

Malaysia to introduce 10-year term limit for PM

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's Anwar Ibrahim said yesterday he would introduce legislation this year to limit the prime minister's term to a maximum 10 years, fulfilling one of his campaign promises.

Speaking to ministers and civil servants after a cabinet meeting, Anwar cautioned against clinging to power and reminded them that "everyone has a term limit" without exception.

"We will table a bill to limit the term of the prime minister, not exceeding 10 years or two full terms," Anwar said in a special New Year's announcement.

After serving the term, "it is better for us to hand it over to the next generation", he added.

There is currently no term limit and former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad was in power for 22 years during his first tenure until he stepped down in 2003.

Mahathir then came out of retirement to lead a disparate opposition coalition that ousted the graft-tainted government of then prime minister Najib Razak in the 2018 elections.



A child suffering from cold-related illnesses and admitted to Bangladesh Shishu Hospital is being taken for medical tests yesterday. The child has been in the hospital for six days. Hospitals across the country are witnessing a surge in child patients suffering from pneumonia, cold, cough, and other respiratory diseases.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

2 shipbreaking workers found dead in Sitakunda

Witness cites beaching accident, yard owner alleges robbery attempt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The body of a shipbreaking worker and severed parts of another were recovered from the coast near a shipbreaking yard in Chattogram's Sitakunda yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Md Saiful Islam, 38, whose body was found severely dismembered, and Abdul Khalek Ratan, 34, both from Gaibandha and workers of KR Ship Recycling Yard.

Contacted by The Daily Star, Al Mamun, senior station officer of the Chattogram Fire Service and Civil Defence's Kumira Station, said, "The bodies were found lying on the seashore near the passenger jetty in Kumira and were recovered between 7:30am and 9:30am yesterday."

"We could recover one intact body and the severed hands, legs and head of another worker, and later handed them over to police."

Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, a co-worker of the deceased and a witness, told this correspondent that he, Ratan, Saiful, and another worker were on a boat on the left side of the yard to secure the anchor of a ship that was about to be beached. "Although the ship was supposed to be beached on the right side, it often veered to the left.... When the ship was coming towards us, we were about to jump into the water to save our lives, but the propeller hit me and another."

"We were thrown quite far into the sea and got stuck in the water near the jetty for around two hours before others came to rescue us. I later learned that Ratan's body and Saiful's body parts were recovered."

SEE PAGE 8 COL 3

Cold wave taking a toll on children, the elderly

FROM PAGE 1

BMD recorded the day's lowest temperature at 8.4°C in Ishwardi, Pabna, while the highest was 26.7°C in Teknaf, Cox's Bazar. In Dhaka, the maximum was 19.7°C and the minimum 13.2°C.

Local correspondents reported that the sun was absent in Ishwardi and adjoining areas throughout the day. The severe cold has disrupted lives and livelihoods, with many residents venturing outdoors only for emergencies. In Pabna, day labourers and homeless people were seen burning wood along roadsides to keep warm.

"I usually earn Tk 400-500 by pedalling from dawn to noon. Today, I made only Tk 150," said Abdul Latif, a rickshaw puller in Ishwardi

municipality.

He added that despite burning scrap paper to warm himself, his hands felt "frozen" and he struggled to steer his rickshaw.

COLD-RELATED ILLNESSES

As the cold wave sweeps parts of the country, the number of patients suffering from cold-related illnesses has risen sharply, particularly among children and the elderly.

DGHS data show hospital admissions for acute respiratory infections (ARI) continue to climb: 1,102 patients were admitted in the 24 hours until 8:00am yesterday, compared to 1,031 on Sunday and 632 on December 27.

Meanwhile, 2,220 patients were hospitalised with diarrhoea in the same 24-hour period, down from

2,332 on Sunday and 2,676 on December 29.

Since November 1, hospitals have admitted 1.02 lakh patients—30,657 with ARI and 71,406 with diarrhoea. Forty-eight people have died during this period.

Prof Mahbulul Hoque, director of Shishu Hospital, said 30-40 percent of patients at the hospital's outpatient department are suffering from cold-related illnesses. "Every day, some 1,000 to 1,400 people seek treatment at the outpatient department. Some, mainly with respiratory issues, require admission."

He warned that severe cold and dense fog are especially harmful to children and the elderly. "If possible, they should stay indoors,

wear masks, and cover their heads when outside. For common colds, guardians can use nasal drops and certain antihistamines. In cases of breathing problems, patients must be taken to hospital. Antibiotics should not be used without a doctor's consultation."

Meanwhile, the advisory committee on law and order yesterday urged authorities to take steps to ensure road safety amid the cold wave.

Drivers have been asked to remain cautious, as foggy conditions on highways have significantly reduced visibility.

Transport owners and workers have been directed to enforce safe driving practices during this period.

FROM PAGE 1

The party has asked multiple leaders to collect and submit nomination papers for single seats in a number of constituencies.

Several others, including JaSaD, Ganosamhati Andolon, Basad, and AB Party, nominated between three and six women each.

Even parties born out of mass movements with strong female participation showed limited inclusion. The NCP, formed by leaders of the July uprising, nominated three women among its 44 aspirants.

The Representation of the People Order (RPO), 1972, requires parties to reserve at least 33 percent of committee posts for women, including at the central level.

Yet almost all parties have failed to meet this obligation. In 2021, the Election Commission extended the deadline to 2030.

Munira Khan, president of the Fair Election Monitoring Alliance, called the situation "deeply frustrating".

"Women contribute significantly to the economy and make up

half of the population, yet their representation in parliamentary nominations is negligible," she said.

"We shout about democracy all the time, but this picture of internal democracy within political parties is profoundly disappointing," she added, questioning whether parties truly enforce rules mandating women's inclusion in their structures.

Shireen Huq, chief of the Women's Affairs Reform Commission, said she was "disappointed but not surprised" by the low level of women's representation.

"This scenario is a manifestation of a male-dominated political tradition and culture," she said.

Anticipating such an outcome, Huq said the commission had proposed a 50-50 model of representation, under which each constituency would have both a general seat and a reserved seat for women.

The proposal would expand parliament to 600 members, with women contesting the reserved seats against women and being elected through direct votes, she added.

'At least now my son knows where his father rests'

FROM PAGE 1

for testing, which began on December 7 and continued till December 27 with the help of the United Nations Human Rights Office, Dhaka Medical College, and both local and international forensic experts.

Samples were also taken from families of martyrs who went missing during the uprising.

The other identified victims are Asadullah, 31; Parvez Bepari, 23; Rafikul Islam, 52; Sohel Rana, 38; Rafikul Islam, 29; Faisal Sarker, 26; and Kabil Hossain, 58.

At the programme, the grave numbers were handed over to the grieving family members, many of whom broke down in tears. Some took fistfuls of earth and wept in the

memory of their loved ones.

Martyr Faisal had gone missing from the capital's Abdullahpur on July 19, 2024. His younger brother Fahad Sarkar said, "For a year and a half, we searched for him relentlessly -- in hospital morgues, police stations, jails -- but never found any clue. We were then informed that he was buried in Rayerbazar."

"We would visit the graveyard sometimes to pray for his soul, but always felt a deep sadness because we didn't know where he was laid to rest."

Expressing gratitude to the CID and the government's efforts in identifying Faisal's body in grave no 35, he said, "After being informed, five of us from the family came here

around 6:30am to offer prayers at grave no 35. It brought us some sense of peace."

Liberation War Affairs Adviser Faruk-e-Azam, Local Government Adviser Adilur Rahman Khan, Chief Adviser's Special Assistant (Health Ministry) Prof Syedur Rahman, and CID Chief Md Shibgat Ullah were present at the programme.

Stating that the government is committed to returning the bodies of all martyrs to their families, Faruk-e-Azam said, "After a long wait, we have successfully identified eight unidentified martyrs. Their families can finally know where their loved ones are laid to rest, bringing mental relief to them and the nation."

Adilur said the sacrifices made

during the July uprising would remain etched in the nation's history, and restoring the dignity of unidentified martyrs is the state's moral responsibility. He added that the state undertook a science-based process to ensure that exhumation and DNA sample collection were done with integrity and transparency.

Prof Syedur said the identification would assist the judicial process related to the uprising and stand as a strong example of Bangladesh's forensic capacity.

CID Chief Shibgat said that identifying these eight bodies has provided a measure of closure and accountability.

Bangladesh's existence rooted in Liberation War

FROM PAGE 1

state and wanted to work in that direction.

Tarique made the remarks during a meeting at the Gulshan chairperson's office with leaders of the left-wing alliance "Democratic United Front", a confirmation made by Razequzzaman Ratan, assistant general secretary of Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BSD), in a press release.

Leaders also discussed the country's overall political and law and order, as well as various issues related to the upcoming national election.

In the meeting, BNP and front leaders said they believe that there will be ideological differences and differing opinions in politics, but they agree on ensuring the freedom to express constructive criticism and opinions.

"Both leaders agree that in the past, critics were tortured by the previous government by labelling them as traitors and against development. They agree that no one should be able to do this in future," read the release.

The front leaders told Tarique, "After the mass uprising of 2024, an opportunity has been created to bring the country back to the path of the Liberation War. But the anti-independence group is pushing for extreme communalism in the country. They want to erase the Liberation War and take the country back to 1947."

The Democratic United Front delegation included CPB Presidium member Mujahidul Islam Selim,

President Kazi Sajjad Jahir Chandan, General Secretary Abdullah Al Kafi Ratan, among others.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir was also present at the meeting.

Later, a four-member delegation of Ganosamhati Andolon, led by its Chief Coordinator Zonayed Saki, also met Tarique and discussed various issues related to politics and the upcoming election.

Nagorik Oikya President Mahmudur Rahman Manna, Amar Bangladesh (AB) Party Chairman Mojibur Rahman Monju, Labour Party Chairman Mostafizur Rahman Iran, and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam leader Junaid Al Habib, and among others, also held a meeting with the BNP acting chairman separately.

VISIT

Tarique is likely to visit his ancestral home and constituency in Bogura next Sunday, January 11.

He is expected to leave for Bogura from his Gulshan residence in the morning. Upon his arrival, he will attend a doa mahfil for late BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia and later visit the house of Abu Sayed, who was killed during the mass uprising, in Rangpur. Rezaul Karim Badsha, Bogura BNP president, told this newspaper.

This will be Tarique's first visit to his ancestral home in Bogura after 19 years, the BNP leader added.

Tarique's father, BNP founder and former president Ziaur Rahman, has his ancestral home in Gabtali upazila of the district.

Party leaders said this would be

his first trip outside Dhaka after returning home from London. Tarique last visited Bogura in 2006.

In the upcoming national election, Tarique will contest from the Bogura-6 (Sadar) for the first time, in addition to Dhaka-17.

From 1991 to 2008, Khaleda ran in every national election from the Bogura-7 as the party's candidate and won each election by a large margin.

BNP leader Rezaul said Tarique would travel by road from Bogura to Rangpur, where he would visit the grave of Abu Sayed.

CONDOLENCE MESSAGE

A condolence message sent by Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus over the death of Khaleda was handed over to Tarique.

Chief Adviser's Private Secretary Shazeeb M Khairul Islam delivered the message to Tarique at the BNP chairperson's Gulshan office.

In the message, Yunus expressed deep sorrow and grief at the death of Khaleda, describing her as a symbol of the country's democratic movement.

Yesterday marked the final day of BNP's seven-day mourning following the death of party chief.

BNP senior leader Abdul Moyeen Khan described Khaleda as an exceptional leader whose name is closely linked with Bangladesh's political journey, democratic movement, and the long struggle to establish people's voting and fundamental rights.

He told reporters after visiting her grave at Zia Udyan in the capital.

Bangladesh suspends

FROM PAGE 1

Betar and various TV channels -- noted that no reason was communicated for the decision behind Mustafizur's exclusion, adding that it had caused distress among the people of Bangladesh.

"In this situation, it is hereby instructed that all broadcasts and telecasts of IPL matches and related programmes be suspended until further instructions are issued," the statement added.

The directive comes a day after the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) decided not to send the national team to India for the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup, set to be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka from February 7, considering the safety and security of the Bangladesh contingent in India and having heeded the advice of the Bangladesh government.

The BCB also requested the game's governing body, the International Cricket Council (ICC), to consider relocating Bangladesh's matches outside India. In an attempt to accommodate the request, the ICC, under chairman Jay Shah, is already drafting a revised schedule, as per a report by The Indian Express yesterday.

Mustafizur's exclusion from the IPL caused widespread criticism across borders. Youth and Sports Adviser Asif Nazrul condemned the move, which he said was on political grounds, while Cultural

Adviser Mostofa Sarwar Farooki slammed Mustafizur's omission as "disgraceful". Information and Broadcasting Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan described the incident as an "unfortunate" one, saying "politics was brought into the game."

Indian politician and current Member of Parliament Shashi Tharoor termed this decision by BCCI an "unnecessary politicisation of a sporting matter," according to a report by The Indian Express yesterday. Earlier, Tharoor had also called out the BCCI for "deplorably" forcing Mustafizur's removal, reiterating that politics should not be dragged into sports.

Mustafizur fetched INR 9.20 crore at last month's mini-auction, making him the most expensive Bangladeshi player in IPL history. The removal of Bangladesh's only representative in this edition of the glamorous T20 league caused an immediate uproar among cricket-crazy Bangladeshi netizens.

Bangladesh are scheduled to take on the West Indies on the opening day of the World Cup at Kolkata's Eden Gardens -- also KKR's home ground, which had received threats of disruption from protesters if Mustafizur featured in the IPL.

The Tigers are also scheduled to play their next two games at the same venue on February 9 and 14 before moving to Mumbai for their final group-stage match on February 17.

Philippines arrests ex-general who called for president's ouster

AFP, Manila

A former Philippine air force general accused of encouraging the military to abandon President Ferdinand Marcos was arrested on a charge of sedition yesterday at Manila's international airport.

Romeo Poquiz, who had publicly called for the armed forces to "withdraw their support" from Marcos amid a burgeoning corruption scandal, was detained by Philippine national police after returning from a holiday in Thailand, interior department secretary Jonvic Remulla told AFP.

"He was arrested for the charge of

sedition in connection with his recent statements. He was arrested upon arrival from Bangkok this morning," Remulla said in a text message.

Speaking at a news conference, acting police chief Jose Nartatez said Poquiz had been detained on the basis of a December 5 warrant.

The 67-year-old ex-general confirmed his arrest in a post on Facebook.

"I was arrested by the (Philippine National Police Criminal Investigation and Detection Group) at the Airport Terminal ... Long live the Filipino!" Poquiz said, adding he was being taken to Manila's Camp Crame police headquarters.