



Prime Minister Tarique Rahman addresses ruling party lawmakers at the first meeting of the BNP parliamentary party at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday. PHOTO: PID

'Careful what you say'

PM tells MPs, ministers during parliamentary party meeting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday urged ministers and ruling party lawmakers to exercise restraint in their conduct and public remarks, warning that careless statements or behaviour could undermine the government's message at a politically sensitive moment.

Speaking at the first meeting of the BNP parliamentary party at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, Tarique told ministers and members of parliament to remain disciplined in both their speech and actions, particularly when dealing with the media.

He also directed ministers and lawmakers to maintain office hours, follow traffic rules while travelling and practise austerity in their daily conduct.

"Everyone has a specific responsibility — no one should make comments beyond

their assigned duties," he told lawmakers, according to participants at the meeting.

The meeting, which began at 11:15am and continued until 1:00pm, brought together 209 BNP lawmakers. It marked the first formal gathering of the ruling party's legislators since the new parliament convened.

The session opened with a welcome speech by Chief Whip Nurul Islam Moni, after which senior leaders addressed the gathering. Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, the BNP secretary general who now serves as local government minister, spoke alongside Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed.

The prime minister used the meeting to outline the government's priorities for the coming months, focusing on public welfare programmes and administrative discipline within the cabinet and the parliament.

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Take oath for Constitution Reform Council

Jamaat ameer urges BNP MPs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A day before the first session of the 13th Jatiya Sangsad begins, Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman has urged the BNP MPs to take oath as members of the Constitution Reform Council.

Shafiqur, also the opposition leader, said his party does not want a deputy speaker's post that has been offered "in fragments". Instead, his party wants opposition-entitled positions based on the July reform proposals.

When asked whether the opposition would boycott the president's speech in parliament today, he did not give a direct answer, saying that the opposition's stance would be "visible" during the parliamentary session.

The Jamaat chief made the remarks while briefing reporters after a meeting of the parliamentary committee of the opposition alliance at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday. Elected members of parliament from the

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Jamaat chief Shafiqur Rahman presides over a meeting of the parliamentary committee of the opposition alliance at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban. PHOTO: PID

High chicken price hurting low-income families

SUKANTA HALDER

The price of broiler chicken, a primary protein source for low-income people, has risen in the capital's markets due to alleged supply shortages, intensifying consumer hardship amid soaring inflation.

The demand for poultry surged ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr, the largest religious festival for Muslims, while market supply fell short, according to traders.

Broiler chicken yesterday sold for Tk 210 to Tk 220 per kilogram, up from Tk 165 to Tk 170 a kg a week ago, according to the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh. A quarter dozen eggs sold for Tk 36 to Tk 40, up from Tk 32 a week ago.

The higher prices of broiler chicken and eggs come at a time when overall inflation has risen to its highest level in ten months. In February, inflation climbed to 9.13 percent, up from 8.58 percent the previous month, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

The prices of chicken may rise further as Eid approaches, said Bashir Sheikh, a retail trader in Kawran Bazar.

Over the past week, wholesale prices have risen by Tk 40 per kilogram, and farmers attribute the increase to higher costs of day-old chicks and feed, said Mohammad Soheli, a wholesale trader in Kaptan Bazar.

A few days ago, a demand-supply gap pushed up wholesale egg prices, with 100 eggs costing Tk 800, said Mohammad Amanat Ullah, a wholesaler and former president of the Tejgaon Egg

Merchants' Association. However, the price has started to decline, he said, adding that 100 eggs were selling for Tk 750 yesterday. Suddenly, the price of day-old chicks



increased to Tk 80 to Tk 90 from Tk 20 to Tk 25 each, said Akram Hossain, a farmer in the Kalma area in Savar.

After that, no chicks were stocked, because it is not possible to run the business by buying chicks at such a high price, he said.

"I am completely idle this Eid season," he said, adding that it is becoming difficult to manage his household expenses.

The day-old chick prices were abruptly increased from Tk 30 to Tk 45 to Tk 90 to Tk 95 ahead of Ramadan and Eid, as a result of which production costs have risen, said Sumon Howlader,

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'Get ready for \$200 a barrel'

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began alongside Israel nearly two weeks ago.

But there has been no let-up on the ground, nor any sign ships can safely sail through the strait, where a fifth of the world's oil has been blockaded behind a narrow channel along the Iranian coast — the worst disruption to energy supplies since the oil shocks of the 1970s.

"Get ready for oil to be \$200 a barrel, because the oil price depends on regional security, which you have destabilised," Ebrahim Zolfagari, spokesperson for Iran's military command, said in remarks addressed to the United States.

After the offices of a bank in Tehran were hit overnight, Zolfagari also said Iran would respond by attacking banks that do business with the US or Israel. People across the Middle East should stay 1,000 metres from banks, he added.

Iran has said it will not allow oil through the strait until US-Israeli attacks cease and has ruled out negotiations. Trump has threatened to hit Iran "twenty times harder" if it blockades the strait, but US officials have not disclosed

Mojtaba Khamenei had been lightly injured early in the war when airstrikes killed his father, mother, wife and a son. He has not appeared in public or issued any direct message since the war began. A source also said Israel believed he had been lightly hurt.

The Iranian military said it had launched missiles at a US base in northern Iraq, the US naval headquarters for the Middle East in Bahrain, and targets in central Israel. Explosions rang out in Bahrain, while in Dubai, four people were injured when two drones crashed near the airport. Loud explosions were also heard in Doha.

Saudi Arabia said it had intercepted a wave of seven drones heading toward a strategic oil field.

According to AFP, at least 25 Iranian attacks have targeted US sites or locations housing US military personnel in the Middle East since the start of the war.

Of these attacks, recorded between February 28 and March 11 at 1500 GMT, four targeted US embassies or consulates in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq.

ship Express Rome and the Thai bulk carrier Mayuree Naree because they had entered the strait "after ignoring the warnings of the IRGC naval forces".

Thailand's navy said the Mayuree Naree was attacked while transiting the strait. Oman's navy rescued 20 crew members, while efforts were underway to find three more. Pictures shared by the Thai navy showed black smoke pouring from the vessel.

Earlier, the Japan-flagged container ship ONE Majesty sustained minor damage from an unknown projectile 25 nautical miles (46 km) northwest of Ras Al Khaimah in the United Arab Emirates, two maritime security firms said.

Iran's military operational command yesterday declared on state television that any vessel belonging to the US, Israel or their allies would be considered a legitimate target.

At least 14 ships have been hit in the region since the war began on February 28.

Analysts say a prolonged closure of the strait, which also carries a third of the fertilizer used in global food production,

missiles, sending Israelis to shelters.

Israel also launched a barrage on Beirut aimed at rooting out the Iran-backed group Hezbollah, which has fired into Israel from Lebanon in solidarity with Tehran.

More than 1,300 Iranian civilians have been killed since the US and Israeli airstrikes began on February 28, according to Iran's UN ambassador Amir Sa'ed Iravani. Scores have also been killed in Israeli attacks on Lebanon.

Iranian strikes on Israel have killed at least 11 people, while two Israeli soldiers have died in Lebanon. Washington says seven US soldiers have been killed and around 140 wounded.

On the diplomatic front, Russia said it has been in constant contact with the Iranian leadership and is willing to contribute to efforts to stabilise the region.

Spain, meanwhile, permanently withdrew its ambassador to Israel on Tuesday as a diplomatic standoff deepened between the two countries over Spain's opposition to the US-Israeli attacks on Iran.

In Italy, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni delivered her strongest criticism yet of the US-Israeli war on Iran, describing it as part of a growing and dangerous trend of interventions "outside the scope of international law".

Her remarks to parliament came after repeated accusations from the opposition that her right-wing government had been too soft toward its allies. Most other European nations, with the notable exception of Spain, have avoided direct criticism of the US and Israeli attacks, largely calling for restraint.

Israel's Foreign Minister Gideon Saar urged the UN Security Council to designate Iran's Revolutionary Guards a "terrorist organisation".

Meanwhile, the EU approved new sanctions on 19 Iranian officials and entities, its foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said, citing "serious human rights violations" during Tehran's deadly crackdown on mass protests.

Two held for raping college girl on launch

STAR REPORT

Police have arrested two men on charges of raping a college girl on a launch on Sunday as she was travelling from Noakhali to Dhaka.

The accused are Sakib Uddin, 26, and Nuruzzaman Mithu, 32. Both of them are residents of Noakhali's Hatia upazila.

They were arrested in the capital's Mirpur area early Tuesday, said Moshikul Alam, inspector (investigation) of Dhaka's Kotwali Police Station yesterday.

Mithu has already made a confessional statement before court, and Sakib is now on a five-day remand, he said.

Earlier on Monday evening, the victim's brother filed the case with the police station, accusing the duo, said the police officer.

The girl was provided with necessary treatment, and her medical test was completed at the One-Stop Crisis Centre (OCC) at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said the police inspector.

[Our correspondent from Noakhali contributed to this report.]

With high hopes

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FIRST SITTING

Nurul said the maiden sitting will begin with the Speaker's chair remaining vacant briefly, as there is currently no Speaker or deputy speaker in office.

Leader of the House Prime Minister Tarique Rahman will propose the name of a senior member to preside over the sitting temporarily. After it is seconded by another MP, the nominated member will chair the session during which the speaker and deputy speaker will be elected, Nurul said.

Usually, the outgoing Speaker or deputy speaker presides over the first meeting of a new parliament. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Speaker of the 12th parliament, resigned in September 2024 and has not appeared publicly since and deputy speaker Shamsul Haque Tuku is in prison after being arrested in a murder case linked to the July uprising.

Nurul said the BNP Parliamentary Party has entrusted Tarique with nominating the candidates for Speaker and deputy speaker.

After the election, the two will be sworn in by the president, and the new Speaker will then preside over the House.

The parliament's Business Advisory Committee will also be formed during the first sitting, with the Speaker as its head. The committee will determine the duration of the inaugural session and the parliamentary agenda.

Condolence motions will be placed in memory of three-time prime minister and former BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia, those who made the supreme sacrifice during the July mass uprising, and other eminent personalities from home and abroad.

The law minister will present the 133 ordinances issued during the interim government. A "special committee" comprising members from treasury and opposition benches will be formed to scrutinise them, the chief whip said.

"The committee will decide which ordinances will remain in force and which will lapse. We will try to pass the necessary ordinances by April 12," he added.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin is scheduled to address the session. The day's sitting will be adjourned after his speech.

REFORM COUNCIL UNCERTAIN

Under the July charter order, members of the 13th parliament were expected to perform a dual role, serve as lawmakers and as members of a Constitution Reform Council to deal with 48 constitutional provisions outlined in the July charter within 180 working days.

For this purpose, MPs were required to take two separate oaths: one as members of parliament and another as members of the council.

However, the future of the council remains uncertain. Nurul said the council is not recognised in the constitution, which is why the BNP MPs did not take oath as its members.

A decision on the matter will be made once the council is incorporated into the constitution, he added.

The proposal to form the council faced a setback when BNP lawmakers

took oath as MPs but declined to be sworn in as council members. In contrast, MPs from Jamaat-e-Islami and allied opposition parties have taken both oaths.

EXPECTATIONS

Prof Al Masud Hasanuzzaman of Jahangirnagar University's government and politics department said many hope the stagnation and failures of past parliaments will not be repeated.

"The treasury bench and the opposition bench must play their respective roles," he said.

He said opposition parties have already indicated they want to make the parliament constructive, adding that the proposal to offer the deputy speaker's post to the opposition is a positive gesture from the BNP.

To make parliament effective and strengthen the legislative process, he said, every bill must undergo proper scrutiny and debate.

He hoped that the culture of boycotting parliament, the absence of the opposition leaders, and the use of "unparliamentary language" would come to an end.

Despite lawmaking being one of parliament's core responsibilities, lawmakers have often shown limited interest or exposed a lack of skills or knowledge required for meaningful legislative deliberation.

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) found that in the 11th parliament, only 16.7 percent of total proceedings time was devoted to lawmaking. The 10th parliament spent 12 percent of its time on legislative affairs, while the 9th devoted just 8 percent.

BOYCOTTS

Bangladesh's parliamentary history has also been marked by frequent boycotts.

The Awami League boycotted 34 percent of sittings in the fifth parliament, BNP 43 percent in the seventh, Awami League 60 percent in the eighth, and BNP 82 percent in the ninth.

Opposition leaders skipped 70 percent of working days in the fifth parliament, 93 percent in the seventh, 88 percent in the eighth, 97.6 percent in the ninth, 41 percent in the 10th, and 80 percent in the 11th.

The culture of boycotting parliament declined significantly in the 10th, 11th, and 12th parliaments, which were formed through the controversial elections of 2014, 2018, and 2024.

The 10th parliament set a rare precedent when three opposition MPs from the Jatiya Party simultaneously held cabinet positions. The party played only a limited role as an opposition in the following two parliaments.

Prof Nizam Ahmed, an expert on parliamentary affairs, said he remains cautiously optimistic about the new House.

Many MPs, he noted, are professionals rather than businessmen, which could give them an advantage in parliamentary work.

"From the party's side, there also appears to be a serious effort to prepare and groom them and build a disciplined team ready for the responsibilities ahead," he said.



A fireball rises from the site of an Israeli air strike that targeted an area in Beirut's southern suburbs early yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

any military plan to reopen it.

A senior Israeli official told Reuters Israeli leaders now privately accept that Iran's ruling system could survive the war. Two other Israeli officials said there was no sign Washington was close to ending the campaign.

Meanwhile, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said its 32 member countries had unanimously voted to release 400 million barrels of oil, describing it as the "largest ever" release.

The IEA said the emergency stocks would be made available to the market over a "timeframe that is appropriate to the national circumstances" of each member country.

It is the sixth time the IEA has approved a coordinated release of oil stocks, having previously done so in 1991, 2005, 2011, and twice in 2022.

In the latest public display of defiance, huge crowds of Iranians took to the streets yesterday for the funerals of top commanders killed in airstrikes. They carried caaskets and brandished flags and portraits of slain supreme leader Ali Khamenei and his son and successor, Mojtaba.

An Iranian official told Reuters

The other 21 Iranian missiles or drone attacks targeted 13 different military sites housing American personnel. These included the Prince Sultan Air Base in Saudi Arabia and Erbil airport in Iraq, which houses a US base. Both were attacked at least four times.

The Al-Udeid Air Base in Qatar and Al Dhafra Air Base in the United Arab Emirates were each targeted at least twice.

The count does not include seven attacks observed or claimed by Iran against radars or US THAAD missile defence systems operated either by the US or Gulf states.

AFP was able to confirm damage after 12 strikes targeted US-linked military sites by analysing satellite images, the most recent dating from March 5, before US providers of high-resolution imagery imposed restrictions on availability in order to protect allies.

Meanwhile, nearly 30 attacks have targeted energy infrastructure in the Middle East between the start of the conflict and March 11, more than half of which were carried out by Tehran.

Meanwhile, Iran yesterday said it had struck the Liberian-flagged container

would have a devastating impact on the world economy, particularly in Asia and Europe.

On Tuesday, the Pentagon said US forces had carried out strikes destroying 16 mine-laying vessels that could have been used to block the strait.

Oil prices, which briefly surged to nearly \$120 a barrel on Monday, have since settled around \$90, suggesting investors are betting Trump will be able to halt the war and reopen the strait soon.

But that prospect appears unlikely. Israel's Defence Minister Israel Katz said the operation "will continue without any time limit, as long as required, until we achieve all objectives and win the campaign."

The longer the war continues, the greater the risk to the global economy. If it ends with Iran's clerical system intact, Tehran is certain to declare victory.

Iran's police chief Ahmadreza Radan said anyone taking to the streets would be treated "as an enemy, not a protester. All our security forces have their fingers on the trigger."

In Israel, explosions rang out before dawn as air defences intercepted