

No masks, gas balloons, vuvuzelas Govt issues directives for Pahela Baishakh celebrations

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Wearing masks in the Baishakhi Shobhajatra will be barred, while sky lanterns, fireworks, gas balloons, and vuvuzelas will remain banned nationwide as the government tightens security for Pahela Baishakh celebrations this year.

All programmes across the country will also have to end by 6:00pm, and no new visitors will be allowed into major venues after 5:00pm, under a set of directives issued at a law and order meeting held at the home ministry conference room at the Secretariat on April 8.

The meeting, chaired by Senior Secretary Monjur Morshed Chowdhury, decided on the measures to ensure peaceful celebrations of Bangla New Year 1433 as well as the new year festivals of the Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Garo, and other ethnic communities.

Security will be especially tight around Dhaka University's Faculty of Fine Arts and the Baishakhi Shobhajatra, one of the main attractions of the celebrations

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Customers queue up with their vehicles for over 12 hours in the capital's Asad Gate area amid uncertainty over fuel availability as supplies run out. *Inset*, the station stands deserted after exhausting its stock. The photos were taken yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

'BNP hasn't learned from the past'

Badiul Alam slams party for repealing key ordinances

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The way the BNP government is repealing laws related to transparency, accountability, and protection of rights shows it has not learned from the past, said Shujon Secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar yesterday.

He was speaking at a discussion, titled "Citizens' Thoughts and Challenges Regarding Ordinances on Protection of Human Rights and an Independent Judiciary", organised by Human Rights Support Society at the Jatiya Press Club.

Badiul, former chief of the Election Reform Commission, questioned why the BNP government is repealing such laws and whether this reflects the "curse" of a more than two-thirds majority in parliament.

Referring to the repeal of ordinances on Supreme Court judge appointments and the Supreme Court Secretariat, he said, "We do not understand why BNP did this."

Recalling 2018, he said he had seen "thousands of BNP leaders and activists waiting at the High Court seeking bail."

Despite facing repression, they could

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Lack of plan stalled reforms under interim govt

Says Debapriya Bhattacharya

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

During the immediate past interim government, many important economic reforms faded out, as it had no economic philosophy or planning, said eminent economist Debapriya Bhattacharya yesterday.

The interim government was legitimate, but it was not elected and lacked both economic philosophy and planning, he said.

Debapriya, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), stressed that the continuation of reforms, especially economic reforms, is very important for development.

For instance, just after Bangladesh's independence in 1971, the then finance minister, Tajuddin Ahmad, carried out economic reforms.

Similarly, reforms were implemented during President Ziaur Rahman's regime. The then finance minister M Saifur Rahman introduced two major reforms: the floating exchange rate of the local currency against the US dollar and the VAT system.

"Sometimes even economists hesitate to acknowledge such important reforms carried out by Saifur Rahman as both a political leader and finance minister," Debapriya Bhattacharya added.

But reforms during the interim government faded out, despite many initiatives being taken, he said. It undertook several initiatives but failed to implement them.

Debapriya Bhattacharya was speaking at the agreement signing ceremony between the Economic Reporters' Forum (ERF) and Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh, held at the ERF office in Dhaka.

Under the agreement, ERF and Citizen's Platform for SDGs, Bangladesh will jointly work to train journalists both in Dhaka and outside the capital on reforms and the progress of commitments pledged in electoral manifestos.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Administrators can now be picked indefinitely

Parliament passes interim govt-era ordinances; opposition slams move, calls it 'black law'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Parliament yesterday passed four separate bills allowing the appointment of administrators for an indefinite period in municipalities, upazila parishads, district councils, and city corporations under "special circumstances".

Despite objections from the opposition, the provisions were approved by voice vote.

The provision for holding elections in local government bodies under party symbols has also been removed. The opposition, however, did not object to this change.

Originally, during the interim government, ordinances were issued introducing a clause that allowed the appointment of an "appropriate person" as administrator indefinitely under "special circumstances". Later, the provision for elections under party symbols was removed from the relevant laws.

To approve those ordinances, parliament passed the Local Government (District Council) (Amendment) Bill, the Local Government (Municipality) (Amendment) Bill, the Local Government (City Corporation) (Amendment) Bill, the Local Government (Upazila

Parishad) (Amendment) Bill, and the Local Government (Union Parishad) (Amendment) Bill.

Opposition members objected to the provision allowing the appointment of administrators under special circumstances.

Objecting to the City Corporation (Amendment) Bill, NCP MP Hannan Masud said it would remain a "black law".

Referring to the interim government's ordinance, he said, "What does 'special circumstances' mean? Does it mean that if party agendas cannot be implemented or illegal benefits are not given, then removal will follow? There is no explanation. This is a stab at democracy."

He also questioned the term "appropriate person", asking, "Does it refer to a party leader, a hired thug, or simply the children of ministers and MPs?"

HANNAN MASUD
NCP MP

Objecting to the District Council (Amendment) Bill, Jamaat-e-Islami's Gazi Enamul Haque said the amendment directly violates three articles of the Constitution.

Citing several court rulings, he argued that appointing administrators instead of elected

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'BNP's rhetoric is all about deceiving the people'

Shafiqur criticises laws passed at JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition leader and Jamaat-e-Islami member Shafiqur



Rahman yesterday slammed the BNP government after staging a walkout in protest against what he described as "anti-people and anti-democratic" laws passed in parliament.

"All of BNP's rhetoric was about deceiving the people -- they are now heading down the same path of fascism," he alleged.

At a press conference after the walkout from the parliament, opposition leaders accused the government of enacting laws that could curtail citizens' rights, undermine the Supreme Court's jurisdiction, and weaken the electoral system.

Shafiqur said the opposition was given limited time to raise objections, while ministers were allowed "unlimited time". "This is not fair," he added.

On judicial independence, he said government moves on issues such as judicial appointments and an independent secretariat

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Govt to display AC bus fares digitally

Rabiul Alam tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Shaikh Rabiul Alam yesterday told parliament that a fare chart for AC buses and minibuses will soon be prepared.

The fare list will be displayed digitally inside public transport vehicles, he said in response to a query from independent MP Rumeen Farhana.

Replying to another question from ruling party MP Abul Kalam Azad Siddiqui, the minister said

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ARMS CASE

Hadi murder accused Faisal jailed for 10yrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced Faisal Karim Masud, the prime accused in the killing of Inqilab Moncho spokesperson Sharif Osman Hadi, to 10 years' imprisonment in an arms case.

Judge Md Mahmudul Mohsin of the Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court-18 delivered the verdict in Faisal's absence, Dhaka Metropolitan Public Prosecutor Omar Faruq Faruqi said.

The court also issued a conviction warrant against Faisal, who is currently absconding.

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Unico starts care project for senior citizens

CITY DESK

Unico Hospital recently launched a comprehensive senior citizen care programme, offering special discounts and dedicated healthcare services for elderly patients, according to a press release.

Under this initiative, senior citizens will receive special benefits and discounts on both OPD and IPD services, including doctor consultations, laboratory services, radiology imaging, diagnostic procedures and dialysis services. The "Unico@Home" initiative, will allow seniors unable to travel to the hospital to receive healthcare services at home.

The project was inaugurated by Prof Sardar A Naeem, chairman of Japan Bangladesh Friendship Retirement Home, along with Unico Hospital Managing Director Tazul Islam Dhali and CEO Andra Kurien.



A new "Senior Citizen Care Program" was launched by Unico hospital recently, aimed at ensuring seniors can receive quality care with dignity and compassion. The programme offers special discounts and dedicated healthcare services for elderly patients.

PHOTO: COURTESY

ROAD, FOOTPATH OCCUPATION DSCC declares zero-tolerance policy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) yesterday announced a zero-tolerance policy against encroachment of roads and footpaths to reduce traffic congestion and ensure pedestrians can freely navigate sidewalks in the capital.

As part of this initiative, two separate mobile courts conducted drives in the Sayedabad Bus Terminal and the GPO Link Road in Gulistan yesterday.

The operations, led by DSCC executive magistrates, resulted in the removal of a large number of illegal structures and unauthorised vendors.

In the Sayedabad Bus Terminal area, an operation was carried out for the second consecutive day, during which around 100 illegal bus counters were removed. Long-standing illegal structures built by occupying footpaths

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