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31 eminent citizens slam repeal of key ordinances

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirty-one distinguished citizens yesterday expressed "strong anger and condemnation" over parliament's repeal of several reform ordinances, saying the move ignored public expectations and contradicted government pledges.

In a joint statement, they noted that civil society, along with the people, had long demanded passage of ordinances on the National Human Rights Commission, the Supreme Court Secretariat, Supreme Court judges' appointment, prevention and remedy of enforced disappearances, and right to information.

They recalled that a special committee of the 13th parliament had recommended passing 98 of 133 ordinances without change, while suggesting repeal of some reform-related ordinances and reintroduction of others later as amended bills.

Parliament on April 9 passed the National Human Rights Commission (Repeal and Reinstatement) Bill, the Supreme Court Judges Appointment

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First responders carry a body from the rubble of destroyed buildings at the site of an Israeli strike that targeted the southern Lebanese village of Qana yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Furnace oil price hiked by 35%

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Electricity bills and industrial costs are set to increase after the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) raised furnace oil prices by 35 percent to Tk 94.69 per litre, citing global market volatility linked to the US-Israel war on Iran.

The latest adjustment came into effect from midnight and will remain in force until further notice.

The decision was made under Sections 34(4) and 34(6) of the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission Act, 2003 following proposals from the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation and the oil marketing companies Padma Oil, Meghna Petroleum and Jamuna Oil, according to BERC.

As no crude oil was imported in March, a committee formed on March 15 recommended the adjustment based on the average international Platts rate and the prevailing US dollar exchange rate.

The new rate was determined based on the free on board (FOB) price of refined furnace oil for March, the average Platts rate between March 1 and April 12 and the FOB price of crude oil imported in February, BERC said.

Furnace oil is a primary fuel source for many independent power plants (IPPs) and captive power units within factories. IPPs account for around one-third of the country's electricity generation.

Opposition's arena is streets Says Shafiqur, vows to fight for reforms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman yesterday said the opposition's "primary arena" is the streets, not parliament, stressing that the party will remain in the House only as long as it can wage a meaningful fight within it.

"The distressed people of this country sent us to parliament hoping for change. If we cannot initiate that change, what is the use of this parliament?" he asked while addressing a discussion with families of July martyrs and fighters in Dhaka.

His remarks came amid the Jamaat-led I-Party Alliance's push, both inside parliament and through street protests, to implement the referendum verdict on state reforms under the July National Charter.

Shafiqur, the leader of the opposition in parliament, vowed that the opposition would fight alongside the people to bring about the "final defeat of fascism" and secure victory for citizens.

He also criticised attempts to politicise the martyrs' sacrifice, saying, "Martyrs do not belong to any party; they are the proud asset of the nation. We do not want any division along party lines."

The programme was organised by the I-Party Alliance at the Institution of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh auditorium in Kakrail.

Presiding over the event, Opposition Chief Whip and NCP Convener Nahid Islam said the unity forged during the 2024 mass uprising still holds, but alleged that the current BNP government has become "the main obstacle" to reforms.



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Suspect dies after DNC raid Wife alleges torture; officials claim illness

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenaidah

A suspected drug dealer was allegedly beaten to death during a raid by a team from the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) in Magura's Mohammadpur upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Akubbar Molla, 40, was from Charpara village.

However, DNC officials denied the allegation and said the man died due to illness.

The deceased's wife, Jyotsna Khatun, said around 10-12 individuals entered their home and introduced themselves as detective branch officers around 10:00am and began searching the premises.

When they failed to find anything, they detained and beat her husband, she said. "When my husband asked them for some water, they didn't give him any. They slapped him instead. He repeatedly said, 'please don't beat me; I have nothing'."

"They beat him with plastic pipes and sticks and left him to die. I want justice for this killing."

Police said Akubbar had four drug-related cases

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War threatens remittance lifeline

Bangladeshi migrants in Middle East report job losses, unpaid wages, business disruptions

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh's overseas employment market faces growing risks of shrinking amid the war in the Middle East, the largest destination for migrant workers from the country.

If the crisis persists, economists fear it could also put pressure on the domestic job market.

Thousands of Bangladeshis, along with other Asian migrants, have already been affected as tourism, construction, and business activities slowed down across Gulf countries, according to migrants, recruiting agents, and researchers.

Many migrants report job losses and unpaid wages, while thousands of prospective workers are not being able to migrate. Nearly 900 flights bound for the Middle East had been cancelled since the US-Israel war on Iran began on February 28.

Due to the war, at least seven Bangladeshi migrants have been killed and several others injured in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Lebanon. The two-week ceasefire agreed on April 7 remains fragile.

The Daily Star has spoken to several Bangladeshi migrants in

the Middle East over the phone.

Ripon Bepari, a construction worker living on the outskirts of Beirut, has been unemployed since Israel began targeting Hezbollah installations in Lebanon.

"I have not received any salary for February and March, as my employer stopped work," he told The Daily Star.

Lebanese and other nationals, have lost jobs and many have been displaced.

"Migrants are living in fear of bombing.... They are more worried over their jobs and wages," he said.

Security measures in Gulf countries, such as school closures, remote work, and restrictions near US bases, have further disrupted

Overseas employment has dropped sharply in recent months, with emigration clearance falling from 95,095 in January to 65,634 in February, and further to 44,661 in March, according to the Bureau of Manpower, Employment, and Training.

Surviving on \$300 (about Tk 37,000) in savings, he said he can no longer send money home to his family in Netrokona.

"The government speaks about us when there is a remittance shortage. Then, they forget it. I expect our authorities to come to our support when we are in an emergency," he added.

Abdul Karim, a leader of the Bangladeshi migrant community in Lebanon, said around 5,000 Bangladeshis, along with

livelihoods.

Md Emon, a Bangladeshi taxi driver in Kuwait, said his monthly income has fallen from 200-300 Kuwaiti dinars (KD) to less than 100 KD (under Tk 40,000) as he was able to work just for 10 days over a month instead of the usual 20-25 days.

"It is common for migrant workers to gather at specific locations to be picked up by employers. Since the war began,

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Masterminds in Kushtia pir killing identified

Say law enforcers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

The masterminds behind the attack and killing of Abdur Rahman, also known as Shamim al-Jahangir -- a pir based in Kushtia -- have been identified, sources in law enforcement agencies have said.

The attack was incited through the deliberate circulation of videos via certain Facebook pages and accounts within a targeted area, they said.

Speaking on condition of anonymity, a police officer told The Daily Star that the identities of admins behind some of the accounts spreading the videos have been traced. He added that 15-18 individuals involved in the attack and vandalism have also been identified.

Shamim was beaten and hacked to death by a mob at his darbar in Philipnagar, Daulatpur upazila, yesterday over allegations of hurting religious sentiments. The darbar was vandalised and

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Artemis crew urges unity on 'lifeboat' Earth



AFP, Houston

Artemis II astronauts expressed awe on Saturday over their record-setting lunar flyby mission, urging unity on Earth after witnessing the planet's isolation like a "lifeboat" in space.

The crew spoke at a news conference as Nasa took a victory lap following the success of the mission.

The astronauts did the first slingshot around the Moon in more than 50 years and traveled deeper into space than any humans before -- culminating in a smooth splashdown Friday off the coast of California.

Flanked on stage by mission commander Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover and Jeremy Hansen, astronaut Christina Koch called for people on Earth to embrace

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A child being jabbed in the capital's Korail slum as a special measles-rubella vaccination drive in four city corporations -- Dhaka north, Dhaka south, Mymensingh, and Barishal -- began yesterday. The health directorate recorded six more suspected measles deaths in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, taking the number to 151.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Hezbollah denies role in Damascus attack plot

AFP, Beirut

Hezbollah yesterday denied any link to a cell accused by Syrian authorities of planning an attack on a religious figure in Damascus, saying it conducts no activity in the country.

Syria's interior ministry said Saturday that security forces had arrested a woman attempting to plant an explosive device in front of a house belonging to an unidentified religious figure in the Bab Touma area of the Syrian capital.

Security forces dismantled the device and arrested five members of the cell, a ministry statement said.

According to initial investigations, the cell was linked to the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and "its members received specialised military training abroad", the ministry added.