

Political killings continue as govt action falls short

Alleges Fakhrul

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir has voiced dissatisfaction with the current law and order situation in Bangladesh, ahead of the national election.



Speaking to journalists at his Kalibari residence in Thakurgaon yesterday morning, Fakhrul said, "People are eager for election. I can't say that I'm satisfied with the law and order situation right now. The rate at which political leaders and activists are being killed, including several of our party members, is alarming."

"We have strongly condemned these acts and expressed our outrage, yet the government has taken no effective measures to tackle the situation. We hope the government will assume a more responsible role and take proactive steps to prevent such incidents from recurring," he added.

Fakhrul also described Tarique Rahman's upcoming visit as a personal

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Amid an acute household gas crisis in Dhaka, people get their kerosene-run stoves repaired at Karwan Bazar in Dhaka yesterday, as many families are forced to fall back on alternative cooking options due to near-zero pipeline gas supply in several areas.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Cold grips country, disrupts life in north

Panchagarh records lowest temperature at 6.8 degrees Celsius

STAR REPORT

The ongoing cold spell continues to sweep across the country, disrupting normal life, particularly in the northern region.

The lowest temperature was recorded at 6.8 degrees Celsius in the northernmost district of Panchagarh yesterday morning, according to the Tetulia Weather Observatory Centre.

The inactivity of monsoon winds is mainly responsible for the narrow gap between daytime and night-time temperatures, said Jitendranath Ray, assistant officer of the centre.

He added that the colder conditions are likely to persist throughout the month.

"Mild to moderate cold wave is sweeping over Rangpur and Rajshahi divisions and the districts of Narsingdi, Jashore, Chuadanga and Kushtia and it may continue," said a weather bulletin issued by the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD). "Moderate to thick fog may occur over the river basins of the country and light to moderate fog may occur elsewhere during mid-night to morning," the bulletin released last evening for the next 24 hours said.

People are struggling to cope with the bone-chilling cold.

Rafiqul Islam, 60, of the Dokropara area in Panchagarh

town, said daily activities have become increasingly difficult as the cold intensifies.

Shariful Islam, 46, a rickshaw-van puller from the Sahapara area under Panchagarh's Boda upazila, said pulling his rickshaw was harder than the previous day due to unusually cold winds.

Habibur Rahman, 60, a rickshaw puller from Mandolpara of Thakurgaon Sadar, said his income drops during cold spells as people venture out only for essential activities.

Jomir Uddin, 55, of Yakubpur village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila, who works in a potato field, said bone-chilling winds have made it difficult to continue farming.

Meanwhile, people in char areas are facing severe hardship during the freezing cold.

Nazrul Islam, 65, a farmer from the Char Korai Barishal area of Kurigram's Chilmari upazila, said, "Our house is on a river bank. Cold wind rushes inside with a whistling sound. It is almost impossible to go outside. We cannot sleep at night."

Shafiar Rahman, 60, a day labourer from Char Gobordhan in Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila, said, "We are suffering from different cold-related diseases. Children are more vulnerable."

Sirajul Islam, additional director of the Rangpur

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Pipeline leak cuts gas supply to near zero in parts of Dhaka

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Amid an ongoing shortage of household gas supply over the past couple of months, a leak in a pipeline under the Turag River has reduced supply to almost zero in parts of the capital.

Many households have shifted to induction cookers or bottled liquefied petroleum gas, but expressed frustration at having to pay for pipeline gas despite being unable to use it even for an hour.

Nur Jahan, a resident of the Indira Road area, said the gas crisis has persisted for several months.

"Until a few weeks ago, a small amount of gas used to be available after 10:00pm, which allowed us to cook. But since the severe winter set in around mid-December, there has been no gas at all," she said.

Due to the shortage, she bought an induction cooker and used the gas stove only occasionally. "Now it is not used at all. We are paying the gas bill for nothing," she added.

The Daily Star spoke to at least 10 residents in Mohammadpur, Dhanmondi, Indira Road, Agargaon, Mirpur, Banasree, Green Road and Puran Dhaka, and found a similar situation.

An Agargaon resident, Mohammed Ahsanul Kabir, shared a worse experience, saying he has been using LPG cylinders since November. He

said he was able to use only two cylinders before prices increased without notice.

"I needed to buy a 12kg cylinder two days ago at Tk 2,200, which was supposed to be sold at Tk 1,306. I had to pay more than the government-

Gas shortages persist in the area year-round but have worsened over the past week. There had been no gas at all until noon yesterday, even though it was a holiday.

JAHANGIR HOSSAIN BABU
A resident of Bakshibazar Lane

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NUR JAHAN

A resident of Indira Road

fixed rate and also pay for pipeline gas," he said. "The struggle has become a part of life for a long time," he added.

Aminul Islam, a resident of Mirpur-2, said he is a kidney patient and cannot manage without hot water, making the gas shortage particularly

distressing.

Jahangir Hossain Babu, a resident of Bakshibazar Lane, said gas shortages persist in the area year-round but have worsened over the past week. "There had been no gas at all until noon yesterday, even though it was a holiday," he said.

"We need to spend at least three to four hours cooking," he added.

The authorities have acknowledged the crisis, saying it may take a couple of days to ease the situation, although a significant improvement in supply is unlikely in the near term.

Contacted, Titas Gas Managing Director Shahnewaz Parvez said severe winter leads to hydrate formation inside gas pipelines. "It is somewhat like ice. As a result, gas pressure usually drops during winter," he said.

"You also know that gas supply to residential areas has already been reduced compared to industrial and commercial users for months."

He said the situation was further worsened by a leak in a pipeline under the Turag River.

"A cargo trawler punctured the pipeline while dropping anchor four days ago. We do not have our own equipment to repair such damage under a river. So, we had to fix the leak by installing clamps with the

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EC suspends polls activities in Pabna-1, 2

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission yesterday halted election activities in Pabna-1 and Pabna-2 constituencies due to boundary-related issues.

The decision was made following a Supreme Court order. Election Commissioner Abdur Rahmani Masud said yesterday, "According to the directive of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, election activities in Pabna-1 and Pabna-2 will be suspended until a further court order."

However, the EC dismissed media reports claiming that it has decided to "postpone election in the two seats", saying that the media has misattributed statements and the commission will make the final decision after receiving the court order.

Talking to The Daily Star, Ruhul Amin Mallik, EC director (public relations), asked the media to refrain from publishing such reports.

He added that a commissioner's remarks were misreported as an EC decision, noting that a court order has been issued.

When asked for clarification, Commissioner Masud said the suspension is valid but not indefinite. It will remain in place only until the court issues a further order.

He added that the EC will make the final decision after reviewing the court order.

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Man, son among 4 killed as bike, bus catch fire after collision

Six others die in other road accidents



PHOTO: FIRE SERVICE AND CIVIL DEFENCE

Firefighters in rescue operation after a bus rammed into the rear of a stationary truck on the Dhaka-Mawa Expressway in Sirajdikhan upazila of Munshiganj early yesterday.

STAR REPORT

Ten people, including a man and his son, were killed and at least 53 others injured in road accidents in three districts yesterday and the day before, according to reports from our correspondents.

At least four people were burnt to death after a bus and a motorcycle caught fire following a collision in Daudkandi upazila of Cumilla yesterday.

The accident occurred around 12:40pm on the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway in the Baniyapara area, said Daudkandi Highway Police Station Officer-in-Charge Iqbal Bahar Majumder.

Police identified three of the deceased as motorcycle rider Md Shamim, 41, his six-year-old son Nadim, both of Pennai Gouripur area of Daudkandi, and 18-month-old Hossain from Sonargaon upazila of Narayanganj.

The identity of another victim, a woman, could not be confirmed immediately.

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Winter chill boosts warm-clothes sales on Ctg footpaths

ARUN BIKASH DEY

With the winter chill biting hard, Chattogram's footpaths have transformed into bustling hubs for winter commerce.

People from low- and middle-income groups are increasingly seen gathering around street vendors to buy affordable attire to shield themselves from the cold.

According to Bashir Ahmed, deputy forecasting officer of Chattogram Met Office, the highest temperature in Chattogram was 25.6 degrees Celsius while the lowest temperature was 13.5 degrees Celsius yesterday.

Hawkers have strategically occupied key locations across the port city, including the New Market area, Jamal Khan, Chawkbazar Gulzar intersection, Sholoshahar Gate No 2, Kazir Dewri, Anderkilla, Laldighi, Station Road, Bahaddarhat, Muradpur, EPZ, and Agrabad.

Beyond these traditional hubs, isolated



makeshift shops have also mushroomed in residential areas like Dewan Bazar.

Driven by significantly lower prices compared to high-end shopping malls, sales at these makeshift stalls are gaining momentum.

Street vendors on Jamal Khan Road showcased a wide array of knitwear, attracting a large number of customers, primarily parents waiting for their children at the nearby Dr Khastagir Government Girls' High School.

Among them, Deepa Saha, who was selecting a sweater for her daughter, said, "The demand is high, and vendors are asking for steeper prices than usual."

At the Cinema Palace intersection, vendor Alamgir Hossain was busy folding blankets. He shared that his stock consists of blankets imported from China. "As the chill intensified, customers started asking for blankets, so I have stocked my stall accordingly," he said.

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A man squeezes through a narrow strip of footpath in the capital's Tejgaon as parked trucks occupy the adjacent road and a major portion of the walkway, forcing pedestrians to navigate an unsafe and congested space. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON