killings. They [BNP] should know this and they should act accordingly," she said.

The premier was addressing a discussion at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre in Dhaka, organised by the Awami League on the occasion of Victory Day.

Hasina said the BNP does not want the welfare of people, rather it wants to establish a regime of looting. "They don't want to take part in elections because they know it very well that people will not cast their votes for arson terrorists and killers."

Knowing the bitter truth, the BNP and its allies wanted to foil the polls and overthrow the government, the PM alleged.

She said the AL was not born in the pocket of an illegal power grabber, rather it is the organisation of this land and

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People from 28 villages of Khulna's Batiaghata and Dumuria upazilas would use boats to get across this once-full stretch of the Shoilmari river. Due to a collection of silt over time, the river, which runs between the two upazilas, has dried up. To ease their own sufferings, locals of both upazilas joined hands and raised funds to build this wooden bridge so that they can get from one side to the other. The photo was taken at Batiaghata recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Jailed BNP men offered freedom if party agreed to contest polls

Says Abdur Razzaque in TV interview

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP leaders were offered release from jail if their party took part in the polls, Awami League presidium member Abdur Razzaque said.

However, the party did not accept the proposal, he added.

Razzaque, also the agriculture minister, made the remarks during an interview with Channel 24, a private TV station. The interview was published on Channel 24's YouTube channel yesterday.

Responding to a question, the AL leader said: "Would you have seen cars plying the streets during hartals if 20,000 BNP leaders and activists were not arrested? We had no other alternative to it. Whatever we did, we did thoughtfully."

He said the Election Commission repeatedly told BNP that the polls schedule would be deferred if they joined.



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Dhaka may face more pressure from the West

Fears Moscow; Momen says Bangladesh wants to stay out of tension between 2 superpowers

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Moscow fears there may be sanctions against the Bangladesh government from the West in the coming weeks, which may affect the country's key industries.

In a statement on December 15, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said they see a link between the events of traffic blockades, burning buses, and clashes with police by the opposition political parties in several districts of Bangladesh on December 12-13 and the "inflammatory activity" of the western diplomatic missions in Dhaka, particularly that of US Ambassador Peter Haas.

"There are serious reasons to fear that in the coming weeks, an even wider arsenal of means of pressure, including sanctions, may be used against the government of Bangladesh, which is undesirable to the West," she said.

Maria said key industries, as well as a number of officials, who will be accused without evidence of obstructing the democratic expression of the citizens' will in the upcoming parliamentary election on January 7, 2024, may be affected.

In the event that the US is not satisfied with the results of the expression of the

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Israeli strikes kill dozens more in Gaza

Opens crossing into Gaza for aid; telecommunication gradually being restored in the enclave

REUTERS, Cairo/Gaza/Jerusalem

Dozens more Palestinians were killed yesterday as Israel stepped up deadly strikes on the besieged Gaza Strip despite growing international calls for a ceasefire.

It also opened a direct crossing for aid into Gaza for the first time in the more than two-month-old war.

The Israeli attacks took place amid fierce fighting the length of the coastal strip, according to residents and militants, with communications down for a fourth day, making it hard to reach the west.

"The communication blackout in #Gaza is the longest since the start of the Israeli escalation," the Palestinian Red Crescent said on X, adding that its teams were also hampered by shelling.

Telecommunications were gradually being restored in central and southern areas, telecom companies said later.

Hopes for peace had been raised on Saturday when a source said Israel's spy chief had spoken on Friday with the prime minister

of Qatar, which mediated hostage releases in return for a week-long ceasefire and the freeing of Palestinian prisoners.

Israel yesterday opened the Kerem Shalom crossing between Israel and Gaza for aid trucks, officials said, in a move to double the amount of food and medicine reaching Gazans.

But Israel cast doubt on whether the aid would be distributed, accusing aid officials of not distributing aid that had crossed from Egypt, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to "fight to the end". Aid agencies say aid distribution has been disrupted by the violence.

Hamas said it would not discuss freeing any more of those captured when its fighters raided southern Israel on Oct 7 while Israel continues its attacks.

Israeli missile strikes on a house belonging to the Shehab family killed 24 people and wounded dozens of others in Jabalia refugee camp in northern Gaza, Hamas Aqsa radio said, quoting the director of the health ministry.

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Nearly 19,000 Palestinians have been killed and thousands are feared to be buried in the rubble since Israel began to pound Gaza on October 7.

Superpowers want puppets that pretend to serve Bangladesh

Says MJ Akbar

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Some superpowers want puppets who serve their interests in the guise of serving Bangladesh, said journalist and former Indian state minister for external affairs MJ Akbar yesterday.

"Remember, a nationalist can never be a puppet," he said in his keynote speech at a seminar titled "Bangladesh's achievements in 52 years and its place in the region and beyond in the coming decades," organised by the foreign ministry at the Foreign Service Academy (FSA) in Dhaka.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen and FSA Rector Mashfee Binte Shams also spoke.

Akbar said Bangladesh is a focus of the superpowers because it is important politically, geopolitically and ecologically, adding that the country isn't helpless and isn't going to fall prey to the neo-colonisation – a message that capitals may not have gotten.

Asked how Bangladesh should deal the India-China rivalry, he said, "You should take your own side."

About the threat of sanctions from the West if polls are not free and fair, Akbar said it is not right to think that Bangladesh will be afraid if someone invokes fear.

He added that the powers and superpowers can manipulate the radicals but not the true nationalists. "They want to corrupt liberalism and divide the polity of



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BB explains warning to cash-strapped Shariah banks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The central bank yesterday said it asked five cash-strapped Shariah-based banks to adjust the deficit in their current account but did not decide yet that the lenders would be removed from payment platforms.

On November 28, the Bangladesh Bank sent letters to the managing directors of Islami Bank Bangladesh, Social Islami Bank, First Security Islami Bank, Union Bank and Global Islami Bank, instructing them to adjust their deficit within 20 working days.

The banks will be barred from all or any specific clearing platform in accordance with the agreement with the payments system departments of the central bank for their failure to adjust the deficit by the stipulated time, said the letter.

"The Bangladesh Bank issued the letter to warn

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Fakhrul's bail hearing at HC on January 3

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday set January 3 for the hearing on the rule regarding BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir's bail in a case filed over vandalism of the chief justice's residence on October 28.

The HC bench of Justice Md Salim and Justice Shahed Nuruddin fixed the date for the hearing after Fakhrul's lawyers led by Zainul Abedin appealed for the rule hearing. His bail petition will also be heard on that day.

On December 7, the HC bench issued the rule asking the state to explain in seven days why Fakhrul should not be granted bail in the case.

On December 3, Fakhrul filed the bail petition with the HC through his lawyers, saying that he was not involved in the vandalism of the chief justice's residence in any manner.

He is an elderly person, SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli strike on a house, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Scientists discover ultra-hard material that may rival diamond

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Scientists have discovered a near-unbreakable substance that could rival diamond as the hardest material on Earth.



Researchers found that when carbon and nitrogen molecules were subjected to extreme heat and pressure, the resulting materials, known as carbon nitrides, were tougher than cubic boron nitride, the second hardest material after diamond.

Experts said the breakthrough opens doors for multifunctional materials to be used for industrial purposes including protective coatings for cars and spaceships, high-endurance cutting tools, solar panels and photodetectors.

Materials researchers have been attempting to unlock the potential of carbon nitrides since the 1980s, when scientists first noticed their exceptional properties, including high resistance to heat.

Yet after more than three decades of research and multiple attempts to synthesize them, no credible results had been reported.

However, an international team of scientists – led by researchers from the Centre for Science at Extreme Conditions at the University of Edinburgh and experts from the University of Bayreuth, Germany, and the University of Linköping, Sweden – has now achieved the breakthrough.