

BNP infighting claims 43 lives in 7 months

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Since the fall of the Awami League regime in August last year, the BNP has been plagued by clashes between party factions, leading to the deaths of at least 43 leaders and activists.

Clashes occurred despite repeated warnings from the top leaders and calls for strict measures as the party began preparing to contest the next general election.

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman, addressing a meeting of grassroots leaders via a video link on February 27, urged them to refrain from infighting.

However, since then, five BNP men have been killed during clashes in Rajshahi, Narayanganj, Bhola, Sirajganj and Chuadanga.

The latest incident occurred on March 19, when two Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leaders and a Jubo Dal supporter were killed in Naryanganj, Sirajganj and Bhola.

The 43 killed since August 5 last year included 26 of the BNP, four of JCD, three of Jubo Dal, and the rest from BNP's affiliated organisations. A student and a rickshaw puller also lost their lives in Chandpur and Rajshahi in violence related to rivalry between groups.

At least 2,000 BNP men were injured in around 200 incidents in 50

For 16 years, my husband couldn't come home because he was accused in many cases, but he died at the hands of his own party men

Nahida Khatun, widow of a slain BNP activist

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PHOTO: SUZIT KUMAR DAS

Farm labourers manually pollinating onion flowers at Ambikapur in Faridpur Sadar upazila as excessive use of pesticides keeps bees away. The authorities have targeted 964 tonnes of harvest in the district this year. Farmers have planted onions on 1,854 acres of cropland. This photo was taken recently.

LAW PROTECTING WOMEN, CHILDREN

Advisory council clears amendments to fast-track trial

UNB, Dhaka

The advisory council yesterday approved several key decisions, including amendments to the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act to reduce the trial and investigation time for rape cases by half.

"We will try to ensure strict implementation of the law as soon as possible -- I have told them that the trial of rape cases should not only be speedy, but justice should be ensured and fair," said Law Adviser Asif Nazrul.

As per the draft, the investigation period for rape cases is being reduced from 30 days to 15 days and the time for completing the trial is being reduced from 180 days to 90 days, he said.

The council of advisors also approved amendments to Public Procurement Ordinance to enhance transparency and competition in government procurement and dismantle syndicates, said Shafiqul Alam, press secretary to the chief adviser, at a media briefing yesterday.

The provision that required rejecting tender proposals below 10 percent of the estimated cost has been removed.

Besides, the previous evaluation matrix, which often resulted in the same companies repeatedly securing contracts, will be replaced with a new capacity-based evaluation system.

Currently, 65 percent of tenders are processed online, and the advisory council decided to increase it to 100 percent.

The council also approved amendment to the law related to abandoned property management.

Besides, the government has declared an additional holiday on April 3 for Eid to facilitate public convenience.

An optional leave policy has also been introduced for indigenous communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts to observe their cultural and social events.

Kidnapping saga of 25 days ends in grief

Family paid Tk 25 lakh ransom but could not save 23yr-old victim

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *thakurgaon*

Police recovered the decomposed body of a man in Thakurgaon early yesterday, 25 days after he was kidnapped.

The victim, Muhammad Milon, 23, was a graduate of Dinajpur Polytechnic Institute, said Mamun or Rashid, inspector of the Detective Branch of Police in Thakurgaon.

Three arrested suspects -- Sejan, 25, Murad, 23, and Ratna Akter Eva, 19 -- had told police that the victim's body was dumped in an abandoned toilet pit behind Sejan's house at Maheshpur Bitbazar village in Thakurgaon upazila.

Quoting family members, police said the gang impersonating a woman on social media asked Milon to go to a place near Thakurgaon Polytechnic Institute on February 22. His phone was found switched off after he went there.

That night, someone called Milon's father and said his son had been kidnapped and demanded Tk 3 lakh for his release.

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PRICES OF ESSENTIALS

High season, govt steps bring relief

No plan to ban Awami League'
Yunus tells Crisis Group; regime leaders to face trial here'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has said that the interim government has no plans to ban the Awami League, but individuals within its leadership accused of crimes, including murder and crimes against humanity, will be tried in Bangladeshi courts.

He said the government has not ruled out referring AL leaders to the International Criminal Court in The Hague, following a UN fact-finding mission that reported

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PRODUCT (KG/LTR)	PRICES ON MAR 12	PRICES ON MAR 19	DECREASE
Soybean oil	Tk 174-184	Tk 157-168	9.22%
Palm oil	Tk 146-155	Tk 145-153	1%
Potato	Tk 20-30	Tk 18-30	4%
Sugar	Tk 118-125	Tk 115-120	3.29%
Eggs (4 pieces)	Tk 40-45	Tk 38-45	2.35%
Ginger	Tk 100-220	Tk 100-200	6.25%
Local onion	Tk 35-50	Tk 30-50	5.88%

SOURCE: TCB

SUKANTA HALDER

Prices of essential commodities in Dhaka's markets have dropped over the past week, bringing much-needed relief to low- and middle-income families.

According to traders, consumers are benefiting from the ongoing production season of certain commodities, various government measures, and enhanced market monitoring.

A visit to several kitchen markets in the capital, including in Pallabi's Duaripara, Mirpur-1, Farmgate, and Karwan Bazar,

yesterday revealed that the prices of soybean oil, palm oil, potatoes, local onions, sugar, eggs, and various vegetables have come down.

However, the prices of broiler chicken, a major source of protein for the masses, have risen.

Mohammad Ali, a wholesale and retail trader at Mirpur-1 kitchen market, explained that the drop in prices of several essentials was due to higher supply and lower demand. "This has brought some relief to consumers. When prices are high,

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An injured Palestinian boy receives treatment at the Indonesian Hospital in Beit Lahia yesterday following Israeli overnight airstrikes in the northern Gaza Strip.

Government employees to enjoy 9-day Eid holiday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has declared a public holiday on April 3 through an executive order to ensure smooth travels for Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations.

The advisory council made the decision at a meeting yesterday, meaning the official Eid holiday is now effectively from March 28 to April 3.

March 28 marks Shab-e-Qadr, a public holiday and is also Friday.

March 26 is a public holiday for Independence Day, making March 27 the only working day before the extended Eid holidays. Offices will reopen on April 6 as there is a two-day weekly holiday on April 4 and 5.

After assuming office, the interim government extended the Eid holidays from three days to five days.

Eid-ul-Fitr is expected to be celebrated on either March 31 or April 1, depending on the sighting of the moon in the country's sky.



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