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No congratulatory banners, billboards in the capital PM orders their removal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has ordered the removal of banners and billboards across Dhaka displaying congratulatory messages featuring his photograph.



Additional Press Secretary Atiqur Rahman Ruman said while leaving his Gulshan residence yesterday morning, the prime minister noticed a banner with his photograph in front of Police Plaza at Hatirjheel and immediately instructed that it be taken down.

"It was removed right away," Ruman said.

He said the premier also directed authorities to remove similar billboards across the capital where various companies had displayed congratulatory advertisements carrying his image.

Earlier in the day, Bangladesh Coast Guard Director General Rear Admiral Md Ziaul Haq paid a courtesy call on the prime minister at the Secretariat.

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A child smiles in her mother's arms as she helps her browse through the children's books available at a stall at the Ekushey Book Fair. Although attendance at this year's Boi Mela has been sparse so far, the joy it brings to those who have visited the fair is immense. The photo was taken at Suhrawardy Udyan recently.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

'I asked for Ziaul to be restrained'

Iqbal Karim tells ICT-1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former army chief Gen (ret'd) Iqbal Karim Bhuiyan yesterday told International Crimes Tribunal-1 that he had received reports of misconduct by several officers while serving as chief of general staff during the 2007-2009 army-backed government, which he described as a "pseudo-military rule".

He said after informing the then army chief Gen (ret'd) Moeen U Ahmed about the alleged wrongdoing, he was advised to stay away from the matter and was later transferred to the Staff College.

Iqbal made the remarks during cross examination by Mohammad Abul Hasan, counsel for Maj Gen (relieved) Ziaul Ahsan, who is accused of crimes against humanity for allegedly abducting and extrajudicially killing 104 people while serving in Rab between 2010 and 2013.

Iqbal named Brig Gen Amin, Brig Gen Bari, Lt Col Saiful Islam Joardar, Lt Col Mehedi and some officers of the 46 Infantry Brigade as allegedly involved in misconduct. He said he did not know whether any action was taken.

Denying allegations of shielding wrongdoing, Iqbal said he had verbally instructed that "crossfire" incidents be stopped and rejected the defence claim that he had failed to inform Gen Moeen.

When Justice Md Shofiqul Alam Mahmood asked whether he could evade responsibility for the period, Iqbal

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MARCH 12 FIRST JS SESSION BNP sets March 6-7 orientation for MPs, ministers

SAJJAD HOSSAIN

The BNP is likely to hold a two day programme on March 6 and 7 for elected members of parliament and ministers of the 13th National Parliament, focusing on parliamentary rules, legislative procedures and governance priorities.

Six days before the start of the first session of the 13th Jatiya Sangsad, the party, which formed the government by securing 209 seats in parliament, has organised the initiative. The sessions will bring together ministers, state ministers, advisers and ruling party lawmakers at the BNP chairperson's office in Gulshan.



Prime Minister and BNP Chairperson Tarique Rahman is scheduled to inaugurate the programme and address participants on the party's policy direction and expectations from its parliamentary team.

According to party insiders, the orientation aims to ensure that lawmakers are fully prepared to carry out their legislative responsibilities and align their work with the party's election commitments.

During the programme, the prime minister is expected to stress the importance of implementing the party's manifesto in a structured and measurable manner.

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February marked by polls-related violence

10 killed, 1,933 injured: HRSS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

February witnessed a wave of political and electoral violence surrounding the 13th National Parliamentary Election, leaving at least 10 people dead and 1,933 injured, according to the monthly monitoring report of Human Rights Support Society (HRSS) revealed yesterday.

The human rights body compiled the data based on reports from 16 national media outlets and its own sources.

According to the HRSS report, at least 346 incidents of political violence took place in February. Over half of these - 191 incidents - were clashes between BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami activists, which led to one death and 998 injuries.

Meanwhile, internal conflicts within the BNP accounted for 95 incidents, leading to eight deaths and 599 injuries.

The report also noted that following the elections, leaders and activists of the Awami League, whose activities are currently banned, reopened or reoccupied their offices in at least 30 districts, triggering further clashes.

Election-related violence specifically accounted for 285 incidents in February, claiming five lives and injuring 1,555 others. A portion of this violence involved attacks by supporters of winning candidates on houses

and businesses of rival supporters.

The report highlighted a particularly gruesome incident in Noakhali's Hatia, where a 32-year-old mother of three was raped and assaulted in her home for voting for a particular candidate.

Journalists faced hostility, with 63 media workers attacked in 28 incidents during the month. One of the severe cases involved Miraj Uddin, a BTV journalist, who was injured severely in a machete attack in Hatia.

Additionally, at least 14 attacks were carried out against religious minorities, including vandalism and arson at a temple in Narayanganj's Rupganj.

HRSS described the situation regarding violence against women and children as "highly alarming". The report recorded at least 45 incidents of rape involving women and children, with over half (24) of the victims being minors. The gang rapes and subsequent murders of teenagers in Narsingdi and Pabna highlighted a deep societal moral decay, the report noted.

Furthermore, HRSS documented 19 deaths from mob beatings in February. Border violence also claimed casualties, with six people injured in BSF attacks and a child killed by Arakan Army gunfire in Teknaf. In addition, 12 people, including former water resources minister Ramesh Chandra Sen, died in prison custody, it said.

A celebration of colour and music Hindu community celebrates Dol Purnima across the country



RAKIB MADBER

Dol Purnima, a major religious festival of the Hindu community, was celebrated across the country yesterday with colourful festivities and prayers.

Also known as Doljatra or Holi, the festival began in the morning with prayers at temples, followed by devotees - from children to elderly - smearing each other with abir (traditional powdered colours) and turning neighbourhoods and temple premises into vibrant spaces of colour and music.

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Dhaka Night Market season 2 begins March 5



CITY DESK

Dhaka Night Market is set to return with Season 2 from March 5 to 7 at the United Convention Centre, beside CenterPoint Mall in the Airport area of the capital.

The event is jointly organised by United Commercial Bank, Nibedita and The Daily Star.

The market will remain open daily from 2:00pm till Sehri.

Organisers said more than 100 lifestyle brands and over 20 food stalls will participate in this year's edition. The event will also feature 10 or more speciality brands, with over 25,000 visitors expected across the three days.

In addition to shopping and food, the event will include a kids' play zone, a magic show, raffle draws, and other entertainment activities.

Organisers said there will also be digital marketing campaigns, along with celebrity and influencer engagements.

Entry to the event will be open to all.



This stretch of the road opposite Kamalapur Railway Station in Dhaka has remained dug up for over a month, causing inconvenience to commuters and pedestrians. Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd is repairing drainage lines damaged during its construction, but work has progressed slowly. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Govt mulls 7 to 10-day Eid holidays

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is considering extending the public holiday for Eid-ul-Fitr, which is now five days.

If the holiday is extended by one day before Eid, the government holiday will be seven days. On the other hand, if two days are added after Eid, the vacation could extend up to 10 days.

Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury, secretary general of the Jatri Kalyan Samity (Passenger Welfare Association), told The Daily Star that the decision to extend the holidays is positive. Extending the holiday before Eid makes the journey more comfortable; therefore, it would be better if the government considers this aspect, he said.

At the same time, he emphasised that if the holiday is extended before Eid, the salaries and allowances of workers must be ensured before the break. Otherwise, millions of workers will not be able to go home.

This year, government employees are going to get a five-day holiday from March 19 to March 23 for Eid, which is subject to the moon sighting.

There is a public holiday for the holy Shabe-Qadr, which falls on March 17. If a holiday is announced for March 18, it would result in a seven-day break from March 17 to March 23.

Besides, March 26 (Thursday) is Independence Day, which is a public holiday. If the two days prior - March 24 and 25 - are declared holidays, government employees could enjoy a 10-day vacation from March

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