

## Modi shows confidence about polls

Asks ministries for 5-year goals

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has asked all ministries to propose annual goals for their departments for the next five years, according to a government document, underlining his confidence of winning a general election starting next month.

The document listing the instructions from Modi to government bureaucrats, which was reviewed by Reuters, was sent earlier this month, just before the Election Commission announced dates for the voting.

Opinion polls predict an easy win for him and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), with the opposition led by the Congress party struggling to present a united front to take on Modi's immense popularity.

The March 11 document says Modi asked all departments to prepare five-year action plans as part of his goal to lift India to a fully developed country by 2047 from middle-income levels.



People and first responders search the rubble of a building that collapsed following an Israeli air strike in the Rafah refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## MYANMAR CRISIS Junta facing 'existential threat': expert

AFP, Geneva

Myanmar's junta is already facing an "existential threat" but the world could help end its "nightmare" rule with coordinated sanctions, the UN special rapporteur on the country said yesterday.

Mass casualties among junta forces, as well as defections, surrenders, and recruitment challenges have led to dwindling troop numbers, posing "an existential threat for the Myanmar military", said Tom Andrews.

"Those who have bet on the junta to restore order and stability in Myanmar have made a losing bet," he said.

The junta came to power in the February 2021 coup that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's democratically elected government, ending a 10-year experiment with democracy and plunging the Southeast Asian nation into bloody turmoil.

The junta is struggling to crush resistance to its rule by long-established ethnic rebel groups and newer pro-democracy People's Defence Forces.

## Rafah displaced shiver as rain lashes tent camp

AFP, Rafah

Torrential rains lashed a tent camp for displaced people in Gaza's southern city of Rafah, where frightened Palestinian children can no longer distinguish between thunder and Israeli bombardment.

The storm fell overnight Monday to Tuesday in the southernmost Gaza Strip city, adding to the anguish of Palestinians who fled the war between Hamas and Israel, many without warm clothes, blankets or proper footwear.

Oum Abdullah Alwan said her children "screamed in fear" because "we can't tell the difference between the sound of rain and the sound of shelling."

"It's shelling, Mum, we have to run," one of the children told Alwan, who was displaced from Jabalia further north, and now lives with more than a dozen family members in a tent in the makeshift camp.

She asked her son: "Is that the sound of shelling?" He told her it was thunder.

The rain, accompanied by biting winds, soaked foam mattresses and the meagre belongings of the camp's residents.

"We are 14 people living in a tent and we cannot find a single dry mattress to sleep on, or even a dry blanket. We have been soaked in rainwater all night," said Alwan.

Like other parents, she said she huddled with her children, embracing them to quell their shivers and "feel a little warmth".

"How much longer will we live in this torment? How much longer?" she cried out.

**Frightened Palestinian children can no longer distinguish between thunder and Israeli bombardment.**

The offensive, now in its sixth month, has devastated vast swathes of Gaza and pushed hundreds of thousands to flee their homes seeking safety.

Many have flooded into Rafah, on the border with Egypt, where Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to launch a ground offensive as he hunts Hamas members.

Hundreds of thousands of people are now also on the brink of famine, the United Nations and international aid groups have warned.

An estimated 1.5 million Palestinians now live in Rafah, most of them displaced

from other parts of the Gaza Strip and living in a sea of makeshift tents.

In the camp, a group of children walked past the tents wearing sandals or even barefoot. "I've told you many times not to play here," an old man shouted at them. "It's (the water is) dirty. You'll get sick."

Residents complained that rainwater was seeping through the tents, drenching them and their belongings and making them ill.

Many tried to patch up their improvised homes with whatever they could find.

Mahmoud Saad gathered sand and pushed it against the edge of his family's tent to stop the water, with help from his daughter Aya.

"Winter is usually a blessed season, but not for Gaza," said Aya.

Further away, Akram al-Arian, who is displaced from Khan Yunis, said when the rain fell he too was confused, thinking it was another Israeli bombardment.

"I held my children close to me like a hen protecting her chicks," Arian said. "I didn't know what to do. I'm tired of living in a tent."

Abir al-Shaer, also originally from Khan Yunis, said her children had "developed a psychological obsession with rockets".

## Pak separatists storm Gwadar port

All attackers shot dead by security forces

REUTERS, Quetta

Baloch separatists armed with guns and bombs attacked Pakistan's strategic Gwadar port, key to the multi-billion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, yesterday, with seven militants shot dead by security forces, a government official said. China has invested heavily in mineral-rich Balochistan, including developing Gwadar, despite a decades-long insurgency. The militants stormed the complex in the rugged southwestern province which houses offices of different government departments, intelligence agencies and paramilitary forces, said Saeed Ahmed Umrani, a government commissioner. "Attackers carried out many blasts," he told Reuters, adding that it was followed with a gun attack. He said the army and police were responding to the attackers. He said he had received reports that seven of the attackers had been killed, adding authorities were trying to confirm reports of a soldier's death. The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), the most prominent of several separatist groups in Balochistan, claimed responsibility for the assault, saying its militants attacked Pakistan intelligence agencies' offices.

## 6 SC lawyers get bail

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Earlier in the day, the four lawyers appeared before the bench.

Meanwhile, the bench of Justice Md Rezaul Haque and Justice Md Khairul Alam granted an interim bail to Kazal, who was arrested on March 9, in connection with this case after hearing of his bail petition.

Yesterday, another HC bench of Justice Md Ruhul Quddus and Justice AKM Rabiul Hassan granted bail to Mohammad Osman Chowdhury, who was held on March 8.

Kayser Kamal, BNP's legal affairs secretary, and a lawyer for Kazal and Osman, told this correspondent that there is no legal bar for his clients to get released from jail following the HC orders of bail.

Juthi and Kazal contested for the post of SCBA secretary.

On March 8, Assistant Attorney General Shaifour Rahman Siddique Saif, who was assaulted during the SCBA election violence, lodged the case with Shabbagh Police Station against Juthi, Kazal, and 17 others.

## Khaleda won't

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Procedure (CrPC).

Khaleda was freed from jail on March 25, 2020 after the government suspended her jail sentence for six months.

She walked out of prison at a time when the world was hit by the Covid pandemic.

On February 8, 2017, the BNP chief landed in prison after a special court in Dhaka jailed her for five years in the Zia Orphanage

Trust graft case.

On October 30 the following year, the High Court enhanced her punishment to 10 years after dismissing her appeal in the case.

The former prime minister was convicted by another special court in Dhaka in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case on October 29, 2018. She was sentenced to seven years' rigorous imprisonment.

## Bhutto faces

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armbands in protest of the killings of civilians in East Pakistan. Processions were organised in protest of his visit. Some placards of the protesters read: "Bhutto, killer of people." The Bhutto delegation was taken to Hotel Intercontinental under heavy military guard. At the hotel, they also faced non-cooperation from the workers.

Shortly after his arrival, Bhutto met Yahya, who briefed him about the ongoing negotiations. Bhutto's reaction, in his own words, was: "I acquainted my colleagues with the two-committee proposal. They expressed their misgivings and suggested that I should not accept the proposal as it contained seeds of two Pakistans... We also agreed that [the scheme] had to be put to and approved by the full knowledge of the people. Two or more political leaders could not ignore the existence of the entire Assembly vested with constitutional and legislative power." [Siddiq Salik, Witness to Surrender, UPL 1997, pg. 167]

Bhutto expressed his opposition to the AI's position on the issues of aid and trade. He also sought time to discuss the other issues with his advisers.

Yahya told Bhutto to be present at tomorrow's meeting if he wanted to meet Mujib.

## BROHI CALLS ON MUJIB

Eminent Pakistani law expert AK Brohi called on Sheikh Mujib at his residence. He presented his written opinion to the AI chief, where he commented that there was no legal barrier to the withdrawal of martial law and the formation of an interim government before framing the constitution. He added that the formation of an interim government with the participation of elected representatives would ensure popular support for the decision.

Bangabandhu, speaking at a gathering in front of his house, urged the people to continue their peaceful and non-violent cooperation movement until the rights of the 70 million people of "Bangla Desh" were established.

Swadhin Bangladesh Kendrio Chattro Sangram Parishad, in a statement issued today, urged people to observe Pakistan Day (March 23) as Protirodh Dibos (Resistance Day).

## JnU student writes to the president

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letter, which had a stamp showing it had been received by the president's office.

According to university sources, the administration had launched an investigation last year, but it fell through and yielded no result till 2024.

Meanwhile, the Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday interrogated the accused teachers and the student who filed the complaint.

Speaking to reporters after meeting DB officials, Abu Shahed Emon, the accused teacher of the university's film and television department, refuted the allegations, claiming they are fictitious.

"We have provided them [DB officials] with the information they asked for."

Regarding failing her in an exam, department Chairman Junaid Ahmed Halim, another accused, claimed the student did not attend second and seventh semester classes and did not submit her assignments.

About the sexual harassment allegations, he said, "As it is currently under legal proceedings, we can't talk about it."

On the other hand, the student told journalists that the teachers gave false information about why she obtained zero marks in her exam.

"I appeared for the test but they showed me absent. I mentioned this in my complaint."

She further alleged the accused teachers were intimidating her in various ways because she spoke to the media.

"I told the DB officials that I was

feeling unsafe. The DB chief told them [the teachers] not to threaten me in any way."

DB chief Harun Or Rashid said, "The victim pleaded with us to ensure she be able to move freely. We conveyed this to the teachers, who assured us they would not disturb her."

Regarding sexual harassment complaint, he said, "It is still under investigation."

On Monday, the JnU student lodged a complaint with the DB, saying that she has been subjected to threats of death and expulsion from the university since coming forward with the accusations against those teachers in December 2021.

The recent death of JnU student Fairuz Sadaf Abontika gave her the impetus to file the complaint again, she told the media.

## Bangladesh 15th least

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are not used to compute the score for the ranking, but they simply offer an explanation for why a country's citizens are evaluating their lives the way they are.

These six variables are: GDP per capita, healthy life expectancy, having someone to count on, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and freedom from corruption. Data for the first two variables are taken from the OECD Economic Outlook and WHO, while the last four variables rely on the GWP.

Additionally, the report includes data on the national averages of positive and negative emotional experiences. Both these measures are based on the GWP.

Looking at Bangladesh's performance on these specific variables, the rankings are relatively high on GDP per capita (101st) and healthy life expectancy (81st).

To measure whether people feel like they have someone to count on, survey-takers are asked if they could count on relatives or friends to help them whenever they need. Bangladesh ranked 141st in the world on this metric, or third last, with an average score of 0.448. This means that over 55 percent of Bangladeshis don't think they have someone to count on to help them in their time of need.

Bangladesh ranked 26th in freedom to make life choices. The question "Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your freedom to choose what you do with your life?" led to 89.4 percent of respondents saying they were satisfied.

Bangladesh ranked 82nd in generosity, after respondents were asked if they donated to a charity in the month preceding the survey, and the responses were statistically contextualised using the GDP per capita.

On the perception of corruption rankings, 70.5 percent of Bangladeshis said that corruption is widespread throughout the government and within businesses. This gave Bangladesh a ranking of 93rd on the list, where lower means better.

Bangladesh ranked 5th lowest in the world on the positive affect metric, with less than 45 percent of people saying they had positive emotional experiences the day before the survey. Bangladesh ranked 9th on the negative affect metric, with over 44 percent of people saying they had negative emotional experiences on the day before the survey.

The World Happiness Report also provided insights on what age group feels the happiest in Bangladesh. Young people (age below 30) are the happiest with an average score of 4.2 out of 10 when evaluating their lives. Old people, those above 60, are also relatively happy with an average score of 4.124. The saddest age group in Bangladesh is the upper middle age (between 45 and 60), with an average score of 3.576. Lower middle aged people (between 30 and 44) gave their lives 3.608 out of 10 on average.

Overall happiness across the world hasn't changed much in 2021-23 compared to 2006-2010. But in South Asia, happiness has fallen dramatically in recent times, according to the report.

## Should I paint

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were due to Eid shopping.

"We are aware of it. We must accept it for the time being. Besides, our plan [regarding reducing jam] has not been implemented fully."

The minister said metro rail is saving people's time and money.

"The service has started to give relief [to commuters]," he said, adding that the benefit of the service will be more evident in the coming days.

In reply to a query that the rundown buses are still operating on city streets, he said the issue is persisting despite efforts by the government.

If the government moves to take action against the vehicles, journalists will be the first ones to react and point out a lack of public transport and people's sufferings, he added.

"We can stop their operations. But we don't have their replacements now. What would be the benefit if I stop those without replacing them?" he said.