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Ignore people at your peril

11-party alliance warns; urges constitutional reforms while 'there's still time'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of the Jamaat-e-Islami-led 11-party alliance yesterday urged the government to adopt a pro-people stance, warning that if the opposition's street movement continues, it would not "bode well" for the ruling party.

They alleged that the current government, like its predecessor, is heading towards earning the label of being "anti-people".

The remarks came at a protest rally held at the capital's Bijoy Nagar to press for implementation of the referendum verdict in line with the July charter.

Top leaders of the alliance spoke at the rally. Afterwards, a procession was brought out from the Bijoy Nagar intersection, which marched through the Nightingale intersection and ended at Shantinagar.

Addressing the rally as chief guest, Jamaat Nayeb-e-Amcer ATM Azharul

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Despite government claims of no fuel shortage, particularly of octane, long queues at filling stations and the suffering of motorists show no signs of easing. The photo, taken yesterday, shows lines of vehicles at Sumatra Filling Station snaking their way up and then down Matikata Road in the capital.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Fuel queues snake city streets

ASIFUR RAHMAN and AHMED DEEPTO

Queues at filling stations across Dhaka yesterday resembled the early-2000s "Snake" game, with lines of octane- and petrol-powered vehicles snaking around pumps, spilling onto surrounding roads, and at times looping back to and past their starting points.

Growing longer by the day, the queues have turned routine refuelling into an hours-long ordeal, even as the country's octane stocks exceed storage capacity — signalling a breakdown in distribution rather than supply.

A visit by The Daily Star to at least 20 filling stations in Tejgaon, Asad Gate, Kuril, Nikunja, Badda, Paribagh and Matsya Bhaban found the rush has worsened over the past two weeks.

Although the government earlier said it would maintain supply at levels similar to the same period last year, supply was slightly reduced between April 1 and April 17, worsening the situation.

Officials now expect conditions to ease at the distribution end, as supply

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

Trade deal with US a threat to energy security

Says noted economist Debapriya

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The unequal agreement signed by the interim government with the US poses a major obstacle to energy security in Bangladesh rather than the disruption in fuel imports through the Strait of Hormuz, said noted economist Debapriya Bhattacharya.

"The Strait of Hormuz is indeed an obstacle to fuel imports, but the US trade agreement is a bigger barrier," he said at a pre-budget shadow parliamentary debate competition organised by the Debate for Democracy yesterday.

The Agreement on Reciprocal Trade (ART) signed on February 9, just three days before the election, commits Bangladesh to purchasing \$15 billion in US energy products, including LNG, over 15 years. It also restricts Bangladesh's ability to buy cheaper fuel from countries under US sanctions such as Russia.

"The current government says it will not pursue country-specific foreign policies. Yet that is exactly what is happening in the trade deal — we now need permission regarding whom we can buy oil from," said Bhattacharya, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

However, Bangladesh should make the best of the 60-day waiver offered by the US on oil purchases from Russia. While criticising the deposed government, Bhattacharya said the energy policy was confusing and controversial, with exploitative policies adopted by an unholy nexus of bureaucrats, business groups and politicians.

Instead of productive investment, priority was given

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RESERVED SEATS BNP nears final list of women

Jamaat to announce nominees tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP is close to finalising its nominees for the women's reserved seats in the 13th Jatiya Sangsad, while Jamaat-e-Islami has completed its selection process and is expected to announce its candidates tomorrow.

BNP leaders said the party interviewed more than 900 aspirants over the last two days, and its parliamentary board is now reviewing the names before making the final announcement.

Aspirants from Chattogram, Sylhet, Cumilla, Dhaka and Mymensingh appeared before the board yesterday, while those from Rangpur, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barishal and Faridpur were interviewed on Friday.

According to party sources, the interviews were led by BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman and members of the party's Standing Committee.

Aspirants were asked why they were seeking nomination, what contributions they had

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Zero malaria death by next year a stiff challenge now

16 dies in 2025, highest in almost a decade

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

At least 16 people died of malaria in 2025, the highest in nine years, raising concerns over the country's goal of achieving zero malaria deaths by 2027.

A total of 10,162 malaria cases were recorded last year, which is lower than the previous year but still a significant number given the country hopes to eliminate the mosquito-borne disease by 2030.

The issue of malaria deaths came into focus following the death of Commerce Secretary Mahubur Rahman from malaria on Friday, ahead of World Malaria Day on April 25.

Although 460 malaria cases were recorded in the first three months of the year, Mahubur is the first to die from the disease, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The 58-year-old bureaucrat was admitted to a private hospital in Dhaka on April 13 due to a decrease in blood platelet levels. Later, he was diagnosed with malaria, according to a press release from the ministry.

Mahubur had recently visited an African country and might have contracted malaria there, said DGHS officials. The directorate will conduct an "oral autopsy"

MALARIA CASELOADS AND DEATHS

| YEAR | CASES | DEATHS |
|------|--------|--------|
| 2025 | 10,156 | 16 |
| 2024 | 13,100 | 6 |
| 2023 | 16,567 | 6 |
| 2022 | 18,167 | 14 |
| 2021 | 7,294 | 9 |
| 2020 | 6,130 | 9 |
| 2019 | 17,225 | 9 |
| 2018 | 10,523 | 7 |
| 2017 | 29,247 | 13 |
| 2016 | 27,737 | 17 |

SOURCES: DGHS

to determine the circumstances surrounding his death.

Malaria is a life-threatening disease caused by parasites that are transmitted to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes.

According to DGHS data, a total of 10,158 cases were recorded from 13 districts last year. In addition, the central reporting team recorded four more cases, taking the total to 10,162.

Of these districts, the highest

number of cases — 5,023 — was recorded in Bandarban, followed by 3,614 in Rangamati, 845 in Cox's Bazar and 534 in Khagrachhari.

This means 10,016 cases, or 98.56 percent of the total, were recorded in these four districts.

A total of 16 deaths were reported last year, of which 11 were recorded in hospitals of Chattogram, two in the medical facilities of Cox's Bazar and one each in Khagrachhari and Rangamati. One additional death was recorded by the central team in Dhaka.

Last year's death toll is the highest since 2016, when 17 deaths were recorded, according to DGHS data. Between 2017 and 2024, the number of deaths ranged from six to 14.

A DGHS official said six deaths were reported from the Rohingya camps last year and hence the fatality rate is relatively high.

Between January and March, a total of 460 cases were recorded from five districts: Bandarban (214), Rangamati (179), Cox's Bazar (49), Khagrachhari (13) and Chattogram (5).

However, the numbers usually see a sharp rise during the peak malaria season, May to August, officials said.

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KILLING OF 2 CHILDREN Fresh protests, clashes in India's Manipur

AGENCIES

Fresh protests broke out across India's Manipur on Friday night, with large crowds taking to the streets in Imphal East over the killing of two children.

Night protests erupted at Khurai Lamlong Bazar in Imphal East, where large numbers of people defied curfew and took out rallies. The situation soon turned tense, with security forces stepping in to control the crowd.

Tear gas shells and mock bombs were used to disperse protesters, and several people were injured in the clashes. The injured were taken to Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Medical Sciences for treatment.

At least four people were killed, two of them by police fire, in India's northeastern state of Manipur on April 7.

On that day, two children from the mostly Hindu Meitei community were killed after a bomb exploded in a house in the Meitei-dominated Bishnupur district.

A day later, police opened fire to control a crowd that had stormed a camp belonging to security forces, killing two people, the state's interior minister, Govindas Konthoujam said.

The children killed in the unrest belonged to the Meitei community, whose members alleged the attack was carried out by Kuki militants. Kuki groups denied the accusations.

Anger continues to build across the Valley since the incident, with civil society groups calling for more protests in the coming days. The case has now been handed over to the National Investigation Agency (NIA).



Fishing boats remain anchored at the fisheries ghat along the Karnaphuli river in Chattogram amid the 58-day government-imposed fishing ban from April 15 to June 11, aimed at boosting marine fish breeding and production. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

48hrs after Pallabi teacher killing, cops clueless

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police are yet to identify any suspects 48 hours after a 68-year-old schoolteacher was killed with a hammer in her rented flat in the capital's Pallabi.

Police recovered the bloodstained body of Firoza Khanom Josna, a teacher at Holy Crescent Ideal School, on Friday afternoon.

The inquest report, prepared after an autopsy at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital morgue, noted severe injury marks on the left side of her head, as well as on her nose and eyes.

Police also recovered a blood-stained hammer at the crime scene, which they believe had been used in the killing.

Firoza had been living alone for 10 to 12 years in a rented room on the first floor of a six-storey building on Road 8, Block D, Section 12 in Mirpur, her brother Nazmul Azam told The Daily Star.

She hailed from Krishnapur

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