

Pirojpur DB

FROM PAGE 12
accused him of theft and restrained him.

Younus further alleged that seven to eight DB personnel arrived, handcuffed him, beat him, subjected him to electric shocks, and even poured hot candle wax over his genitals.

"The torture continued for more than three hours," he said, adding that he was forced to confess under pressure despite maintaining his innocence.

He alleged that a DB member named Kawsar, whom he described as close to Ariful, led the torture.

Younus said his family handed over some money under pressure, but he was later taken before Superintendent of Police Md Manzur Ahamed Siddique, where another person reportedly confessed to the theft and returned the money.

He said Ariful then admitted his mistake and sought forgiveness before releasing him that night.

While visiting Younus at a hospital, Additional Superintendent of Police Mohammad Abdul Awal confirmed that he had been tortured by DB personnel.

He said Additional SP (Crime and Operations) Md Ziaur Rahman has been tasked with investigating the allegations and will submit a report within three working days.

Awal also assured that legal support would be provided to the victim.

Younus said he was initially taken to a diagnostic centre instead of a hospital and was not allowed to speak freely to doctors.

He alleged that he was later taken to a private hospital in Khulna, where he was pressured to claim his injuries resulted from a family dispute.

According to a medical report, his injuries were described as "self-burn" and "accidental". Family members said they have not filed a formal complaint due to fear of retaliation, although they claimed the police returned the money taken earlier.

"The way my brother was tortured, even a criminal does not face such brutality," said Younus's brother Anisur Rahman.

This newspaper could not reach Ariful for comment despite several attempts.

Trade deal with US

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to import-dependent energy strategies to serve vested interests, leading to the import of LNG instead of domestic gas exploration.

Institutions like the state-owned Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company (BAPEX) were weakened.

There were major irregularities in energy imports, Bhattacharya said.

The government has formed a cabinet committee on energy security, but it should inform the public about its activities through transparency and bring the matter for discussion in the national parliament.

Although the government has spoken about forming a reform commission in line with its electoral promises, it has not

yet been made visible.

The government should clearly disclose its plans for reforms in public financial management, revenue collection and incentives, Bhattacharya added.

While moderating the programme, Hassan Ahamed Chowdhury Kiron, chairman of Debate for Democracy, said that due to past corruption, Bangladesh failed to achieve self-reliance in energy.

Import dependence was increased for vested interests, while domestic production was neglected.

Therefore, ensuring energy security will be a major challenge for the government in the upcoming budget, he said.

The upcoming budget must reflect the expectations of ordinary people.

During a crisis, a people-friendly, business-friendly, sustainable and cautious budget needs to be presented.

The new government, which has achieved a large mandate, must maintain its popularity by presenting a budget that ensures maximum welfare, avoids placing pressure on lower- and middle-income groups, prevents public suffering and maintains price stability.

Additionally, to keep the economy active and ensure investment and employment growth, a hassle-free business environment must be created.

Therefore, the upcoming budget must be people-oriented and practical, he said.

BNP nears final list of women

FROM PAGE 12
Aspirants were asked why they were seeking nomination, what contributions they had made to the party and their constituencies, and what roles they had played in political movements over the years.

They were also asked about their priorities if elected, their previous experience as public representatives, whether they would support the party's final nominee, and what they would do if denied nomination.

Senior BNP leaders said the party was trying to maintain a balance between long-serving and loyal women leaders and younger aspirants who could bring fresh energy and ideas to politics.

They said that Tarique, during the interviews, instructed the party's aspirants to accept the BNP's final decision and avoid any action that could undermine party discipline.

Among senior BNP figures under discussion are Jatiyabadi Mohila Dal President Afroza Abbas and Mohila Dal General Secretary Sultana Ahmed, who was a reserved-seat lawmaker in 2001.

Others being considered include former reserved-seat lawmakers Rehana

Akter, Bilkis Islam, Rasheda Begum Hira, Newaz Halima Arly and Helen Zerir Khan. BNP central committee member Shirin Sultana, a former reserved-seat lawmaker in 1996, is also among the aspirants, along with Dhaka district BNP General Secretary Nipun Roy Chowdhury.

BNP Chairperson's Adviser and singer Baby Naznin and Mayer Daak Coordinator Sanjida Islam Tulee are also being discussed, according to party insiders.

Among leaders linked to the 2008 reserved seats, BNP Assistant Secretary for Local Government Affairs Shammil Akter and Assistant Secretary for Human Rights Affairs Syeda Ashifa Ashrafi Papia are also under consideration.

Meanwhile, Jamaat leaders said the party's women's central committee has already finalised a list of nominees, prioritising those considered capable of playing an effective role in parliament and meeting public expectations.

Party sources said Jamaat was also giving importance to women leaders from areas where it failed to win general seats, so that those regions could still have representation in parliament. It has also decided not to nominate

family members of its current lawmakers.

The list has already been submitted to Jamaat's executive committee for approval, they added.

Among those being discussed are Nurunnisa Siddika, Mardia Mumtaz, Supreme Court lawyer and Jamaat women's wing Assistant Secretary Sabikun Nahar Munni, Sylhet Jamaat leader and former professor Mahfuza Siddika, Chattogram leader Marina Sultana, Bogura representative and former upazila vice chairman Sajeda Samad, women's wing Assistant Secretary Marzia Begum and member Nazmunnila Nilu.

Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair, assistant secretary general and chief of Jamaat's central publicity and media department, said the party would officially announce its nominees tomorrow.

According to the Election Commission, there are 50 women's reserved seats in parliament. The commission estimates that the BNP-led alliance may secure 36 of those seats, the Jamaat-led alliance 13, and independents one.

The EC has set April 21 as the deadline for nomination submissions, and April 22 and 23 for scrutiny, while voting is scheduled for May 12.

Zero malaria Ignore people

FROM PAGE 12
Halimur Rashid, director (disease control) of DGHS, however, said they were on track to achieve the malaria elimination target.

In 2022, the national malaria elimination programme under DGHS had prepared "National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination and Prevention of Re-establishment of Malaria Transmission in Bangladesh 2024-2030".

The strategy aimed at attaining zero mortality due to indigenous malaria by 2027 and eliminating malaria by 2030.

"Bangladesh has demonstrated significant progress in reducing the malaria caseload over the years, although fluctuations are reported in terms of upsurges in 2014, 2019 and again in 2022," reads the executive summary of the strategy.

MA Faiz, former director general of DGHS, however, said that achieving both targets will be very challenging given the current situation.

Around 12 lakh Rohingya people are living in camps in Cox's Bazar, many of whom travel to hilly areas outside the camps and become infected with malaria.

Many of them are not aware of the risks of malaria and often seek diagnosis late, increasing the risk of transmission in Teknaf and Ukha.

Besides, the four districts with the highest malaria burden share borders with neighbouring countries, meaning elimination efforts will also depend on controlling the disease across the border, he told this correspondent yesterday.

Funding for malaria control has shrunk globally as well as in the country, posing another challenge.

"Besides, we presumed that our 51 districts are malaria-free, but to achieve elimination, we have to prove this scientifically with evidence," he added.

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Islam urged the government to immediately accept and implement the referendum verdict "while there is still time".

"Barely two months into assuming office, extortion has resumed. People are fed up with the harassment. You yourselves are creating mobs from within the ruling party, indirectly provoking the people."

He also called on the government to make an announcement in parliament about initiating constitutional reforms and implement the referendum verdict.

"Those of us who are in the Jatiya Sangsad will cooperate. Otherwise, be prepared to face protests in the days ahead," Azhar warned.

"People of Bangladesh know how you came to power. They are well aware of the extent to which you manipulated election results in various constituencies... The ground beneath your feet has begun to slip away. Understand the language of the people. Do not force them to take to the streets in protest. If the people do come out to the streets, they will not leave until their demands are met, Inshallah."

Urging activists of the alliance to mobilise people, he said, "If the government does not accept our demands, we will compel it to do so through peaceful means. In the meantime, we will continue to play our role in parliament and intensify the movement on the streets."

Also speaking at the rally, Jamaat Assistant Secretary General and alliance coordinator Hamidur Rahman Azad said the government's conduct suggests little has changed in Bangladesh since August 5, 2024.

"It does not appear that

Dhaka, EU ties set

FROM PAGE 3
Bangladesh is the first LDC the EU is signing the CPA with.

The country's exports to the EU rose from \$2 billion in 2000-01 to over \$26 billion in 2024, and the duty-free facility that the EU has been providing for Bangladeshi goods under the 'Everything but Arms' scheme will be phased out in 2029.

After that, the EU will have Generalized System of the Preferences (GSP) Plus, and Bangladesh will have to implement a variety of UN conventions related to good governance, environment, and labour rights to have duty-free access under GSP Plus.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh has been part of EU's Global Gateway Initiative, under which the country can get funding for renewable energy projects. The EU also made Bangladesh part of its 'Talent Partnership' under which a skilled workforce can migrate to the EU countries.

Bangladesh has also been drawing close attention of the EU being a country located in the Indo-Pacific region, as well as being among the countries most affected by climate change.

"The CPA is a

Sheikh Hasina has fled to India or that fascism has fallen. Her government was anti-people, and the current one is also heading in the same direction.

"In the past, Sheikh Hasina tried to suppress us with counter programmes but failed before the power of the people. If the current government resorts to repression using state machinery like a fascist regime, people will resist untidely and realise their demands."

Nasiruddin Patwari, chief coordinator of the National Citizen Party (NCP), alleged that the government has established "Zia-tantra" instead of democracy.

"They have taken control of our banks, parliament, and the Anti-Corruption Commission. Leaders of the 11-party alliance are being attacked in different places. The people, who voted with certain expectations, are now being made to stand in queues with empty buckets."

Earlier in the day, Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman criticised the government by saying allocations for the Bangladesh Shishu Hospital and Institute are inadequate amid rising concern over the disease.

Speaking to reporters after visiting the hospital in Dhaka's Shyamoli yesterday, Shafiqur said the facility's annual government allocation had been reduced from Tk 30 crore to Tk 28 crore. "Of that, only Tk 7 crore has been released in the first quarter, which is insufficient to operate the 700-bed hospital."

Later, after visiting a petrol pump in Asadgate, Shafiqur urged the government to disclose accurate information on fuel supplies, saying that delivering false information in the Jatiya Sangsad is "unfortunate and shameful for the nation".

MMC suspends classes

FROM PAGE 12
exchange over refuelling a motorcycle escalated into a scuffle.

At one point, Hamidur and his associates allegedly beat Muaz and forced him out of the room.

Later, when Hamidur went out for tea, he was attacked and hit on the head with a blunt object. As members of the rival group chased Muaz, he took shelter in a room. When his associates came to rescue him, a chase and counter-chase ensued between the two groups, triggering the clash.

Police rushed to the scene and brought the situation under control. The injured students were admitted to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) immediately, said the additional SP.

Later, Muaz was referred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for advanced treatment, while Hamidur is undergoing treatment at MMCH.

Mohammad Shebirul

Islam, officer-in-charge (OC) of Mymensingh Kotwali Model Police Station, said the situation is now under control.

"One person, identified as Nafiul Islam, 25, has been detained in connection with the incident. No case has been filed yet."

Police are investigating the incident, said the OC.

Meanwhile, the college authorities have formed a three-member probe body, headed by Prof Dr Seheri Zannat Sultana, head of the anatomy department, to investigate the incident. The committee has been asked to submit its report within seven working days, the college principal said.

Denying that the incident was a factional clash, Tanvir Abdullah, convener of the JCD unit at Mymensingh Medical College, claimed the incident might have occurred over "personal enmity".

He also said the incident is being investigated by the JCD central committee.

Punish those

FROM PAGE 3
Public health expert and DPPH convening committee member Mushtaq Husain read out their keynote paper.

He said the current measles situation is a serious public health crisis that has exposed weaknesses in the healthcare system and gaps in vaccination coverage.

Citing data from the DGHS, he said 206 children died from measles and measles-like symptoms between March 15 and April 16 this year. "These deaths could have been prevented if timely and effective measures had been taken," he added.

Of them, 34 cases were confirmed through laboratory tests, while the rest showed symptoms consistent with the disease. More than 20,000 people have been infected so far, with over 3,000 currently undergoing treatment in hospitals, he also said.

"We believe that negligence in vaccine procurement by the previous interim government, bureaucratic delays, and institutional indifference towards public health have contributed to this outbreak and weakened the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI). Those responsible for these preventable child deaths must be identified and held accountable," he said.

Replying to a query, he said a measles epidemic is currently underway in the country, whether the government acknowledges it or not.

"We are seeing the government take various emergency measures. However, it may be refraining from declaring

measles a public health emergency, possibly out of concern that it could create panic among people or have political consequences," he added.

Replying to another query, he said since the government has started mass vaccination, the rising trend of measles cases may decline within one and a half months, adding that the number of deaths, however, may take another month to come down.

AMZakir Hussain, former director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), said in previous years, three out of every 1,000 measles patients died in the country, but this time the number has risen to 10.

"The government must conduct a thorough analysis to identify the reasons behind the increased death rate," he added.

DPPH Convener Prof Mahbub E-Rashid said Bangladesh had been performing well in controlling communicable diseases, with the main concern shifting to the rise of non-communicable diseases.

However, the country has faltered in controlling communicable diseases like measles, attributing the situation to negligence by those concerned, he added.

PRAYER TIMING					
APRIL 19					
Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
AZAN	4-35	12-45	4-45	6-24	7-45
JAMAAT	5-10	1-15	5-00	6-28	8-15
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION					

Caught between arsenic and salinity

FROM PAGE 3
Prof AHM Selim Reza of Rajshahi University's Geology and Mining department said arsenic concentrations of around 1.2 mg/L were found at depths of 120-150 ft, far above both the Bangladesh standard of 0.05 mg/L and WHO guideline of 0.01 mg/L.

Parvin Begum, a housewife from Chandlai, said she could use tap water only for washing clothes.

"We cannot even rinse our mouths with this water. It's too salty and leaves my hands with blisters as I use it for domestic chores. We have to bring drinking water from far away," she said.

Mohammad Ali of the same area said the water comes from a very deep layer, so it is warm and salty. "Bathing with it leaves the body feeling

itchy," he added.

Many others, including students, workers and families across the municipality, expressed similar frustrations.

Prof Chowdhury Sarwar Jahan of RU's Geology and Mining department explained that the salinity found in the area reflects ancient geological conditions.

He also said northern and north-western Bangladesh consist of two types of geological formations: the uplifted Barind Tract and sediment-filled floodplains.

"However, millions of years ago, the sea extended much farther inland than it does today. What is now Chapainawabganj was once situated near a coastline. As the sea retreated over time, salt deposits remained trapped underground," he said.

He added that such saline water is extremely harmful to health.

Toufikul Islam, executive engineer of Chapainawabganj municipality, said water is usually drawn from 120 ft wells at 24 locations across the town. The three ultra-deep wells, around 1,000 feet deep and installed in wards 8 and 13, are yielding saline and warm water.

"Except for parts of wards 1, 3, and 4, most other areas also have issues with iron and arsenic contamination," he said. "We often need to test 20-25 sites before identifying a viable source. In the affected wards, we could not find arsenic-free water at regular depths, so we relied on those three ultra-deep wells."

He also said the municipality continues operating the ultra-deep

wells to temporarily ease acute water shortages during peak demand. "Treating saline water is extremely expensive, so we have no such plan yet. We are now working on a project to treat river water and supply it to the affected zones."

Amit Kumar Sarkar, executive engineer at DPHE in Chapainawabganj, said the ultra-deep pumps were initially meant to explore clean groundwater sources but later proved unsuitable.

"Later, we installed five more test wells in the district outside the municipality, and their salinity was within acceptable limits. This means the problem exists only in specific zones," he said. "We are working to find alternative solutions to address the issue."

Measles vaccination failure

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"We expect each of you to turn your respective workplaces into model healthcare service centres," he told the health officers.

The conference, organised by the Health Services Division under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, was attended by over 500 UHFPOs from across the country.

The prime minister also handed out awards to top-performing officers in six categories.

Tarique said the government's proposals reflect its broader vision for the health sector but stressed that success depends on collective effort.

"The government cannot do it alone. We need your support," he said, adding that even small contributions can bring meaningful change.

He said the government plans to recruit 1,00,000 new health workers, 80 percent of them women, and urged officials to work with dedication to expand access to healthcare.

Referring to the National Health Service in the United Kingdom, he noted that despite operating for around 75 years in a stronger economy with a smaller population, the NHS still faces challenges in ensuring services for all.

Drawing the comparison, he said it is natural for Bangladesh's

healthcare system to face difficulties, particularly at the grassroots level.

The prime minister said the government is working to ensure healthcare as a basic right, guided by the principle that prevention is better than cure.

He pledged to improve the dignity, safety, and living standards of healthcare workers, address manpower shortages, and modernise upazila health complexes with technology-based services.

Emphasising accountability, he called for a corruption-free healthcare system and urged officials to play active roles in vaccination, maternal health, and disease prevention.

3&4

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