



BNP leaflet distribution extended till tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP and its allies will hand out leaflets today and tomorrow as part of their oust-the-government movement, said Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, the party's senior joint secretary general, at a virtual press briefing yesterday.

"Many people celebrate December 31 and January 1. Given the situation in the country, there is no joy in people's minds. They are filled with sadness today. The country is in a state of fear," he said.

On December 30 in 2018, electoral fraud was orchestrated in an unprecedented scale in the darkness of the night, Rizvi said, adding that this is why it is a "black day".

At least 155 BNP leaders and activists have been arrested across the country in the 24 hours preceding yesterday afternoon, and six cases were filed accusing 429 BNP members, he said.

After a BNP rally ended in clashes between activists and police on October 28, the party called strikes multiple times.

AL leaders left out of Hasina's rally for backing 'independent'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Shariatpur

Although Kalkini Upazila Awami League organised Sheikh Hasina's rally yesterday, the president and general secretary of the unit were not invited to the event.

Many other leaders of the party's Madaripur unit were also not invited due to what insiders said were objections from Abdus Sobhan Golap, the AL nominee for Madaripur-3.

Since Kalkini upazila AL President Tahmina Begum is running for parliament as an independent, she is an opponent of Golap in the election. This is why Golap ensured that Tahmina and the leaders who expressed allegiance to her do not get to attend the event, insiders said.

Contacted, Madaripur district AL President Shahabuddin Ahmed Molla, who was not invited, said, "Prior to the rally, Awami League Organising Secretary Mirza Azam asked us to provide him with a list of leaders [who would attend the event]. Eleven names was provided.

"But Mirza Azam later told us that Golap does not want us to attend the rally. We didn't get the security clearance. He knows why he did this. I don't want to talk about this."

Local sources said none of the 11 leaders named in the list got to attend the event.

Golap said the allegations raised against him were baseless.



In preparation for the 12th national election, voting equipment is being sorted for polling stations in Chattogram. Since Friday morning, the regional election commission office has been dispatching the equipment from the gymnasium adjacent to MA Aziz Stadium.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Serial muggers terrorise Mohammadpur

Residents panic-stricken as 'patronised' criminals evade arrest

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The residents of Mohammadpur's Beribadh area have been living with a growing sense of insecurity and fear over the last few months due to recurring robberies and muggings perpetrated mostly by teenage gangs.

Armed with sharp weapons, the gangs have adopted a brazen modus operandi: rob anyone and everyone in their path either by intimidation or attack.

At least four incidents of serial muggings and robberies were reported over the last 30 days.

Residents blamed lax police surveillance and their failure to apprehend the actual criminals.

They went on to allege that the criminals managed to evade arrest due to the protection they get from local politicians.

Sumon Khan, manager of a grocery shop in Beribadh, said, "We live in constant fear as muggings and robberies occur almost daily. We refrain from leaving our homes unless necessary."

Sumon fell victim to an attack by a group of robbers on November 22. Around 6:00pm that day, five robbers entered Sumon's shop and attempted to loot the cash box.

When Sumon resisted, he was attacked with a machete. He was injured in his left hand. Sumon had to undergo treatment at the hospital for a week.

He said, "The cash box contained Tk 1.14 lakh." When Sumon's employer, Md Habib, first tried to file a case with Mohammadpur Police Station, he was turned away by the duty officer, who claimed to be busy and advised him to return a day later.

On November 23, police finally registered a case against unidentified robbers, although Sumon identified one of the suspects as "Chui Rakib".

A month later, when asked about the progress in the investigation, Shofiul Alam, sub-inspector of Mohammadpur Police Station and also the investigating officer of the case, told this newspaper that they had identified some suspects but had not made any arrests.

"Tracking down the culprits proved difficult as they do not have any addresses and often appear suddenly and hide quickly," he said.

Sumon was one of the two dozen individuals targeted on that fateful day. Armed with knives, machetes, and rods, the robbers targeted shops and pedestrians in Beribadh, according to witnesses.

The following day, on November 23, another serial mugging occurred in the same area around 7:00pm. The attackers, armed with machetes and knives, stole valuables from pedestrians.

The mugging spree usually last 30-40 minutes.

One such incident took place on December

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'BNP planning to murder a key leader or candidate' Says Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said the BNP is planning to kill an important leader or a candidate before the polls.

"Failing to run a movement, the BNP turned to sabotage. We have information. A message sent from London told them to commit assassinations. We urge everyone to be vigilant," he told reporters in Dhanmondi.

The road transport and bridges minister then said, "We request our candidates to act responsibly. The Awami League does not want to become embroiled in controversies over the election."

He said the man who died on Friday after falling sick at an AL rally in Barishal was not injured. He had a heart attack.

About the allegations of repression on opposition, he said, "The BNP has eliminated itself through its misdeeds and bad politics."



NEW SCHOOL CURRICULUM A step forward yet concerns remain

AZMIN AZRAN

A year on, the newly introduced competency-based curriculum for primary and secondary schools faces more challenges than addressed.

While the inadequately-trained teachers are struggling to cope with the complex new curriculum, parents are divided over the development of necessary basics for their children due to a shift from the age-old terminal examination-based education system.

Educationists say the skill-focused curriculum is a positive step forward but the lack of enough training for teachers and logistical support for educational institutions for its successful implementation remain as concerns.

The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) introduced a competency-based curriculum for classes one, six and seven in 2023 with a plan to incorporate all the classes up to 10 by 2025.

The competency-based education is a shift from the traditional rote memorisation to an outcome-based approach to ensure proficiency in learning by students through demonstration of the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required for dealing with real-life situations at the age and grade-appropriate level.

According to the National Curriculum Framework 2021, students will be evaluated using a combination of the continuous assessments made by teachers during school weeks, and summative assessments that will take place twice a year.

Teachers say training, logistical support and getting parents on board are the biggest challenges for the successful implementation of the new curriculum.

Instead of grades, teachers will use three shapes – triangles, circles, and squares – to track a student's expertise in competence. Using this, a range of qualitative evaluations will be formulated for each subject, helping students understand their strengths and weaknesses.

However, the pertinent question is if the parents and teachers understand these changes, and what concerns they have about it.

Sumaiya Shaid, parent of a class-6 student at Dhaka's Holy Cross Girls High School, said her biggest concern was that her daughter was not studying very hard in the absence of regular exams.

"When they announced it first, they explained to us that it would be good for the kids. There would be less competition, they would learn more and they would be able to learn by themselves. As there are no regular exams like before, I don't see her studying too hard."

Sumaiya, however, was impressed with an assignment of her daughter.

"As part of an assignment, my daughter had to make a budget for personal expenses. I would have struggled to do this even as an adult, but my daughter did it by herself," she added.

The other parents did not have similar optimism.

"I'm worried if my child will develop the necessary basics," said a parent, wishing to remain unnamed, of a class-6 student at Dhaka's St Joseph Higher Secondary School.

This parent, however, said that her child was enjoying the new curriculum, specifically the mathematics and science textbooks.

"He told me that this might be difficult for students who rely on memorisation, but for others, it's easier," the parent added.

Susmita Roy, a mother of a class-7 student at Dinaipur Zilla School, said she was particularly perplexed at the inclusion of cooking classes.

"My son has successfully incorporated some

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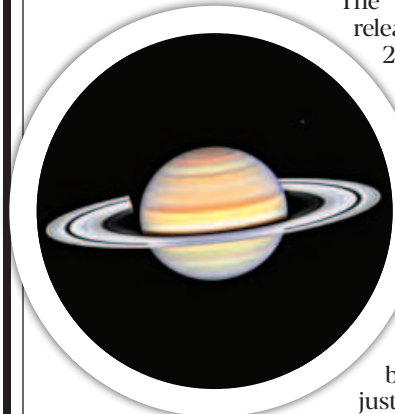
Hubble telescope spies mysterious shadows on Saturn's rings

CNN ONLINE

The Hubble Space Telescope captured a newly revealed image of the mysterious, ghostly shadows on Saturn's rings – the latest sighting of the so-called "spokes" that continue to baffle scientists.

The composite photo, released on December 21 by Nasa, was taken by Hubble on October 22 as Saturn was about 850 million miles (1.37 billion kilometres) away, according to the space agency. The space observatory has been orbiting Earth just a few hundred miles above the surface for more than three decades.

Astronomers have long known about the perplexing spokes on Saturn's rings, which look like apparitions skating along the rings and can be spotted in various locations depending on where the planet is in its orbital cycle.



A picture taken from Rafah shows smoke billowing over Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip during Israeli bombardment yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

S Africa files genocide case against Israel Gaza death toll 21,672

REUTERS, Cairo/ Gaza

Israeli tanks pushed deeper into central and southern Gaza yesterday under heavy air and artillery fire, residents said, pressing a deadly offensive that has razed much of the enclave and that Israel has said may last months more.

Fighting was focused in al Bureij, Nuseirat, Maghazi and Khan Younis, backed by intensive air strikes that filled hospitals with injured Palestinians.

The bombardment has killed 165 people and wounded 250 others in Gaza over the past 24 hours, health authorities in the Hamas-run territory said.

At Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, the biggest and most important medical facility in the south of the tiny, crowded territory, a Red Crescent video showed paramedics rushing a tiny, dust-covered baby into a busy hospital as one shouted "there is breathing, there is breathing".

Almost all of Gaza's 2.3 million

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