

Hajj registration deadline extended till December 15

UNB, Dhaka

The government has extended the Hajj registration deadline for 2025 to December 15 to prevent last-minute hassles.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs announced this change through a notice signed by Deputy Secretary Md Rafikul Islam yesterday.

The notice said the registration period for both government and private Hajj pilgrims now runs until December 15, 2024. During this period, pilgrims can complete their initial registration by depositing Tk 3 lakh and must finalise their registration by paying the full amount for the Hajj package.

The notice added that no further extensions will be given after this deadline. Pilgrims must complete all necessary procedures within the stipulated timeframe.



Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus holds a meeting with Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman at the state guest house Jamuna yesterday. Shafiqur led a Jamaat delegation to the meeting.

PHOTO: PID

Bangladeshi fisherman shot by Myanmar Navy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A Bangladeshi fisherman sustained injuries after being shot by the Myanmar Navy while fishing near Saint Martin's Island in Teknaf, Cox's Bazar, said BGB yesterday.

Mohammad Ershad, 40, has been taken to Teknaf for advanced medical care.

The incident occurred Wednesday around 3:00pm in the Baddar area of the southeast Bay of Bengal, close to St Martin Jetty.

The fishing trawler Ershad was aboard inadvertently entered Myanmar's waters in the Baddar area due to an engine failure, said Major Mohammad Ishtiaq Murshed, acting commanding officer of the Teknaf-2 BGB Battalion.

"At that time, a ship of the Myanmar Navy stationed there opened fire at the trawler. Ershad was shot in his arm."

The navy then provided first aid to the injured fisherman before releasing him and the other crew, along with their trawler. "Inquiries are being made in this regard."

Cops identify 8-10 attackers

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between followers of Chinmoy, former ISKCON leader and also spokesperson for Sammilita Sanatani Jagaran Jote, and law enforcers and lawyers on Tuesday.

The arrestees are Rajib Bhattacharya alias Sumon, Bobi Chowdhury, Abdul Kaium, Kowshik Chowdhury, Abir Dey, Robin Das, and Jewel Das, said police.

With these seven, 34 people, including seven murder suspects, have been arrested, according to police.

Officer-in-Charge Fazlul Kader Chowdhury of Kotwali Police Station said, "We have scrutinised the CCTV footage of the area and found 8 to 10 who took part in the killing. Of them, four to five were seen hacking the lawyer."

"We got some names and are trying to arrest them."

OC Fazlul was transferred last night.

Several police officers told this paper that they have identified 8-10 suspects from footage.

Meanwhile, Shuvo Kanti Das, a fourth semester student of LLB at the BGC Trust University, was expelled yesterday after alleged evidence of his involvement in the murder surfaced.

BGC Trust University's Deputy Registrar Salauddin Shahareir told The Daily Star, "Soon after photos [allegedly of the murder incident] went viral on the social media, his classmates and other students identified him in the photo. The university made the decision based on students' information and evidence."

"The university did not launch any investigations on its own in this matter," he said.

The Daily Star could not verify the authenticity of the photos in question.

LAWYERS ON STRIKE

Members of Chattogram District Bar

Association refrained from attending court proceedings for the second day yesterday, protesting the murder of Saiful and demanding arrest of his killers.

All proceedings at the 74 courtrooms in Chattogram were suspended due to the strike. Wearing black badges, lawyers demonstrated in the court building area since yesterday morning.

Some former students of International Islamic University Chittagong, Premier University, and Chattogram Law College, who practise law at the courts, also took part in the protest under separate banners.

Addressing the programme, CDBA President Najim Uddin Chowdhury alleged that police failed to control the situation despite having proper support. He came down heavily on the CMP commissioner's role.

"On Tuesday, when the Chinmoy supporters were not letting the prison van move, there was a huge deployment of police, army, and BGB personnel in front of district administration office. Why didn't you call them?" he asked.

"We want to know from the CMP commissioner how Chinmoy got a megaphone inside the prison van ...," said Najim.

He urged the lawyers not to represent those accused of Saiful's murder.

Meanwhile, deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina in a statement has condemned the killing of Saiful and demanded punishment to the culprits. She also slammed the arrest of a top leader of the Sanatani community and demanded his immediate release, read a post on the official Facebook page of the Awami League.

AFP, Tehran

A general in Iran's Revolutionary Guards was killed in Syria yesterday during fighting between Syrian government forces and jihadists, an Iranian news agency reported.

Tehran has been a staunch ally of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad during the civil war that broke out in 2011, providing military advisers.

Iran general killed in Syria clashes

The worst fighting in years broke out in northern Syria this week between jihadists and the army.

"General Kioumars Pourhashemi, one of Iran's senior advisers in Aleppo, was killed in an attack carried out by takfiri terrorist mercenaries," Tasnim news agency reported.

In Shia-majority Iran, the term 'takfiri' generally refers to jihadists or supporters of radical Sunni Islam.

Academic life

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witnessing such chaos in many institutions. To address these challenges, we need a permanent solution, which can help us act promptly."

The college announced that its academic activities will remain halted until December 2, while Kabi Nazrul Government College remained shut until yesterday since the clash erupted on Monday (November 25). It has not given a date of reopening till the filing of this report at 9:00pm last night.

On November 24, students of DMRC went to Dhaka National Medical Institute Hospital to protest an alleged medical mistreatment of a fellow student.

At one point, they vandalised the hospital, compelling the institute authorities to postpone all MBBS and BDS classes from November 26 to 28.

As some students of Shaheed Suhrawardy College, located near the hospital, intervened, the DMRC students attacked and vandalised that college as well.

St Gregory High School and College also came under attack at that time, leading to suspension of all classes, and exams until yesterday. The authorities of the institution yesterday said they will begin classes on Saturday.

On November 25, in response to the attack, students of Suhrawardy College, with support from students of other DU-affiliated colleges like Kabi Nazrul Government College, severely vandalised the 11-storey DMRC building, leading to a series of clashes and chases.

In a separate incident, students of Bangladesh University of Textiles (Butex) and Dhaka Polytechnic Institute got locked in a clash on November 24 night, resulting in the suspension of nine exams of Butex.

Since the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led government, the education sector has been in a state of instability. Several protests were held at different institutions across the country as students demanded the resignations

Political parties strongly endorse press freedom

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activists, had been in constant fear of being sued or landing in jail for writing in newspapers or speaking out. It is unfortunate that even after a mass uprising, attacks on media outlets remain a concern," he said.

He said the BNP always fought for freedom of speech, right to vote, and democracy.

"Some people are attempting to divide the people. Certain remarks are being made that could lead to complete anarchy. Together, we must stop this; or else, the sacrifices of the students and the masses will go in vain."

Fakhru pointed out that certain actions lead to depoliticisation at times, which must be consciously avoided. He said that an elected government is the best option, but imposing control on it or on democracy is unacceptable.

"Creating anarchy or acting recklessly would lead the nation towards the gravest danger."

Urging caution, he warned against taking actions that could allow the ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina to manipulate incidents from abroad and this would ultimately spoil the opportunity to rebuild the nation.

He reaffirmed his party's commitment to protect freedom of the press, freedom of expression, and voting rights at all costs.

Andaleev Rahman Partho, chairman of Bangladesh Jatiya Party, said it is not unlikely that press freedom would be under threat after the fall of such a fascist regime.

He said that when the interim government assumed office on August 8, the media outlets had said that the government should stay in power for two to three years. "They also said there is no difference between an Awami League government and that of the BNP's, and that the two parties are two sides of the same coin. This view of the media hurts us."

Partho said no one should think that if one government is replaced by another one, nothing will change. "Thinking along such line is another form of fascism."

"It is ultimately up to the people to decide. A gap has been created between political parties, the government, and the media. Many have tried to capitalise on this gap."

He also said the interim government has failed to keep in touch with the people.

"Had the government maintained more matured informal and formal relationships with the political parties, these problems would not have arisen."

Terming the incumbent government a weak government, Partho said no one can expect they would be protected by such a weak administration.

"Only a people's government, be it good or bad, can be held accountable. A political government can stand by the media and protect it."

Hamidur Rahman, assistant secretary general of Jamaat-e-Islami, said democracy and independent

journalism are intrinsically linked.

He said his party thinks any attempt to weaken independent journalism is a conspiracy to undermine the state.

"Such actions constitute a new conspiracy aimed at obstructing the path of democracy and paving the way for the return of old fascism."

Highlighting Jamaat's continued support for independent journalism, Hamidur said, "Arson and other attacks and vandalism targeting newspaper offices are regrettable. We do not support such activities."

He called for a national consensus to address any such crisis.

Nagorik Oikya President Mahmudur Rahman Manna said, "When you talk about practising inclusive politics and democracy, you will also have to accept the idea of letting a hundred flowers to bloom. You cannot gag any opinion. Democracy is undoubtedly the rule of the majority, but at the same time, you must also acknowledge you cannot muzzle the minority communities."

He said every opinion must be allowed to be expressed.

"From this perspective, I believe that be it the Prothom Alo, The Daily Star, or any other newspaper or TV channel, they must be granted full freedom. If we cannot foster the expression of diverse opinions freely, it will be difficult for us to move forward."

Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganosamhati Andolon, said press freedom was the "key verdict" of the 1971 Liberation War and the 2024 mass uprising.

"For that, we need to stand for the media and its rights. Even if a media outlet is ideologically opposed to me, I will stand for its rights as well."

He said he believes there should be one standard for everyone.

"Even if we do not consider a particular media outlet ideologically correct, it still has the right to exist as a media entity. Ideological and political debates will continue, but committing a nuisance in front of a newspaper office aligns with fascist practices. Shutting a media outlet is an extension of this approach, and everyone should realise this."

Saki said there can be criticisms, and ideological differences among the people, but their freedom of speech should not be obstructed by any means.

"These issues should be clearly mentioned in the constitution in future."

There should be no compromise on press freedom because people rely on the media, he added.

Nasiruddin Patwary, convener of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, called for unity among the stakeholders to resolve the problems facing the media through dialogue.

"Those who have resentment or complaints about any particular media outlet can resolve those issues through discussions," he said.

Nasir urged the media owners, workers, political figures, and all other stakeholders to come to a common platform so that no media house

in the country would fall victim to aggression.

"Wherever there is an attack, we will collectively stand against it," he added.

Bazlur Rashid Firoz, general secretary of Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal, said attacks on newspapers and media outlets are effectively assaults on democracy and the mass uprising of 2024. "To counter these attacks, we must unite and move forward collectively."

Saiful Haque, general secretary of the Biplobi Workers Party, described the slaughter of a cow for a feast in front of a newspaper office as an unbelievable, unimaginable and worrying act.

Condemning the incident, he said, "The question of who was behind this remains unaddressed. Who will uncover this? There must be provocation and instigation behind it."

Communist Party of Bangladesh General Secretary Ruhin Hossain Prince criticised the arbitrary cancellation of the accreditation cards of some journalists and filing of murder cases against some others.

He said people must stand united against the attacks on the media.

Rashed Khan, general secretary of Gono Odhikar Parishad, said his party strongly believes in freedom of speech and freedom of press.

"If the journalists cannot write independently even after the mass uprising, it would be deeply saddening."

He said the media did not play its due role over the past 15 years, and the authorities should investigate into this failure.

Mujibur Rahman Manju, member secretary of Amar Bangladesh (AB) Party, highlighted a "gap" between the media stakeholders and those protesting against some media outlets.

"It was the government's responsibility to engage with the demonstrators outside the Prothom Alo office. What could have been resolved through discussion has instead been allowed to evolve into an ideological or commercial issue."

Manju suggested that the Media Reform Commission or the Noab make recommendations to prevent such incidents.

Maulana Imtiaz Alam, assistant secretary general of Islami Andolan Bangladesh, said, "We believe in freedom of the media and we want to assist them. However, the media also need to make sure it do not write or say anything that goes against the belief of the majority. The media also need to show respect to our belief."

Jalaluddin Ahmed, joint secretary general of Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish, urged the owners of media outlets not to discriminate between political parties while running news on them.

Reading out a written statement, Noab President AK Azad expressed deep concern that at a time when media outlets should be operating in a pressure-free environment after the mass uprising, some newspapers and media houses are still facing threats, and even warnings of closure.

He said incidents such as laying siege to newspaper offices in the name of protests, creating chaos, attacking regional offices, and obstructing the distribution of newspapers in different parts of the country are totally unacceptable.

These actions are fostering an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, posing a serious threat to press freedom, he said.

"The actions and campaigns against the Prothom Alo and The Daily Star are not merely protests or expression of dissent, rather those involve issuing threats, making provocative statements, spreading hatred, creating chaos outside their offices, and resorting to violence whenever possible. Such actions are causing financial losses to the newspaper industry."

Azad stressed the need for taking strong measures against such undemocratic activities that threaten press freedom.

He said the safety of the media outlets and their employees must be ensured at all costs.

The Noab leader called upon all political parties to assist and cooperate with the media to safeguard press freedom.

Mahfuz Anam, executive member of Noab and also the president of the Editors' Council, said the media want to see an end to the oppressive measures taken to suppress independent journalism and stifle the press over the last 15 years.

He said the media had hoped that the situation would improve after the mass uprising, allowing journalists to carry out their duties freely and independently.

"Unfortunately, independent journalism is being attacked in new ways, which is highly condemnable and alarming. We believe political parties play a significant role in supporting independent journalism," said Anam, also the editor and publisher of The Daily Star.

He urged political parties to ensure press freedom.

Muntasir Ali, joint secretary general of Khelafat Majlish, also spoke at the event.

Khalekuzzaman, adviser of Basod; Maj (ret'd) Abdul Wahab, convener of AB Party; Jahangir Hossain, senior joint secretary general of Khelafat Majlish, and its Joint Secretary General Mahabubul Haque; and Abdul Kaiyum, central publicity affairs secretary of Islami Andolan Bangladesh, were present at the meeting, moderated by Dewan Hanif Mahmud, editor and publisher of daily Bonik Barta.

Shahidullah Khan Badal, Noab vice-president and publisher of New Age; Matiur Rahman, editor and publisher of Prothom Alo; Nurul Kabir, editor of New Age; Altamash Kabir, editor of Dainik Sangbad; Saiful Alam, editor of daily Jagantor; Shamsul Haque Zahid, editor of Financial Express; Mozammel Haque, editor of daily Karatoa; and Mostafa Mamun, editor of Desh Rupantar, were also present.