

'Dec, June or March? Be specific'

Rizvi asks interim govt over polls date

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi yesterday said the interim government was creating uncertainty regarding the announcement of the national election date.

"There is a lot of confusion -- December, June, or March? Different times, different statements. There are similarities here with some of Sheikh Hasina's words. Why is this happening?" he questioned.

He made these remarks at an event at BNP's central office in Naya Paltan yesterday morning.

Rizvi said the government must announce a clear and specific date to ensure a fair electoral process.

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A narrow escape in Bangkok

Bangladeshi journalist and daughter survive earthquake



PORIMOL PALMA

"It all happened in about one and a half minutes. It was just like a movie.. how earthquakes are portrayed. Rupkotha and I experienced it live!"

Tanvir Sohel and his nine-year-old daughter narrowly escaped a potentially fatal incident in Bangkok when a powerful earthquake rocked Thailand and Myanmar, destroying buildings and killing more than 150 people in the two Southeast Asian countries.

Tanvir, chief news editor at Digital Media of independent24.tv, and his daughter Ariana Rupkotha were on the 24th floor of the 32-storey Bumrungrad International Hospital located in the Sukhumvit area of Bangkok, where at least 10 people died and a high-rise under construction collapsed.

Sohel, who travelled to Thailand on March 27, said he checked into the hospital for his daughter's treatment around 9:45am local time yesterday.

"We were almost done. We consulted the doctor and got some tests done on Ariana. Then, I had a plan to get a test for myself, and a nurse was taking me to a CT scan room on the 24th floor," Tanvir told The Daily Star last night over the phone, sharing his experience during the earthquake.

He said around 1:22pm he felt the building sway. At first, he thought he was feeling dizzy, but then



A severe gridlock on the Dhaka-Tangail Highway at the Chandra intersection in Gazipur disrupts the journey of thousands leaving Dhaka to celebrate Eid with their loved ones. With overcrowded buses and scarce tickets, many are forced to walk to their destinations, while others risk climbing onto trucks for a ride home. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

EID HOLIDAYS

Dengue surge feared as millions leave Dhaka

HELEMUL ALAM

As millions have started to leave Dhaka ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations, experts have raised concerns over a potential spike in dengue cases unless preventive measures are taken timely.

With government officials and employees set to enjoy an extended holiday spanning from March 26 till April 5, entomologists fear that empty homes and unchecked water sources may become breeding grounds for Aedes mosquitoes.

Prof Kabirul Bashar, an entomologist at Jahangirnagar University, advised city dwellers to take necessary precautions before leaving their homes.

"Residents should cover toilet commodes, be mindful of plant tubs, and ensure that any containers storing water are properly sealed," he said, warning that Aedes mosquitoes thrive in stagnant water.

He also suggested turning buckets and containers upside down to prevent water accumulation. "We are seeing a high number of mosquitoes in basements where stagnant water can be found due to leaks of pipes or from car washing. Residents should use bleaching powder or salt in these areas to curb mosquito breeding," he said.

Prof Bashar further advised homeowners to check their yards and rooftops for discarded containers that could collect rainwater.

He also urged people to inspect

their homes upon their return for potential breeding grounds and to open doors and windows to let mosquitoes out and flush toilet commodes, which can harbor Aedes larvae.

"If mosquitoes can breed during the vacation, they will become matured by the time residents return," he warned. The risk



- 1 Empty homes, stagnant water boost mosquito growth
- 2 Leaks, car wash water attract Aedes mosquitoes
- 3 Experts urge use of eco-friendly insecticides
- 4 Authorities improving efforts but need stronger measures
- 5 Even light rain can worsen the situation

increases significantly if there is rainfall during the holidays, he added.

Entomologist GM Saifur Rahman stressed the need for proactive measures. "Authorities should use BTI like insecticides to control Aedes mosquitoes as these are environmentally safe. However, their application remains

neglected," he said.

BTI is a naturally occurring soil bacterium used as a microbial insecticide to control mosquito larvae and other insects.

Saifur warned that even a little rain could trigger a surge in dengue cases.

"The first generation of mosquitoes maturing after rain helps in population growth. If the authorities take immediate steps to apply BTI early, we can prevent their spread," he said.

City corporations, which were uncoordinated last year, have shown better discipline this time, though on a small scale, he observed. He, however, stressed the need for local administration to stay vigilant and for mosquito control cells to be established nationwide.

"Pre-investigation is crucial to identify Aedes mosquito clusters. Once the first rains arrive, authorities must launch drives to destroy breeding sources and larvae. Early preventive measures are of utmost importance to keep the outbreak under control," Saifur added.

Md Emdadul Hoque, deputy chief health officer of Dhaka North City Corporation, said preparations are already in place ahead of the upcoming dengue season.

"Besides regular drives, our mosquito control workers will continue anti-mosquito operations during the Eid vacation," he said.

A Dhaka South City Corporation official echoed him.

'Make TNZ pay our wages'

RMG workers hold hunger protest

MD ABBAS and MASHFIQ MIZAN

Emotions ran high. Exhaustion was evident on their faces.

Yet, with clay pots symbolising empty plates in their households, garment workers from three factories under TNZ Group -- Apparel Plus Eco Ltd, TNZ Apparel Ltd, and Apparel Art Ltd -- took to Dhaka streets yesterday.

They staged a "Bhukha Michhil" (hunger procession), demanding three months' unpaid wages and Eid bonuses.

For five days, they had staged a sit-in at Shromo Bhaban (Department of Labour), but no government official had met them.

Desperate, the workers carried empty plates and placards bearing the message "Pay Our Wages," urging international brands to intervene.

One placard read, "Dear Zara, make TNZ pay our wages."

"Even a single jacket I make retails for more than my entire month's salary, yet we're not being paid for months," said garment worker Rina Akter.

RMG workers protesting for rights is nothing new, but many had hoped things would be different this time.

However, a placard reading, "What do you mean by a new political settlement if we have to take to the streets for arrears as before?" summed up how those hopes quickly turned into frustration.

"We've had no sleep, food, or showers for days. Our families are waiting for us. If we receive our wages and bonuses, we can return home and celebrate Eid," said Shefali Akhter, a worker at TNZ Group.

Rekha Akter Tinni and Md Shahin Alam echoed similar sentiments, saying they had exhausted their savings.

"If the factory does not pay our wages and Eid bonuses now, how will I return to my family? How will I face my children? What will I tell them if they ask for new clothes for Eid?" asked Tinni.

Many broke down in tears.

The hunger procession began at 4:00pm from Shromo Bhaban, moving through Paltan, circling Nightingale Junction, and returning.

Their slogans echoed through the streets

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'If there's no change, what's the purpose of sacrifices?'

Nahid urges all to unite for reforms

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Nahid Islam, convener of National Citizen Party, yesterday stressed the need for systemic reform and fundamental changes in the state to honour the sacrifices of July martyrs.

"People shed blood for reforms, and that is precisely why the country witnessed a mass uprising. If there is no change, what was the purpose of the sacrifices made by so many?" he said at an iftar virtually in Sirajganj.

Nahid said, "The kind of injustice, repression, and torture that has been going on in the last 15

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Swechchhasebak Dal leader caught with rice 'meant for the poor'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A leader of Swechchhasebak Dal was caught with 69 sacks of rice, reportedly meant for the poor under the Food-Friendly Programme at Begunbari Rajapur village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila early yesterday.

He was allegedly attempting to smuggle them out of the union.

The detainee, Aminul Islam, 40, is from Begunbari Sarcarpura village. He is the president of Begunbari union unit of Jatiyatatabadi Swechchhasebak Dal.

Quoting locals, Sub-inspector Sumon Roy of Thakurgaon Police Station said a group of villagers intercepted a tractor that Aminul was using to carry the sacks of rice around 2:00am.

However, Aminul's accomplices, including Wadud Hasan, president of BNP's Ward No. 9 unit, Nurul Amin, a secretary of the same unit, and Kamal Hossain, organising secretary of the union unit of Krishak Dal, managed to flee.

Meanwhile, Abdul Hamid, president of Thakurgaon upazila BNP, announced the expulsion of Aminul and Wadud through a Facebook post for violating organisational discipline.

Locals said incidents of rice theft meant for the poor are not new, but previous offenders faced no action due to their political influence.

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The slow death of DSAC's homeopathy clinics

DIPAN NANDY

The walls of the dilapidated single-storey building are crumbling, with plaster peeling away. The floor has worn down, exposing bricks and sand beneath. A rusted signboard, corroded in several places, hangs above the entrance. Inside, a doctor continues to treat patients and dispense medicine despite the deteriorating conditions.

This is the state of the Farashganj Homeopathy Charitable Dispensary, one of the homeopathy clinics run by the Dhaka South City Corporation, located at Dalpatti Mor in Sutrapur.

A visitor is met with a collection of old furniture -- an empty, dust-covered wooden showcase, four worn-out chairs, a table, a steel cabinet, and a single patient bench.

The cabinet holds DSAC provided medicines and essential documents.

Despite its dilapidated state, patients continue to visit the dispensary regularly.

"We once had a compounder and an assistant (aya), but now only a security guard remains. Once I retire, this clinic will close, as no new doctors will be

appointed," Dr Farzana Begum, the clinic's physician, told The Daily Star.

Farzana, who joined DSAC's health department in 2005 and was assigned to this dispensary, said she had treated and prescribed medicines for over 500 patients in just the first two months of this year.

"There is no publicity for these

charitable homeopathy centres. If there were, more patients would visit," she added.

Another DSAC homeopathy centre, Roknpur Homeopathy Charitable Dispensary, has changed its original location and now operates from the third floor of the DIT Market in Lakshimbazar, Old Dhaka.

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Finding this clinic amidst a cluster of coaching centres is a challenge in itself. Two more charitable homeopathy clinics exist under DSAC -- Katara Homeopathy Charitable Dispensary in Chawkbazar and Sat Shahid Homeopathy Charitable Dispensary in Lalbagh.

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