



A group of people waiting under a crumbling passenger shade in the Basabo area of Dhaka yesterday. The rusted beams and partially collapsed wall, barely held together, pose a serious risk of collapse. With cracks and exposed metal, the structure is a potential hazard for those waiting underneath, raising concerns that an accident could occur at any moment if repairs are not made promptly. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

ELECTORAL REFORM

Most parties for proportionate representation

BNP leader calls it 'illogical'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of five political parties yesterday proposed introducing a proportionate representation system in elections during a seminar in Dhaka, while a BNP leader dismissed the idea as "illogical".

The seminar, titled "How to Reform the Electoral System?" was held at the CIRDAP auditorium and organised by the Reporters Forum for Election and Democracy (RFED).

While representatives from BNP and four other political parties reached a consensus on bringing back the caretaker government by abolishing the fifteenth amendment, the BNP leader remained opposed to any shift towards a proportionate representation system, despite support from other parties.

WHAT IS PROPORTIONATE REPRESENTATION?

Proportionate representation (PR) is an electoral system in which seats in parliament are allocated to political parties based on the proportion of votes they receive in an election. Unlike the current first-past-the-post (FPTP) system, where the candidate with the most votes wins a seat, PR ensures that political parties gain representation that mirrors their share of the national vote.

At the seminar, BNP Vice Chairman Asaduzzaman Ripon rejected the PR system, calling it impractical for Bangladesh.

He argued that reforms should be grounded in reality. On the caretaker government system, he said, "The caretaker government should stay in place for the next 100 years."

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CALLS FOR ELECTORAL REFORM

Brigadier General (ret'd) M Sakhawat Hossain, adviser for the Jute, Textile, and Shipping ministries, addressed the gathering as the chief guest.

He stressed that the aim of political reform should be to restore the collapsing state system.

"The students shed their blood to reform the state, not to govern it. Our goal remains to restore the collapsed system," he said. He urged political leaders to embrace reforms, however difficult the process may be.

Badiul Alam Majumdar, chairman of the election reform commission, echoed these sentiments, emphasising the importance of integrity and neutrality in the election process.

He said elections are a long term process, involving everything from voter registration to the voting procedure, and called for political parties to work together to ensure transparency.

WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FOR PR SYSTEM

The idea of proportionate representation found support from several political leaders.

Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganosamhati Andolan, called for the next three to five elections to be held under an interim government and backed the PR system.

He also proposed the inclusion of a "No Vote" option in future elections.

Ruhin Hossain Prince, general secretary of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, also highlighted the need for an election-time government to ensure free and fair elections. He too was in favour of the PR system.

Shafiqul Islam Masud, a member of Jamaat-e-Islami's executive council, also endorsed the PR system, saying it was essential for truly representative elections.

Other speakers included Jatiyo Party leader Shamim Haidar Patwari, AB Party member secretary Mojibur Rahman Monju, and BNP leader Syed Moazzem Hossain Alal. RFED president Ekramul Haq presided over the event.

'We refused to retreat, even with bullets flying'

Students share harrowing tales of July uprising

NILIMA JAHAN

When protests against the quota system in government jobs erupted in Bangladesh during June and July, students believed they were standing up against a system they saw as discriminatory. Never did they imagine that their call for reform would be met with the brutal force of ruling party goons and the bullets of law enforcement.

What started as a peaceful demand for change quickly escalated into a violent

The day Abu Sayed was killed, even female students were not spared. A group of them, along with two male students, sought refuge in a roadside abandoned toilet, but when they came out, they were attacked again. The violence never seemed to end; even those already injured were not spared.

MOMTAZ SOMA
BRUR Student

confrontation with the state. Over the course of 36 days, students found themselves on the frontlines of a deadly battle. They were killed on the streets, beside their universities and even in their own homes. Their comrades were gunned down, many of them blinded, some of them lost their



limbs or other vital body organs.

For students involved, the trauma runs deep. They faced a harsh reality where death was no longer an abstract fear, but a vivid, horrifying presence.

Among them was Abdul Aziz, a protest coordinator from Jahangirnagar University, who fought alongside others on July 18 in Uttara, one of the deadliest days of the uprising.

Five protesters died when police and Rapid Action Battalion opened fire on protesters in Uttara.

Over 500 were injured that day, he said.

"We refused to retreat, even with bullets flying," he added.

At one stage, the law enforcers shot aiming his head, he said.

He turned just right in time to evade a fatal headshot, but the bullet shattered his glass and hit his ear, he recounted.

"I was boarded on a rickshaw

van by fellow protesters. But then they realised, the rickshaw puller was already dead after sustaining a bullet at some point."

"Then, one of the protesters took it upon himself to pedal the rickshaw and bring me to Uttara Adhunik Medical College Hospital," he said.

Aziz was speaking at a webinar titled "Confronting Death: The Experience of Students Against Discrimination", hosted by Forum for Bangladesh Studies in Dhaka yesterday.

Though Aziz required urgent neurological care, he was denied further treatment at the facility.

"The head of neurosurgery refused to treat me. Awami League supporters were hunting for me," he shared.

Under the cover of darkness, Aziz was moved to another hospital, but the damage had been

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Drives against crimes after Durga Puja

Says IGP

UNB, Dhaka

There is no scope to escape punishment after committing any crime in the country, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Md Mainul Islam said yesterday.

"Those who are involved in wrongdoings are few in numbers and if we all remain united, they will be insignificant. Yesterday's incident [attack on idols of a puja mandap in Tanti Bazar] proves this. We have arrested them and taken prompt action. So, those who want to commit crimes have no chance to escape," he said.

The IGP came up with the remark while talking to reporters after visiting Ramakrishna Mission Temple in the morning.

He also assured that drives will be conducted against mugging, extortion, drugs, criminal activities and for traffic management after Durga Puja.

Dengue claims nine lives

Highest in a day so far this year, 915 hospitalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



At least nine dengue patients died in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, highest in a single day this year.

Moreover, 915 patients were also hospitalised during this time. Of the deaths, one each was recorded in Barishal and Chattogram divisions, and the rest in Dhaka city.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, with the new deaths, the total number of fatalities rose to 210, making it the third-highest death toll since the outbreak in 2000.

According to the DGHS, 1,705 dengue deaths occurred in 2023, marking the highest annual death toll to date. In comparison, there were 281 deaths in 2022 and 179 in 2019.

Meanwhile, total number of cases rose to 41,810, of which 23,851 are from outside Dhaka.

Currently, 3,651 dengue patients are undergoing treatment in different hospitals across the country.

A total of 37,949 dengue patients have been released from hospitals till yesterday this year.

Experts attribute the high mortality rate this year to factors including late hospitalisation, quick onset of shock syndrome, inaccurate test results, and recurrent dengue infections.

Besides, the ongoing rainy weather has worsened the situation, said experts.

Experts say such intermittent rain, coupled with high humidity, creates ideal conditions for Aedes aegypti mosquitoes, the primary carrier of the dengue virus, to breed. The rainy weather also increases the mosquitoes' biting tendencies, which will further escalate the dengue crisis.

BOLSTERING TIES

Foreign secy meets key US officials

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

In a series of meetings with key US officials between October 7 and 14, Bangladesh foreign secretary Jasim Uddin discussed the reforms of the democratic institutions and upholding of democratic values, as well as accountability for human rights violations.

In his first visit to the US after assuming office, Jasim Uddin met UN officials in New York and then flew to Washington and held meetings with key US officials, including US Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights Uzra Zeya, Acting Under Secretary for Political Affairs John Bass, Special Assistant to the US President and Senior Director for South Asia Lindsey W Ford, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Verma, among others.



Labour rights, Rohingya crisis, trade and investment, regional security and Indo-Pacific Strategy of the US were also discussed as Dhaka and Washington stepped up efforts to deepen relationship following the formation of Bangladesh's interim government.

Jasim also met US Assistant Secretary Ambassador Donald Lu, Acting Assistant Secretary Marta C Youth, Deputy Assistant Secretary Nicole Chulick, Deputy Assistant Secretary Monica Ager Jacobsen, as well as Director Alla P Kamins.

"US values Bangladesh as a partner in the Indo-Pacific region and our strong collaboration as their leading partner on Rohingya response and number one source of FDI," Uzra Zeya posted on X after meeting with the foreign secretary.

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The Hatkhola and Joy Kali Mandir roads (inset) are in a state of disarray for over a month following development work. After persistent monsoon rains, potholes have also developed, adding to the woes. While Joy Kali Mandir serves as the entry point for inter-district buses, Hatkhola road serves as the exit. Despite being two major roads, they lie neglected and in dilapidated conditions. In addition, their current state has led to massive traffic jams in the respective areas. The photos were taken yesterday. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN, RASHED SHUMON



Gang posing as security forces rob cash, gold

Looted Tk 75 lakh, 70 bhoris of gold ornaments, say police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of miscreants in the guise of security forces robbed Tk 75 lakh and 70 bhoris of gold ornaments from a building in the Mohammadpur area of the capital early yesterday, said police.

The incident occurred around 3:45am on the second floor of a five-storey building named "Abu Company Building" near the Tin Rasta intersection.

The building belongs to a businessman named "Abu", said locals.

According to the victims, a group of eight to 10 individuals dressed in uniforms resembling those of the army and Rab arrived at their home, and said they were there to conduct a raid to recover weapons.

They searched several

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