

Make a ‘plan to control immigration’

Ex-PM Blair lays out ‘advice’ to Britain’s new leader

AFP, London

Former Labour prime minister Tony Blair made an early intervention in British politics yesterday after Keir Starmer's landslide election victory, urging him to have a "plan to control immigration".

Blair warned Starmer, who will visit Scotland on his second full day as prime minister, that the anti-immigration Reform UK Party also posed a challenge to Labour, not just the Conservative Party.

The Reform UK party, led by Brexit firebrand Nigel Farage, maximised the damage to the Conservatives at the election by splitting the right-wing vote.

It won five seats in the Westminster parliament and 14 percent of the vote, prompting Farage to warn that it will target Labour voters next.

In a piece headlined "My advice to Keir Starmer", Blair wrote in the Sunday Times that "all over the western



world, traditional political parties are suffering disruption".

"Where the system allows new entrants to emerge, they are running riot everywhere. Look at France or Italy.

"We need a plan to control immigration. If we don't have rules, we get prejudices," he added.

Blair, the only Labour leader to lead his party to three consecutive election victories starting with his own landslide win in 1997, couched his "advice" in an article about harnessing the power of artificial intelligence (AI).

He said he believed digital ID technology offered the best solution to controlling irregular immigration, a key issue on the doorstep during the election campaign.

"We should move as the world is moving to digital ID. If not, new border controls will have to be highly effective," he wrote.

Other suggestions included "a tough new approach to law and order" due to the fact that "at present criminal elements are modernising faster than law enforcement".



Displaced Palestinians carry belongings as they walk in front of a destroyed building in Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip yesterday. An Israeli air strike on a house in the town of Zawayda, in central Gaza, killed at least six people and wounded several others.

PHOTO: AFP

‘Bulldozed and shelled’

Gaza farming sector ravaged by Israeli offensive now in its 10th month

AFP, Palestinian Territories

Tank tracks still fresh on his field in southern Gaza's coastal area of Al Mawasi, Nedal Abu Jazar lamented the damage offensive has wrought on his trees and crops.

"Look at the destruction," the 39-year-old farmer told AFP, holding an uprooted tomato plant. He pointed to his greenhouse's metal frame and its white plastic sheeting strewn across the plot, inside an area designated a humanitarian zone by the Israeli army.

"People were sitting peacefully on their farmland ... and suddenly tanks arrived and fired at us, and then there were (air) strikes."

Abu Jazar said the Israeli operation in late June destroyed about 40 dunams (10 acres) of land and killed five labourers.

His is not an isolated case. Across Gaza, 57 percent of agricultural land has been damaged since the offensive began, according to a joint assessment published in June by the UN's agriculture and satellite imagery agencies, FAO and UNOSAT.

The damage threatens Gaza's food sovereignty, Matieu Henry of the Food and Agriculture Organization told AFP, because 30 percent of the Palestinian territory's food consumption comes from agricultural land.

"If almost 60 percent of the agricultural land has been damaged, this may have a significant impact in terms of food security and food supply."

The Gaza Strip exported \$44.6 million worth of produce in 2022, mainly to the West Bank and Israel, with strawberries and tomatoes representing 60 percent of the total, according to FAO data.

Across Gaza, 57 pc of agricultural land has been damaged since the offensive began: FAO

The damage assessment on the agricultural land comes as the UN's hunger monitoring system estimated in June that 96 percent of Gaza faces high levels of acute food insecurity.

Contacted by AFP, the Israeli army said it "does not intentionally harm agricultural land".

In a statement, it said Hamas "often operates from within orchards, fields and agricultural land".

The impact is worse in the Palestinian territory's north, where 68 percent of agricultural land is damaged, although the southern area encompassing parts of

Al-Mawasi has seen the most significant increase in recent months due to operations.

UNOSAT's Lars Bromley told AFP the damage is generally "due to the impact of activities such as heavy vehicle activity, bombing, shelling, and other conflict-related dynamics, which would be things like areas burning".

Near the southern city of Rafah, 34-year-old farmer Ibrahim Dheir feels helpless after the destruction of 20 dunams (five acres) of land he used to lease, and all his farming equipment with it.

"As soon as the Israeli bulldozers and tanks entered the area, they began bulldozing cultivated lands with various trees, including fruits, citrus, guava, as well as crops like spinach, molokhia (jute mallow), eggplant, squash, pumpkin and sunflower seedlings," he said, before listing more damage in a testimony of the area's past agricultural abundance.

Dheir, whose family exported its produce to the West Bank and Israel, now feels destitute. "We used to depend on agriculture for our livelihood day by day, but now there's no work or income."

Farmer Abu Mahmoud Za'arab also finds himself with "no source of income". The 60-year-old owns 15 dunams (3.7 acres) of land on which crops and fruit trees used to grow.

Biden back on campaign trail as pressure mounts

AFP, Washington



US President Joe Biden headed back out on the campaign trail yesterday, desperate to salvage his re-election bid as senior Democrats meet to discuss growing calls that he quit the White House race.

The 81-year-old Democrat kicked off a grueling week with two campaign rallies in the battleground state of Pennsylvania, before hosting the Nato leaders' summit in Washington. He will do so under an increasingly unforgiving spotlight, as pressure mounts for him to drop out after his disastrous debate against Donald Trump last month ignited panic over his age and fitness to serve another four years.

Biden has remained defiant, unequivocally declaring -- at a rally, to reporters and on social media -- that he is fit to serve, the only one who can defeat Trump, and staying in the race.

"I beat Trump in 2020. I'm going to beat him again in 2024," his campaign social media account posted later on Saturday.

But a televised interview with ABC News on Friday has failed to quell concerns. His next major test in the public eye will be a press conference scheduled for Thursday, during the Nato summit.

Eight killed in gun battles in India's Jammu & Kashmir

Two soldiers among dead

AFP, New Delhi

Two soldiers and six suspected militants were killed in two separate gun battles in Indian's Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), police said yesterday.

Kashmir police inspector general Vidhi Kumar Birdi told AFP that authorities in the disputed territory had "carried out two different operations" in villages in the Kulgam district.

Birdi said two members of the security forces had been killed, with clashes continuing in Modergram and Frisal Chinnigam villages.

"We have retrieved the bodies of two terrorists from Modergram, and four others from Frisal Chinnigam," said Birdi.

This is the latest incident in an uptick of attacks in the disputed territory.

India and Pakistan both claim Muslim-majority Kashmir in full and have fought three wars for control of the Himalayan region.

Rebel groups have waged an insurgency since 1989, demanding independence for the territory or its merger with Pakistan.

The conflict has killed tens of thousands of civilians, soldiers and rebels.

In June, nine Indian Hindu pilgrims were killed and dozens wounded when a gunman opened fire on a bus carrying them from a shrine in the southern Reasi area.

Dorival takes responsibility

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card given to Uruguay's Nahitan Nandez in the 74th minute, Brazil failed to break the deadlock as the feisty encounter featuring a tournament-high 41 fouls finished 0-0 after 90 minutes to go to penalties.

In the shootout, Eder Militao and Douglas Luiz failed to find the net for Brazil, while Alisson Becker denied Uruguay defender Jose Maria Gimenez. However, Manuel Ugarte converted the winning spot kick to send Uruguay into the last four and Brazil to an early exit.

Voter turnout high

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through the European Union at a time when populist parties are strengthening support across the continent.

Voting was due to close at 6:00 pm in towns and small cities and 8:00 pm in bigger cities. Pollsters was due to deliver initial projections based on early counts from a sample of voting stations at 8:00 pm.

Macron called the snap election after his ticket was trounced by the RN in European Parliament elections last month, a move apparently aimed at wrong-footing his rivals in a legislative election. The vote is pitting a centrist government against opposition movements from the left and far right.

"The country is facing three radically opposed views of society," said Olivier Grisal, a retiree, as he walked towards his polling site in the middle-class town of Conflans Sainte-

Brazil head home after earning just one win in the group stage before being defeated by Uruguay in the first knockout round.

The result also represents a downward turn for the Brazilians, who were finalists (2021) and champions (2019) in the two previous editions of the Copa.

"This is a process; in general, you come across difficulties when you're creating a team," said Dorival, whose team was without the suspended Vinicius Junior in the quarterfinal.

"This was our first official tournament, and the result was far

from what was expected ... our main objective now is to qualify for the World Cup."

Dorival, who has just eight games under his belt, defended his players after they only recently wrapped up their club campaigns before the competition.

"Many of them joined us after long seasons," Dorival said. "Considering what we saw at the training sessions and every day, I think we can still grow as a team ... many people might not understand, things are like this when you're creating a team from scratch. There are ups and downs in football."

Honorine, west of Paris, with his wife.

Opinion polls forecast Marine Le Pen's RN will emerge the dominant force as voters punish Macron over a cost of living crisis and being out of touch with the hardships people face.

However, the RN is seen failing to reach the 289-seat target that would outright hand Le Pen's 28-year-old protégé Jordan Bardella the prime minister's job with a working majority.

The far right's projected margin of victory has narrowed since Macron's centrist Together alliance and the left-wing New Popular Front (NPF) pulled scores of candidates from three-way races in the second round in a bid to unify the anti-RN vote.

"France is on the cliff-edge and we don't know if we're going to jump," Raphael Glucksmann, a member of the European Parliament who led France's leftist ticket in last month's

European vote, told France Inter radio last week.

Political violence surged during the three-week campaign. Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin has said authorities recorded more than 50 physical assaults on candidates and campaigners.

Some luxury boutiques along the Champs Elysees boulevard, including the Louis Vuitton store, barricaded windows and Darmanin said he was deploying 30,000 police amid concerns of violent protests should the far right win.

A longtime pariah for many due to its history of racism and antisemitism, the RN has broadened its support beyond its traditional base along the Mediterranean coast and the de-industrialised north, tapping into voter anger at Macron over straitened household budgets, security, and immigration worries.

western Gaza.

Tanks deepened their raids in central and northern areas of Rafah on the southern border with Egypt. Health officials there said they had recovered three bodies of Palestinians killed by Israeli fire in the eastern part of the city.

Electrocution kills five

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Those who were in the chariot jumped from it to save themselves," he said.

"We rescued 20 injured people from the spot and hospitalised them. Four of them died at the Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital and one at the Mohammed Ali Hospital," Arup told The Daily Star.

Contacted, Khorajita Krishna Das, principal of ISKON's Bogura chapter, said, "We tried to move the procession very carefully. When the chariot came

near the electric wire, we warned the devotees so that they lower the dome. But they could not hear us due to noise."

Abdul Wadud, deputy director of the Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital, told The Daily Star that four died at the hospital as of filing of this report around 11:00pm and 38 others were undergoing treatment there. Two of the injured were in the ICU, he said.

Shafiq Amin Kajal, resident medical officer of the Mohammed Ali Hospital,

said four people were admitted there, of them Joly Rani, 35, died.

In a statement last night, Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad expressed deep shock and conveyed condolences to the bereaved family members.

Its leaders called upon the government to take effective measures for treatment of the wounded.

The local administration formed a five-member committee to investigate the incident and asked it to submit the report within 10 working days.

Quota protests bring capital to a standstill

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from underdeveloped districts; 5 percent for members of indigenous communities and 1 percent for persons with physical disabilities.

"With due respect to the prime minister, we want to say that the students have provided the logic for the quota reform movement in 2018," said DU student Nahid Islam, one of the protest organisers under the banner of "student movement against discrimination".

The country's constitution speaks of equality for all and that goes against the quota system, he said.

"There is no point in showing us court -- we are fighting in favour of the constitution. The prime minister herself gave the verdict in favour of the quota cancellation in parliament," he said, adding that the protests will continue indefinitely.

Yesterday, several thousands college and university students gathered in front of the Dhaka University Central Library around 3:00pm in line with their earlier announcement of holding "Bangla Blockade".

They blocked the Shahbagh intersection at about 3:50pm and lifted the blockade around 8:00pm. Many protesters moved towards the Banglamotor and Sonargaon intersections at 6:00pm. They left Sonargaon intersection at about 6:50pm and Banglamotor around 7:00pm and returned to Shahbagh.

A section of DU students first blocked

the Chankharpul intersection near Mayor Hanif Flyover around 3:30pm. The blocked the on and off ramp of the flyover for about four hours.

Another group of protesters also blocked the Science Lab intersection.

Meanwhile, students of Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University blocked a street near their university in the capital's Agargaon around 3:45pm, said Ahad Ali, officer-in-charge of Sher-e-Bangla Police Station.

Student also blocked the Dhaka-Chattogram, Dhaka-Aricha, Chattogram-Khagrachhari, Barishal-Kuakata and Dinajpur-Dhaka highways.

Hundreds of students of Jahangirnagar University blocked the Dhaka-Aricha highway near the campus for around two hours from 11:00am.

The protest caused a six-kilometre tailback on the highway, said AFM Sayeed, the officer-in-charge of Ashulia Police Station.

Many passengers were stuck for hours in a six-kilometre-long tailback in Kotbari crossing area of the Dhaka-Chattogram highway as the protestors from Cumilla University kept the highway blocked for four hours from 4:00pm.

Thousands of students of the University of Chittagong blocked the Chattogram-Khagrachhari highway for about two hours from around 4:00pm.

"If the talented people are not evaluated properly, then there will be a brain drain," said Mubarak Hossain, a

student at the University of Chittagong's department of economics.

Hundreds of students from Barishal University kept the Barishal-Kuakata highway blocked for more than three-and-a-half hours from 11:30am, creating tailbacks on both sides of the highway.

Local and long-distance buses could not depart Nathullahad due to the protest, said Arichul Haque, the officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station.

Students from Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University (HSTU) in Dinajpur blocked the Dinajpur-Dhaka highway for an hour from 11:00am, leaving hundreds of vehicles stuck.

Meanwhile, Education Minister Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury yesterday said it would not be appropriate for him to comment on the protest against the quota system as it is a sub-judice matter.

"Commenting on the matter will be tantamount to contempt of court. Any citizen of Bangladesh can comment on the street. But it is not possible to comment from a responsible place in government," he said.

The government is closely monitoring the ongoing movements of the university teachers and the students against a new pension scheme and quota in government jobs, said Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, while talking to reporters at the secretariat.