



Chengdu: A
Blend of History
and Modern
Charm
WR1



Global flight
turmoil as
Heathrow closed
by huge fire
P7



New leadership,
old rivers, and
the long road to
clean water
P8



Why non-
discrimination
demands
secularism
P9

CLOSURE OF FACTORIES

Eid joy eludes jobless workers

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

An uncertain future is overshadowing the joy of the upcoming Eid for thousands of workers who have lost their jobs due to factory closures and layoffs in the wake of last year's political shift.

Trade union groups estimate that nearly 1 lakh workers, mostly in the garment and textile sectors, have lost their jobs in the past seven and a half months as factory owners closed production units or announced layoffs due to financial struggles.

Recovery has slowed and is likely to continue as entrepreneurs have refrained from investing in new units or expanding existing operations due to the country's ongoing economic and political uncertainty.

Many workers are now desperately searching for new jobs, while others have returned to their villages, unable to make rent and afford daily necessities in the capital.

With no steady income, buying their family members anything for Eid is a distant thought as the loss of employment has made it difficult for many to support their families and cover expenses for their children and elderly parents.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Laid-off
workers
desperately
search for new
jobs; others
return to
their villages,
unable to
afford rent
and daily
necessities in
the capital



A FAMILIAR YET ARDUOUS WALK... After toiling away in the fields all day, local women gather their pitchers for a familiar yet arduous hike. As the sun loosens its fiery grip, they form small groups and tread two to three kilometres across the parched, crackling earth in search of life's most essential element -- freshwater. In the dry season, freshwater becomes scarce in regions highly affected by salinity. With reservoirs reduced to one for roughly every five villages, these resilient women must endure this ritual daily. The photo was taken on Wednesday from Khatail village in Dakop upazila of Khulna.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN



WORLD
WATER
DAY

Debate, demo swirl over banning AL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Facebook post by NCP leader Hasnat Abdullah early yesterday touched off intense public debate and also demonstrations over the question of banning Awami League.

Hasnat wrote that there was an ongoing conspiracy to rehabilitate the Awami League as per India's plan.

A proposal for this "refined" Awami League to be helmed by AL leaders Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, and Fazle Noor Taposh was pitched to Hasnat and two others "at the cantonment" in the afternoon of March 11, he wrote.

"We were asked to accept this proposal in exchange for" a parliamentary seat-sharing agreement, wrote the chief organiser of the NCP around 2:00am.

"We were told that multiple political parties, when presented with this proposal, had agreed to the rehabilitation of the Awami League on certain conditions. [We were told that] It is better to have several opposition parties, including a weak Awami League, than just one party in opposition.

"We were further told that those who will lead this 'refined' Awami League will start publicly admitting the crimes of the Sheikh family from April-May onwards, distancing themselves from Hasina while pledging allegiance only to Bangabandhu's Awami League."

He said the offer was immediately rejected with the assertion that efforts should be made to prosecute the Awami League rather than rehabilitating them. Hasnat and the two others then abruptly left the meeting.

Hasnat then urged people to unite. "There is no place for Awami League's comeback in post-August 5 Bangladesh. The Awami League must be banned."

"The Jamaat-e-Islami was banned. But that did not stop the party's political activities. I think the Awami League should be dealt with political programmes, not a ban."

Anu Muhammad, former teacher at Jahangirnagar University

His post came hours after Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus told the International Crisis Group that the interim government had no plans to ban the AL. But AL leaders accused of murder and crimes against humanity will be tried in Bangladeshi courts, he added.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Political decisions rest solely with political entities

Says NCP, condemns CA's
remark on AL question

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Citizen Party yesterday condemned Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus' remark that the government had no plans to ban the Awami League.

"When the trials for crimes committed by the Awami League, including the Pilkhana massacre, the Shapla Chhatar massacre, enforced disappearances, crossfires, electoral fraud, and the July killings, have made no visible progress, such a remark from a person holding a key position in the state is unacceptable," NCP Convener Nahid Islam said at a press briefing.

On Thursday, the chief adviser told the International Crisis Group that the interim government had no plan to ban the AL, but individuals within its leadership accused of crimes, including murder and crimes against humanity, will be tried in Bangladeshi courts.

Responding to a query, Nahid said the decision on elections or whether a party can conduct political activities is entirely a political matter.

"This decision lies solely with the government, political parties, and the people. The army or any state institution has no jurisdiction to comment, propose plans, or make decisions on this issue," he said.

He said such practices should not exist in Bangladesh.

"Political decisions should come from the political arena through democratic means, and we aim to move towards that democratic process," said the NCP chief.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



Rohingyas
are victims
of racial
discrimination

Says Prof Yunus

UNB, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus yesterday called for global action against racial injustice and highlighted the plight of the Rohingyas, who remain victims of racial discrimination and prolonged statelessness.

Since 2017, Bangladesh has sheltered over a million forcibly displaced Rohingyas, but their repatriation to Myanmar remains the only sustainable solution to this protracted crisis, he said in a message on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

DHAKA'S GROUNDWATER

Drying up alarmingly

Experts blame WASA's
impractical management

PINAKI ROY

The old channel of the Buriganga in the Vakurta area is now like a mere canal connecting the Dhaleshwari and the Turag, and dividing Savar and Keraniganj upazilas.

Despite being near so many water bodies, the residents of Vakurta are struggling to get water from their tube wells due to the fast-declining groundwater level.

They wonder whether it is the causal effect of the WASA's installation of a good number of deep tube wells in the area.

DESICCATED AQUIFERS OF DHAKA

- 70pc of water supply comes from groundwater
- 2,000 million litres of water extracted every day
- Groundwater up to 66m below surface in densely populated areas
- Groundwater level depleting by 1-1.5m every year
- By 2050, groundwater expected to fall to 100m

Don't try to
rehabilitate
allies of fallen
regime: Tarique

Fakhrul urges all to
act with caution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman has urged the interim government not to take any steps that would allow fugitive allies of the fallen regime to be rehabilitated in the state and politics.

"By turning minor issues into major ones in the country's political arena, doubts and suspicions have been created or are being created knowingly or unknowingly ...," Tarique said while addressing an iftar event virtually yesterday.

BNP organised the iftar event in honour of working professionals at the Ladies Club in the city's Eskaton.

The allies of the fallen autocrat still hold thousands of crores of taka looted from the state and the people. In



The presence of army personnel around the capital was noticeably high yesterday, with troops stationed at key intersections and checkpoints. The photo was taken in the Purana Paltan area.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

"All of us are facing the problem -- none can use their hand tube wells anymore," said Lokman Hossain, who runs a grocery shop on the bank of the Buriganga.

The tube well in Lokman's home, installed by his grandfather, is 200 feet deep. But these days, it cannot lift any groundwater for the family's consumption.

Lokman blames the WASA for their water crisis, saying the numerous deep tube wells installed by the authorities about a decade ago have desiccated the area.

To get any water from the ground, the residents have to install a powerful pump, which costs Tk 40,000 and is beyond the affordability of many in the area.

"We feel helpless," Lokman said, adding that they are getting their water supply through a pipe from their neighbour's home, who could afford to install a pump.

Lokman's neighbour Mamta Begum is more resentful. "WASA is taking water from our village for the city dwellers," she said.

It is the same scenario in Bauta village in Keraniganj.

The residents get water through their tube wells only in monsoon and nothing during the dry season from March to June, said Akhil Chandra Das, a local.

The problem persists in all villages in the area, including Vakurta, Baherchar, Battoli Bazar, Balughata and Bauta. Several lakh residents of Bhakurta and Tetuljhora unions in Savar and Taranagar union in Keraniganj are in the same boat.

As many as 20,000 hand-driven tube wells in the area have gone dry.

Dhaka WASA, however, denies drying up the grounds.

A total of 42 deep tube wells have been installed in the Vakurta area and 1,227 in Dhaka and its surrounding areas, said Abdul Kader, deputy chief of public relations at Dhaka WASA.

All those pumps are extracting water from the aquifer 400 to 1,200 feet deep, he said, adding that about 2,000 private deep tube wells are also in operation in the city.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1