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Hefazat seeks withdrawal of all 322 cases against it

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hefazat-e-Islam has demanded the immediate withdrawal of all cases filed against its leaders and activists over the past decade, warning of serious consequences if the government fails to respond.

According to Hefazat, a total of 322 cases were filed against the group, including 73 in Dhaka alone. Around 7,000 individuals were named as accused, while nearly 300,000 remain unnamed in these cases.

The cases stem mainly from two waves of unrest—first, the deadly crackdown on May 5, 2013, when Hefazat members gathered at Shapla Chattar in Dhaka's Motijheel, and second, the violence that broke out during protests around Baitul Mukarram National Mosque on March 26, 2021.

Hefazat Joint Secretary General Maulana Azizul Haque Islambadi told The Daily Star yesterday that although applications had been submitted for the withdrawal of

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As far as the eye can see, countless neatly arranged sandbags line the bank of the Padma in Rajshahi city. The sandbags are to be dumped into the river as a means to protect the embankment and safeguard the city from potential flooding in the monsoon season. The photo was taken yesterday at the T dam area.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

EU for fair polls, has no say on timing: envoy

Says trial of rights violators should be fair, transparent

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The upcoming national election in Bangladesh should be free, fair and credible, said EU envoy to Bangladesh, adding that the bloc has no say on when the election should be held.

"We are not pressuring anyone to hold elections on a specific date," Michael Miller said during a discussion organised by the Diplomatic Correspondents Association, Bangladesh (DCAB) at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

He also said that the EU wants all perpetrators of human rights violations, before and during the July uprising, to be held accountable through a fair and transparent process.

Asked about the EU's position on election timing, given the differing opinions among political parties, Miller said it is up to the people of Bangladesh to decide.

Miller said the EU fully supports the ambitious reform agenda of the interim government, saying it will be "a very significant milestone" in Bangladesh's democratic transition.

"However, as the European Union, we do not have an opinion on the timeline," he said.

He, however, noted that carrying out the reforms would be time-consuming.

"We do think that there needs to be sufficient time to implement reforms under this interim government. So ... a bit of space needs to exist," he added.



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Italy wants to hire more people from Bangladesh

Visiting minister tells chief adviser

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Italy has expressed willingness to hire more people from Bangladesh and put measures in place to ensure their safe migration.

"We have a great Bangladeshi community in Italy. We are really satisfied with them. They are young and hard-working and have integrated into the Italian society perfectly. We need more of them," said visiting Italian Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi.

The Italian minister called on the Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus at the State Guest House Jamuna yesterday and discussed issues of mutual interest, including safe and legal migration of Bangladeshi, combating human trafficking, and trade and investment, according to the Chief Adviser's Press Wing.

Matteo told the chief adviser that Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni is expected to visit Bangladesh sometime

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Pakistan conducts 2nd missile test

India orders civil defence drills; UN chief urges countries to 'step back from the brink of war'

AGENCIES

Pakistan yesterday conducted a second missile test and India ordered civil defence drills in an escalating stand off over contested Kashmir that the UN said has brought the two nations to the brink of war.

New Delhi blames Islamabad for backing an attack on tourists last month -- the deadliest against civilians on the Indian-administered side of the Himalayan territory for years -- sparking a series of heated threats and diplomatic tit for tat measures.

Pakistan rejects the accusations, and the two sides have exchanged nightly gunfire since April 24 along the de facto border in Kashmir, the militarised Line of Control, according to the Indian army.

UN chief Antonio Guterres yesterday said relations between Pakistan and India had reached a "boiling point", warning that "now is the time for maximum restraint and stepping back from the brink" of war.

The Pakistani military said it had tested a surface-to-surface missile with a range of 120 kilometres (75 miles), a launch "aimed at ensuring the operational readiness of troops".

The missile test comes as Iran's top diplomat

Abbas Araghchi was in Islamabad for talks with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif yesterday, ahead of a visit to India on Thursday.

Tehran has offered to mediate between the two nuclear-armed neighbours, and Araghchi will be the first senior foreign diplomat to visit both countries since the April 22 attack sent relations into a tailspin.

"We will spare no effort to help de-escalate the situation between the two countries," Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baqaei said.

Pakistan announced a previous test on Saturday of a surface-to-surface missile with a range of 450 kilometres -- about the distance from the Pakistan border to New Delhi.

It has not said where either of the tests took place.

Sharif, who cancelled a visit to Malaysia scheduled for Friday, said the launch

"clearly shows that Pakistan's defence is in strong hands".

Indian information ministry officials said that several civil defence "mock drills" would take place on Wednesday, preparing people to "protect themselves in the event of a hostile attack".

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said India will "identify, track and punish every

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Waiver that stole justice

Family of Shapla Chattar victim silenced by intimidation for 12 yrs

ZYMA ISLAM

"They made us sign a waiver stating that we would never file any case before they handed over my brother's body."



This is how Faria Sonomi Vasha, a college student at the time, recalls her encounter with police when she went to the morgue to claim the body of her brother after he was killed at Shapla Chattar in the capital's Motijheel on this very day, 12 years ago.

During the Shapla Chattar massacre on May 5-6, 2013, law enforcers violently dispersed thousands of Hefazat-e-Islam protesters in Motijheel amid a media blackout.

Rights organisation Odhikar put the death toll at 61.

Vasha's brother, AKM Rehan Ahsan, was a student of computer science and engineering

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Chinmoy shown arrested in Saiful murder case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Ex ISKCON leader Chinmoy Krishna Das Brahmachari was shown arrested yesterday in a case filed over the murder of Saiful Islam Alif, a lawyer who was hacked to death outside the Chattogram Court Building on November 26 last year.

Chattogram Metropolitan Magistrate SM Alauddin issued the order following an application from the investigation officer, said Additional Deputy Commissioner (Prosecution) Mafiz Uddin.



The virtual hearing took place around 9:30am due to security concerns.

Assistant Public Prosecutor Advocate Raihanul Wazed Chowdhury said the petition was filed after Chinmoy's involvement in the murder was uncovered during the investigation.

The development came after the High Court granted bail to Chinmoy last Wednesday in a seditious case over the alleged desecration of the national flag during a rally in the port city's New Market area.

However, a chamber judge of the Appellate Division stayed the bail following a state petition, which was later withdrawn on a suo motu

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Israel cabinet okays plan for Gaza 'conquest'

AGENCIES

Israel's security cabinet approved the expansion of military operations in Gaza including the "conquest" of the Palestinian territory, an official said yesterday, after the army called up tens of thousands of reservists for the offensive.

A report by Israel's public broadcaster Kan, citing officials with knowledge of the details, said the new plan was gradual and would take months, with forces focusing first on one area of the battered enclave.

Such a timeline could leave the door open for a ceasefire and hostage release deal talks ahead of a visit by US President Donald Trump to the region next week, according to security cabinet minister Zeev Elkin.

"There is still a window of opportunity until President Trump concludes his visit to the Middle East, if Hamas understands we are serious," Elkin told Kan yesterday.

Meanwhile, Gaza's civil defence agency said two Israeli air strikes killed at least 19 people in the war-ravaged Palestinian territory's north early yesterday, reports AFP.

"Our teams found 15 martyrs and 10 wounded, mostly children and women, after an Israeli strike on three apartments" northwest of Gaza City, said the agency's spokesman, Mahmud Bassal. Four other people were killed and four wounded in a strike on a house in Beit Lahiya, north of Gaza City, he told AFP.

Already in control of around a third of Gaza's territory, Israel resumed ground operations in March after the



Algae bloom has covered a segment of Hatirjheel lake near the Tejgaon area. Due to discharge of sewage and other pollutants the water now emits foul smell, making life difficult for residents living near the lake. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Bangladeshi man killed in BSF firing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A Bangladeshi man was killed and an Indian national injured after Border Security Force (BSF) shot them near the Madla border in Brahmanbaria's Kasba upazila on Sunday night.

The deceased, identified as Md Sakib, 25, was from a cluster village near Madla border under Bayek union of the upazila, said Kasba Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mohammad Abdul Kader.

The incident occurred around 11:45pm near the main border pillar 2045/17-S, when they were trying to smuggle a motorcycle from India, said police, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), and local administration officials.

Lt Col Md Ziaur Rahman, commanding officer of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) Battalion-60, confirmed the incident and said a flag meeting was held with BSF officials in the morning.

However, Ziaur did not provide any details of the decisions taken at the flag meeting.

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