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Certain groups misrepresenting BNP's stance on reforms: Fakhrul

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir accused certain groups of misrepresenting the party's stance on reforms on social media.

"There is a deliberate campaign that the BNP wants the election before reforms, or the BNP is against reforms. This is misleading the public. We have always advocated reforms," he said.

"Many are misunderstanding our stance. We never said the election should come first, and then reforms. We have always maintained that a minimum level of reform is necessary to ensure a free and fair election."

While responding to a question during a meeting with local journalists at his residence in the Kalibari area of Thakurgaon town yesterday, Fakhrul emphasised three key areas for reforms: the electoral system, law enforcement, and the judiciary.

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A different kind of Eid for party leaders

Those of BNP, Jamaat, NCP in polls mode; AL men absent

STAR REPORT

This year's Eid-ul-Fitr saw a major political shift, with BNP and Jamaat leaders celebrating freely for the first time in 16 years, while those of the Awami League were not seen.

BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami leaders seized the Eid holidays to reconnect with voters and to organise mass-contact events.

Meanwhile, the newly formed National Citizen Party (NCP) made its presence felt as key leaders travelled to their regions to engage with the public. During the holidays, NCP leaders hosted iftar parties, visited local communities, and intensified outreach efforts.

The Awami League leaders, who had dominated these events for the past 16 years, were mostly in hiding or imprisoned following the July uprising that led to their government's ousting.

For example, former AL lawmaker and whip Iqbalur Rahim was a prominent figure at Dinajpur's largest Eidgah, Gor-e-Shahid Boromoydan. This year, however, he remained in hiding, a fate shared by many in the party, from central leadership to grassroots. On the other hand, BNP leaders said they could finally return to their constituencies and celebrate EID freely, without the threat of arrests and attacks.

BNP Joint Secretary General Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Annie, after Eid prayers at Laxmipur Sonamiya Eidgah Jame Masjid, told journalists: "For 17 years under the autocratic rule of Sheikh Hasina, we could not celebrate Eid in peace. Now, with the people's support, we can finally do so."

"I hope that through unity, we will be able to maintain this peaceful environment in the coming days," he said.



Empty boats are moored along the banks of the Buriganga in Keraniganj, as boatmen and their passengers, many of whom cross the river to go to work in the city, are enjoying the ongoing Eid holidays. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

In Shariatpur, a man was allegedly beaten to death in Bhedarganj upazila on Sunday night for asking two youths to stop smoking in public.

BNP 'failing to control its grassroots'
Says NCP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Citizen Party yesterday criticised the BNP for "failing to control its grassroots", resulting in factional clashes and attacks carried out on its rivals.

"We have been noticing that the BNP central leadership has no control at the local level," the NCP said in a statement.

"It's right that the central leaders frequently speak out against attacks for political reasons and expel disobedient and criminal activists, but violent activities continue.

"This is making the country's political situation confusing and unstable," said the NCP, urging the BNP central leaders to take effective measures against crime, extortion, and illegal grabbing.

The statement, signed by NCP Joint Member Secretary Saleh Uddin Sifat, came in the wake of an attack on Azizur Rahman Bachchu Mollah, the father of NCP Central Joint Convenor Mahbub Alam Mahir.

Azizur's hand was broken and he suffered

Aid groups seek access to quake victims

Myanmar junta fires warning shots at aid convoy; death toll rises to 2,886

REUTERS, Bangkok

Myanmar's junta said yesterday its troops fired warning shots at a Chinese Red Cross aid convoy, underlining the challenge of delivering relief amid a civil war as aid groups called for better access to help survivors of a devastating earthquake.

The military has struggled to run Myanmar following its coup against the elected civilian government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021, reducing the economy and basic services including healthcare to tatters after civil war broke out.

Junta spokesperson Zaw Min Tun said the Chinese Red Cross had not informed authorities it was in a conflict zone on Tuesday night, and a security team fired shots in the air after the convoy, which included local vehicles, failed to stop.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said the aid team and supplies were safe, and called on all parties in Myanmar to ensure the safety of rescuers.

"It's necessary to keep transportation routes for relief efforts open and unobstructed," Guo Jiakun told a press conference.

The firing came as the death toll from Friday's 7.7-magnitude quake rose to 2,886, with 4,639 injured, Myanmar state media said.

UN urges aid to survivors before monsoon hits

Death toll rises to 21 in Thailand

Junta announces temporary ceasefire

Meanwhile, the military has announced a temporary ceasefire in operations against armed opponents effective April 2 to April 22 following the earthquake, state-run MRTV said yesterday.

In neighbouring Thailand, the death toll from the quake rose to 21, with hundreds of buildings damaged. Rescuers kept searching for life in the rubble of a collapsed skyscraper under construction in the capital Bangkok, but acknowledged time was against them.

United Nations officials who surveyed earthquake damage in Myanmar urged the global community on Tuesday to ramp up aid before the looming monsoon season worsens already catastrophic conditions.

The rural parts of hard-hit Sagaing region were mostly under the control of armed resistance groups fighting the military government, the International Crisis Group said.

"They will be among the most challenging for aid agencies to reach, given regime restrictions, a complex configuration of local administrations and control by armed resistance groups, and the persistent conflict," it added in a statement.

Even before the quake, the ICG said, information had been hard to gather from such areas, because of a junta blackout of internet and mobile phone networks as part of the conflict.

YUNUS' COMMENT ON SEVEN SISTERS

'Made with honest intention'
Says CA's high representative

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka says Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's comment relating to the Northeastern states of India was made with honest intention, keeping in mind the potential of regional connectivity.

"He made the statement with honest intention. If a different interpretation is provided, we cannot prevent it," said Khalilur Rahman, chief adviser's high representative for the Rohingya issue and other priorities, at a media briefing yesterday when asked for comment as many Indian leaders have strongly reacted to the statement.

Addressing a discussion in Beijing on March 28, Yunus had tried to convince Chinese businesses to set up industries in Bangladesh and export to the rest of the world and even China by taking advantage of the country's seaway.

"Seven Sisters of India are a landlocked region -- they have no way to reach the ocean. We are the only guardian of the ocean for all of this region. This opens up a huge possibility," he told the roundtable.

Yunus also said Nepal and Bhutan have unlimited hydropower, which is a blessing for the region.

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Kazakhstan finds its 'largest' rare earths deposit



AFP, Almaty

Kazakhstan discovered its largest deposit of rare earth metals, containing around one million tonnes of the elements that are seen as vital for the future economy, the Central Asian country said yesterday.

Rare earths comprise 17 raw materials that are essential for the green energy transition and highly sought by the likes of China, Russia, the United States and Europe.

"As of today, this is the largest rare earths deposit" in Kazakhstan, a spokesperson for the industry ministry told AFP.

The deposit -- in central Kazakhstan's Karaganda region -- contains cerium, lanthanum, neodymium, and yttrium, they said.

The announcement of the find comes on the eve of the first EU-Central Asia summit, kicking off in Uzbekistan.



Workers wearing hazmat suits spray disinfectant to sterilise the rubble of a collapsed building in Mandalay yesterday, five days after a major earthquake struck central Myanmar.

Three killed in mob beatings

STAR REPORT

At least three people were killed in mob beatings in the capital and Narshingdi between Sunday and Eid day.

In Dhaka, an Uber driver was killed on suspicion of being a mugger early Sunday.

The victim was identified as Riyad.

According to his wife Farzana Akter, Riyad was taking a passenger from Pallabi around 2:00am on Sunday when another car hit his vehicle from behind. As he got out of the car to seek compensation for the damage to his vehicle, the passengers of the other car shouted "mugger", prompting locals to beat him up.

She claimed that police took Riyad to several hospitals, but due to the holidays, he was not given proper treatment. He was eventually taken to Kurmitola General Hospital, where he was declared dead. Farzana was with the police throughout the ordeal.

"My husband was not a mugger. He bought his car for Tk 16 lakh just a couple of months ago... But they beat him to death [on suspicion of being a mugger]. Would a mugger buy a car for Tk 16 lakh?" she asked.

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Workers wearing hazmat suits spray disinfectant to sterilise the rubble of a collapsed building in Mandalay yesterday, five days after a major earthquake struck central Myanmar.

PHOTO: AFP

Houses of ex-AL MP, Sylhet mayor vandalised

UNB, Sylhet

The residences of former Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) Mayor Anwaruzzaman Chowdhury and former Awami League MP for Moulvibazar 2 (Kulaura) Shahul Alam Chowdhury Nadel were attacked and vandalised yesterday.

Syed Anisur Rahman, officer-in-charge (OC) of Sylhet Airport Police Station, said a group of students and members of the public carried out the attack on Nadel's residence, causing minor damage.

"Police have visited the scene," he added.

According to locals, a group of people took out a procession and arrived at Nadel's residence in the Housing Estate area after sunset. They stormed the house, damaging CCTV cameras and a laptop.

Meanwhile, around 7:30pm, another attack took place at Anwaruzzaman Chowdhury's house in the Pathantula area, where attackers vandalised furniture and other household items.

Jalalabad Police Station OC Harunur Rashid said police responded quickly to reach the scene.

"A group of enraged students and members of the public carried out the attack," he added.