

‘Minus-two’ won’t be successful

Says Khasru

UNB, Dhaka

BNP standing committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday said the hope for implementing a fabricated notion of minus two formula or depoliticisation will not be fulfilled as BNP is now the most popular political party in the country.

“That expectation [minus-two] will not be fulfilled...,” he said, replying to a question from reporters after paying tribute at the grave of Ziaur Rahman.

Khasru also said, “Democracy must be established in Bangladesh. The first task for that (to restore democracy) is (to arrange) election... election is the first reform (initiative). The movement for reforms and the restoration of democracy must begin with this (election),” he said.

Meanwhile, BNP senior

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A farmer spreads paddy grains under the sun, following a traditional post-harvest method to ensure they are properly dried for storage and preservation. This photo was taken in Surjanagar, Rajbari recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Need collective efforts for societal challenges

Says Rizwana

UNB, Dhaka

Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan has stressed the critical role of women alongside men in promoting environmental conservation and climate resilience.

“We must commit to collective efforts to address societal challenges and uplift communities. By securing equity and sharing responsibility, we can create a better world where everyone can progress,” she said.

She made the remarks at an event organised to mark the 40th anniversary of Inner Wheel District 328 yesterday at a city hotel.

The adviser urged all to work tirelessly for positive change and extend support to disadvantaged individuals.

She highlighted the importance of stepping out of comfort zones to advocate for justice and dignity as central to all human endeavours, whether by the state or private individuals.

She also encouraged organisations like the Inner Wheel to continue inspiring others through service and friendship, setting impactful examples for society to follow.

Political parties slam VAT, tax hikes

Say it’s an ‘authoritarian policy’, will disproportionately impact the poor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political parties have criticised the government for increasing value-added tax (VAT) and supplementary duty (SD) on nearly 100 goods and services, saying such measures would disproportionately burden marginalised and low-to-middle-income groups.

They argued that the hike in indirect taxes would exacerbate the struggles of ordinary people, calling it a move akin to the “authoritarian policy” of draining citizens’ resources.

The National Board of Revenue on Thursday issued a notification raising VAT and SD rates on products such as mobile phone usage, internet, tissue, fruit, readymade garments, LP gas, spectacles, and hotel services. The new rates came into effect yesterday.

Consumers now face VAT rates of up to 15 percent on items like restaurant food, biscuits, cakes, pickles, tomato sauce, tailoring services, toilet tissue, towels, sweets, driving licences, non-AC hotels, motor workshops, and lubricant oil.

Previously, VAT rates for these items ranged as low as 5 percent.

Additionally, VAT on electric transformers, poles, and steel products such as cold-rolled coils, limestone, and dolomite was raised to 15 percent from 5 percent.

Medicine prices are also expected to increase due to a VAT

hike at the trading stage, rising from 5 percent to 7.5 percent. Other areas affected include printing, cinema tickets, repairs, cleaning services, and airfares, with VAT and excise duties seeing significant increases.

BNP standing committee members Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury and Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku criticised the government for what they described as regressive policies.

These measures will worsen public hardship, especially for marginalised groups, fixed-income earners, and low-to-middle-income families.

Communist Party of Bangladesh

Tuku said, “Raising indirect taxes will place an unbearable burden on the people. This is completely unacceptable. During Sheikh Hasina’s tenure, the prices of essentials skyrocketed. Now, under the interim government, what measures have been taken to alleviate public suffering?”

He added that the interim government had failed to stabilise the economy, leaving it unchecked like the previous administration.

Khasru said, “It will severely affect the lives of ordinary people,

increasing their suffering.”

The Communist Party of Bangladesh also condemned the decision.

In a statement, the CPB said, “These measures will worsen public hardship, especially for marginalised groups, fixed-income earners, and low-to-middle-income families.”

The CPB linked the tax hikes to International Monetary Fund (IMF) pressure, accusing the government of adopting policies characteristic of an authoritarian regime. The party called for reversing the decision, recovering embezzled funds, collecting bad loans, and imposing special taxes on the wealthy.

The Socialist Party of Bangladesh also criticised the government, saying it had followed in the footsteps of the previous “fascist regime”.

“This absurd decision will push low-income groups further into jeopardy. It exposes the anti-people nature of this interim government,” the party said.

The statement also said IMF recommendations influenced the decision, warning of adverse effects on rural and low-income earners, as well as a deeper economic crisis.

Political parties across the spectrum demanded the immediate withdrawal of the tax hikes, urging the government to prioritise public welfare over regressive fiscal measures.

Unite for inclusive Bangladesh

Says Sarjis

UNB, Bhola

The youth should unite in shaping an inclusive and equitable Bangladesh,

said Sarjis Alam, central coordinator of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement.

Speaking at a public rally near the Ilisha Fountain in Bhola yesterday, Sarjis said it is important to document the aspirations of all citizens in a unified declaration.

“These dreams must reflect the voices of people from every district, sub-district, and social stratum,” he said.

Sarjis highlighted the movement’s success in ousting the “autocratic killer regime” of Sheikh Hasina, uniting people across parties, religions, and classes. “It’s now our responsibility to fulfil the masses’ aspirations for a brighter Bangladesh,” he added.

He criticised corruption and extortion and demanded justice for protesters injured by law enforcement. “The officers who opened fire on our brothers, including Jasim, must face more than mere transfers,” he said.

Sarjis questioned Bhola’s lack of gas access and medical facilities, despite producing gas.



JULY UPRISING

Six bodies of martyrs found in DMCH morgue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six bodies of martyrs from the July uprising have been found in the forensic department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

The special cell for the July uprising at DMCH revealed this during a press conference yesterday, reports UNB.

The identities of the bodies are as follows — an unidentified male aged around 20, an unidentified male aged around 25, an unidentified male of around 22, an unidentified male of around 30, an unidentified female of around 32, and Enamul, 25.

The forensic team has completed autopsies and collected DNA samples. Reports indicate that five individuals died from injuries, while Enamul succumbed to a fall from a height, according to the cell’s secretary Hasan Inam.

“We discovered that six unidentified bodies from the uprising were at Dhaka Medical College Hospital. This morning [yesterday], our team visited Shahbagh Police Station to gather detailed information. Officer-in-charge Khalid Mansur confirmed that six bodies were in the morgue, and these bodies belong to the protesters of the uprising,” he said.

“However, the police have not clarified when the bodies were brought here,” he added.

The special cell urged anyone missing a person of the mentioned ages to contact them at this number — 01621324187.

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‘Tipu was a victim of local power struggle’

Claims family of slain Swechchhasebak League leader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Family members of Golam Rabbani Tipu, a Swechchhasebak League leader who was shot dead at Cox’s Bazar sea beach on Thursday night, believe his murder was part of a power struggle in the local political scene.

Tipu was vice president of the organisation’s Khulna city unit, and former Ward 4 councillor of the Khulna City Corporation.

“Tipu’s popularity made him a target of multiple groups who were envious of his success as a councillor,” said Tipu’s elder brother, Golam Rasul Badsha, a school teacher.

“After August 5, Tipu left Khulna and moved to Dhaka. There, numerous people contacted him with different offers, perhaps to lure him into a trap,” he also said.

“One of the suspects might be Ward 16 councillor Sheikh Hasan Iftekhar alias Chalu, who could have tricked Tipu into traveling to Cox’s Bazar by luring him with something like a business deal,” he added.

A case was filed by Tipu’s brother-in-law Yunus Ali yesterday against unidentified accused, said Jasim Uddin Chowdhury, additional superintendent of police (Media Spokesperson) in Cox’s Bazar.

The ASP said the body was handed over to relatives after autopsy. “No one has been arrested yet. Involvements of suspects Sheikh Hasan Iftekhar, and Tipu’s friend Mejbah Uddin Bhuttu, who were detained by Rab earlier on Friday, could not be found in connection with the murder,” he added.

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Tipu’s popularity made him a target of multiple groups who were envious of his success as a councillor.

GOLAM RASUL BADSHA
Tipu’s elder brother

Bus driver and helper held with 4,000 yaba pills in Jatrabari

UNB, Dhaka

Detective Branch of Police (DB) arrested a bus driver and his helper with 4,000 yaba tablets during an anti-narcotics drive in the capital’s Jatrabari area yesterday.

The arrestees were identified as bus driver Md Zakir Hossain, 45, and helper Md Shahin Chowkidar, 30.

Following a tip-off, a team of the Detective Branch (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police stopped a bus named “Saint Martin Road Master” at Janapath intersection in the capital Sayedabad around 9:05am on Friday, said Deputy Commissioner (Media) of DMP Talebur Rahman.

During a search, detectives found the yaba tablets inside a bag the driver was carrying. The bus was also seized, the DC added.

The two had been smuggling yaba from Cox’s Bazar to Dhaka under the guise of passenger transport, said Deputy Commissioner (Media) of DMP Talebur Rahman.

A case has been filed under the Narcotics Control Act with Jatrabari Police Station, and further legal actions are underway, said police.

Cold disrupts life, livelihood

Panchagarh records coldest day of the season at 7.3 degrees Celsius

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Jatish Chandra Barman, a tractor driver in Barunagaon village of Thakurgaon, struggles against biting winds as he tills frozen croplands. “The cold winds make it extremely difficult to drive the tractor,” says the 35-year-old, his breath visible in the air.

But for farmers like Rafiqul Islam, there’s no choice but to brave the bitter cold. “We must nurture our potato plants now to prevent pests and fungal attacks,” he says.

This week, Panchagarh recorded the coldest day of the season at 7.3 degrees Celsius yesterday, the lowest temperature in the country so far. Dinaipur was not far behind, with the mercury dipping to 9.7 degrees Celsius.

According to the Meteorological Department, the region is under a mild to moderate cold wave, amplified by cold winds rolling down from the Himalayas. Temperatures between 8 and 10 degrees Celsius mark a mild cold wave, while anything below 6 is considered severe.

For farmer Yunus Ali in Dinaipur Sadar upazila, the cold brings a different worry. “My paddy seedbeds are at risk. If this weather persists, they will be ruined,” he says.

Others, like rickshaw-puller Md Sattar from Nishchintapur in Thakurgaon, are seeing their incomes plummet. “I can only work a few hours a day in this cold. My earnings have dropped to



half of what they were,” the 55-year-old says.

Schools, too, are feeling the chill. At Abdur Rashid Degree College, Principal Anwar Sahadat said there is a significant drop in attendance. “The cold has kept many students at home,” he said.

The cold is also taking a toll on health. Hospitals say there is a surge in patients with respiratory and cold-related illnesses.

“The number of cases has significantly increased,” says Rakibul Alam, resident medical officer at Thakurgaon Modern Hospital.

While district administrations in Panchagarh, Thakurgaon, and Dinaipur are distributing warm clothes, the demand far outweighs the supply.

Officials have urged wealthier residents to lend a hand to mitigate the suffering.

Arrest those responsible for Ijtema ground deaths

Demand Zubair followers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The supporters of the Tablighi Jamaat faction aligned with Maulana Zubair Ahmad yesterday demanded a ban on the activities of the faction aligned with Maulana Saad Kandhalvi.

They made the demand during a protest rally after Juma prayers at the Biswa Ijtema ground in Tongi on December 18 last year.

Shaikhul Hadith Alama Mohiuddin Rabbani said the ulema (Islamic scholars) shed blood and

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