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BNP at 47: Caught between prospects and perils

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP has survived Sheikh Hasina's 15-year rule, during which over a million cases were filed against its leaders and activists for trying to launch street agitations demanding elections under a non-partisan government. Thousands were jailed, including Chairperson Khaleda Zia and other top leaders.

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader had once mocked that the BNP would become another "Muslim League". That prediction has not come true. Instead, after the unprecedented July uprising toppled Hasina's government, with AL top brass fleeing abroad and the party's activities banned, the BNP has emerged as the country's largest political force.

As the party marks its 47th founding anniversary today, it eyes the prospect of returning to power while navigating perils posed by its unruly rank and file.

Extortion, land grabbing, and other criminal activities by its leaders and activists have continued unabated since the August 5 changeover last year, undermining acting chairman Tarique Rahman's efforts to reshape the organisation.

Though many see the election, slated for February next year, as a formality for BNP's return to office, analysts say the party faces its toughest test: misdeeds by its grassroots, organisational weaknesses, and other parties pushing for proportional representation under the July Charter.

WEAKNESSES, INFIGHTING

Analysts warn that BNP's organisational weakness, infighting, and a

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PHOTO: REUTERS

Smoke rises from Gaza following an explosion, as seen from the Israeli side of the border yesterday. Palestinians continue to flee northern Gaza City and surrounding areas as Israel intensifies its military offensive aimed at seizing control of the city.



Evil forces attempting to foil polls Says Tarique

UNB, Dhaka

BNP acting chairman Tarique Rahman yesterday said the "unholy efforts of evil forces" to create the ground for thwarting the next parliamentary elections are gradually becoming visible.

"Almost a year ago, I said invisible forces were working, centring the upcoming election. Now people have started noticing that the ill efforts are slowly becoming visible in recent times in preparing the ground to destroy the

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Pratirodh Parshad pledges women-friendly campus

DU CORRESPONDENT

Gonotantrik Chhatra Jote-backed Pratirodh Parshad will solve accommodation issues, prioritise research, and ensure a women-friendly campus if elected in the Dhaka University Central Students' Union polls, the left-leaning panel said as they unveiled their manifesto yesterday at Madhur Canteen.

The panel's general secretary candidate Meghmallar Bosu read out the 18-point manifesto, which also highlighted issues like structural reform to strengthen Ducsu and guaranteeing the rights of all ethnic groups.

Pratirodh Parshad also called on the authorities to specify central and hall union election dates in the academic calendar.

In its manifesto, it pledged to amend the Dhaka University Order-1973 and make it mandatory for two elected student representatives to be present to fulfil the quorum of senate meetings. It also proposed 10 elected representatives to the senate, instead of the current five.

Removing an elected representative from Ducsu or hall unions would require a referendum, the manifesto reads.

The panel also promised to empower students by introducing a teacher evaluation system and increasing the number of scholarships.

According to the manifesto, the panel demanded 10 percent of the university budget for Ducsu, while also promising research assistantships and fellowships for the students.

Regarding accommodation, it promised seats for students from their first year under the administration's supervision.

Meanwhile, to ensure a women-friendly campus, it promised to work to establish cybersecurity measures, and freedom of movement and of expression for female students, adding that the university's sexual harassment prevention cell must be made fully functional.

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ATTACK ON NUR Govt must be held accountable Says youth and sports adviser



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Youth and Sports Adviser Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain yesterday said the government cannot avoid responsibility in the attack on Gono Odhikar Parishad President Nurul Haque Nur.

"Even during the Awami League regime, we didn't see such an incident occur.... Whoever carried out the attack, the interim government bears responsibility as it is in power. It must ensure justice so that no one dares to commit such heinous crimes again," he told reporters after visiting Nur

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Sexual abuse rampant in Rohingya camps

Says ActionAid study

AFP, Dhaka

Sexual harassment remains the most pressing concern for Rohingya women and adolescents living in squalid refugee camps in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar, according to a study released yesterday.

Cox's Bazar is home to around a million largely Muslim Rohingya minority, fleeing a brutal military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine state.

ActionAid -- one of the largest non-profits operating in the camps since the influx in 2017 -- conducted 66 in-depth interviews, revealing dire challenges faced by women and adolescents.

"Sexual harassment is the biggest concern," said Tamazer Ahmed, policy, research and advocacy manager at ActionAid.

"Early marriage and polygamy have become normalised, and 93 percent of interviewees remained outside the scope of legal assistance."

The participants said the violence was meted out not only by men known to their families but also members of the Armed Police Battalion (APBN) -- a security force deployed by the Bangladesh government.

Ahmed said women in the camps described a shift in the nature of threats over the years, from lack of basic amenities in the early days to more systemic abuses now.

"Now, Rohingya women and adolescents often fall victim to molestation, rape, trafficking, poverty, educational exclusion, and even death," Ahmed said.

Girls aged between 6 and 15 were particularly vulnerable, with most incidents of sexual harassment occurring near latrines and bathing points.

They were also vulnerable at distribution centres, hospitals, schools and madrassas, border zones and even within relatives' homes.

"Patriarchy runs deep in the Rohingya community," said Farah Kabir, executive director at ActionAid. "But the views of the Rohingya women, mostly aged 16 to 30 years, were central to the research."

The women surveyed urged authorities to improve lighting in public areas, replace APBN officers with army personnel, engage men in prevention efforts, and expand access to education and livelihoods.

Trust in law enforcement and religious leaders remained low, with many women saying they had almost nowhere to turn when facing abuse.

Kausar Sikdar, commanding officer of APBN, however said they were not aware of any such allegations against the force.

Bangladesh has recorded a surge of refugees from Myanmar since early 2024, with 150,000 more Rohingyas arriving.

Early marriage and polygamy have become normalised, and 93 percent of interviewees remained outside the scope of legal assistance.

Tamazer Ahmed, policy research and advocacy manager at ActionAid

Journo's body found in the Rupsha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police recovered the body of Wahiduzzaman Bulu, Khulna correspondent of Dainik Sangbad Protidin, from beneath the Rupsha bridge in Khulna yesterday evening.

The body of the 60-year-old journalist, a permanent member of Khulna Press Club and also affiliated with the Khulna Union of Journalists, was found near pillar No 2 of the bridge around 7:00pm, said Inspector Abul Khayer, in-charge of Rupsha river police outpost.

Police confirmed his identity with the help of his national ID card. He was the son of late Akbar Ali of Shibbari area in Khulna city.

Sub-Inspector Rahim of Labanchara police outpost said locals first spotted the body near the river and informed police. Later, a team, led by SI Bellah Hossain of the Rupsha river police outpost, recovered the body.

Quoting a vendor, police said he saw him jump into the river.

Family sources said Bulu had been mentally distressed since his wife, Eliza Parveen Liza, went missing on May 11 this year. She had been suffering from mental health issues, while the couple, who had

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Country now has 12.63cr voters

EC mulls accessibility plans for elderly, those with disabilities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The total number of voters in the country now stands at 126,307,504. Of them, 64,004,455 are male, 62,058,819 are female, and 1,230 are from the hijra community, Election Commission Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed told journalists at the EC headquarters in the capital yesterday.

He said that as of June 25, a total of 4,571,216 new voters were added to the draft voter list, while 2,132,590 names of deceased individuals were removed. Between then and yesterday, another 137,642 voters were added at the field level, while 1,038 deceased voters were removed.

Earlier, following the March 2 update of the draft list this year, the number of voters stood at 123,732,274.

The EC secretary added that another updated list will be prepared by October 31, including all those who will turn 18 by then. "We will release another updated list

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Traffic policeman capturing photos of drivers of battery-run rickshaws with his phone yesterday before taking their vehicles to the impound for illegal operation on thoroughfares. The photo was taken in front of the police box on Manik Mia Avenue.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Mob beats man to death accusing him of theft

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A man was beaten to death by a mob on theft allegations in Nepaldighi village of Natore Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The victim, Md Nabir Ali, 50, originally from Rajshahi's Bagha upazila, had been living in Islabari village of Natore Sadar for a long time, said police.

Police and locals said there was a theft incident in one of the houses in Nepaldighi on Saturday night. Spotting Nabir in the area, locals shouted "thief", detained him and beat him to death.

Md Mahabubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Natore Sadar Police Station, said angry locals beat Nabir mercilessly on theft suspicion. "He died on the spot around 2:00am today [yesterday]. On information, a police team went to the spot, recovered the body and sent it to Natore General Hospital for autopsy.

"We are not sure if he was indeed involved in the theft. We're investigating the incident."