

CLIMATE VULNERABLE COUNTRIES

# PM seeks strong global support

Bss, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday sought strong support from the international community and G20 to increase adaptation finance for the climate vulnerable countries.



While delivering the keynote speech virtually at a high-level event on the occasion of the F20 Climate Solutions Week that began on September 14, the PM also placed three priority issues, including a greater collaboration from the international community for a unified, stronger and green mechanism to tackle the negative impacts of climate change and uphold sustainability.

The F20 and King Khaled Foundation are jointly organising the event. The title of the event is “Resilience and Recovery: Highlighting Solutions for the G20 on Climate and Sustainability”.

The PM said G20 have a greater responsibility to come forward with a stronger commitment to mobilise the global support to address the issue of displacement or climate refugees.

“Peace and security of all will largely depend on how we will be able to manage this forced displacement of innocent people,” she said.

The PM said nobody knows it better than Bangladesh as it has 1.1 million forcibly evicted Rohingya refugees from Myanmar and they are causing extensive damage to the environment and nature.

“I will urge G20 countries to mainstream the issue of loss and damage as in many parts of the world, the environmental loss has become permanent and irreparable,” she said.

The Prime Minister said G20 must announce accelerated actions to reinvigorate the global economy to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

“We are still off track to achieve the SDGs by 2030. The Covid-19 pandemic has further slowed us. Under these

circumstances, G20 must announce accelerated actions to reinvigorate the global economy,” she said. In this connection, she placed three issues of priority.

Firstly, for successful implementation of 2030 agenda, addressing climate change is fundamental as both have symbiotic relationships with each other.

Secondly, it needs a greater collaboration from the international community for a unified, stronger and green mechanism to tackle the negative impacts of climate change and uphold sustainability. G20 countries have specific roles to play here.

And thirdly, global financing mechanism must be replenished as promised in a true spirit of responsibility sharing and partnership.

Hasina added that it is disturbing that the global financing mechanism like the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) are severely under-resourced.

She said climate and sustainability are mutually dependent and the G20 economies account for around 90 percent of the gross world product, almost 80 percent of world trade, two-thirds of the world population and approximately half of the world land area.

“So, anything to do with the global climate and sustainability must go through G20 for any satisfactory outcome. G20 has previously shown that jointly they can take many beneficial measures for the benefit of the global community.”

Mentioning that climate change is a global problem with cross border adverse impacts, the PM said it is the responsibility of the international community to take drastic measures to stop the activities that cause climate change.

## 30-plus too can apply for govt jobs

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for various government jobs as circular had not been issued since March, she [Hasina] instantly instructed us to take measures in this regard,” added Farhad.

He said the government would permit those who turned 30 on March 25 or later amid the coronavirus shutdown to apply for government

jobs.

The state minister added that his ministry sent a summary to the PM who already gave her consent in this regard.

No government job circulars were published during a 66-day countrywide shutdown since March 26 due to the coronavirus outbreak in the country.

## All 25 accused to face trial

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Later, his father Barkatullah filed a murder case in this regard with Chawkbazar Police Station against 19 Buet unit BCL leaders on October 7.

The incident triggered a firestorm of protests on campuses across the country. Many took to social media to demand justice for Abrar.

Amid protests, Buet authorities on October 11 banned all political activities on the campus and suspended 19 students, mostly leaders of the university’s BCL unit who were made accused in the murder case.

On November 13 last year, Inspector Md Wahiduzaman of Detective

Branch of police submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court in Dhaka against 25 Buet students.

Of them, 22 accused were earlier arrested and remanded several times. During the investigation, eight of the accused gave confessional statements to magistrates at different times last year.

Following filing of the charge sheet, the court had issued arrest warrants against them and also ordered that advertisements be published in two national dailies asking the three fugitives to appear before the court within a stipulated period.

## EC officials compromising

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Sidul also said they had formed two investigation committees after the arrests of two data entry officers on Saturday over forged NIDs.

Siddharth Shankar Sutradhar, 32, and Mohammad Anwarul Islam, 28, -- data entry operators of the capital’s Sabujbagh and Gulshan election offices -- were held also on charges of helping loan defaulters secure bank loans using fake NIDs.

The EC suspended them after their arrest.

“Both the committees started working on Tuesday and they were asked to submit their probe report within a short time,” he said.

Meanwhile, police’s Detective Branch (DB) yesterday said a gang assisted at least 40 people in getting bank loans with forged NIDs in the last one year.

They claimed to have gleaned the information from five of the gang members, who were arrested in Mirpur on Sunday.

Law enforcers were interrogating the five -- Siddharth, Anwarul, Suman Parvez, Mohammad Majid, and Abdullah Al Mamun -- after they were placed on two-day remand each by a court.

Madhusudan Das, assistant commissioner of DB police, told The Daily Star yesterday that they were trying to arrest four more members of the gang.

“We are suspecting that some more staffers of the Election Commission might be involved in the forgery. We are at the primary stage of the investigation. We will need some time to confirm it,” he said.

### HOW THE GANG WORKS

DB officials said the gang members target those who seek loans from banks. A group of brokers collect

information on their “clients”, who work for preparing documents for loan defaulters seeking fresh loans, they said.

If the Credit Information Bureau (CIB) report of the client is found not satisfactory, then the brokers take their clients to another group of brokers who work at the EC offices, Razib Al Masud, deputy commissioner of DB (Lalbagh division), told The Daily Star.

Then the client and the bank-related brokers make a deal with the EC office brokers and prepare a second NID card with the help of some data entry officials, he said.

According to sources, arrestee Suman Parvez earlier used to work at an audit firm, which actually verifies documents of loan seekers upon instructions from banks. So, Suman knew quite well how to forge those documents, the sources said.

DC Razib Al Masud, who is coordinating a case filed over the arrests, said

the data entry operators used to give inputs of client information to EC offices’ offline server.

“For this reason, the previously inputted data and finger print of the clients did not match the newly entered data,” he said.

He also said the server takes almost 15 to 20 days to come up with notification regarding such inputs. During that period, the brokers managed all others documents using the duplicate NID to seal the bank loans, he said.

“Interestingly, the duplicate NIDs are also found authentic when the bank goes on to verify the NIDS with the authorities concerned,” he explained.



**A worker sits idle at an onion shop in Chattogram city's Khatunganj wholesale market yesterday morning after traders virtually stopped selling the essential cooking ingredient. Wholesalers at the market sold onion for Tk 70-80 a kg yesterday, up from Tk 40-45 the previous day. The prices of onion shot up across the country after India had suspended export of the commodity on Monday.**

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

## Onion makes consumers cry

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Monday afternoon, placing serious pressure on a population already reeling from the economic fallout of the coronavirus pandemic.

In Dhaka, the price per kg of local onions was between Tk 80 and Tk 100 yesterday, up from Tk 60 to Tk 65 the previous day. Imported onions were being sold for between Tk 70 and Tk 80 whereas they cost Tk 50 to Tk 55 on Monday.

Sha Md Abu Raihan Alberuni, member (TPD) of BTTC, said, “We need 1.8 lakh to 2 lakh tonnes of onion every month to meet our domestic demands and in the [agriculturally] lean period from September to December we need around 8 lakh tonnes of onions. We already have 11 lakh tonnes of onions in the country, including 4.5 lakh tonnes imported from India.”

BTTC officials also said production of onion was bumper this year and the government has a good stock in hand and requested people not to panic.

The government has already imported 4.5 lakh tonnes onion from India against its target of 6 lakh tonnes, which amounted to a surplus stock of 3 lakh tonnes of onion for the lean period.

He said the government has also started the process of importing

onions from Turkey, Myanmar, and China.

Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi on Monday Told The Daily Star that the government has decided to import one lakh tonnes of onions as soon as possible to rein in skyrocketing prices in the local markets. Import of the widely consumed vegetable has already begun and it will continue until the next harvesting season, mainly to ensure affordable prices for consumers, he said.

### TCB TRUCKS

The Trading Corporation of Bangladesh has started selling onions, lentil, sugar and soybean oil from 275 trucks at reasonable prices, which will continue until October 1.

Forty of the trucks are in Dhaka, 10 in Chattogram, seven in Rangpur, five each in Mymensingh, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barishal, Sylhet, Bogura and Cumilla, three each in Jhenidah and Madaripur and two each in the other districts.

A kilogramme of onion at Tk 30, sugar at Tk 50, lentil at Tk 50 and a litre of soybean oil at Tk 80 are being sold from the trucks.

However, that has not had an impact in the onion market due to panic buying, reports our correspondents in Dhaka, Chattogram, Rajshahi, Dinaipur, Khulna, Benapole, and

Thakurgaon.

### IN DHAKA

“I brought two sacks of onions to my shop yesterday [Monday] morning, but just after evening a good number of customers came to the shop and purchased all of my onions within half an hour, a stock that normally takes several days to run out,” a retailer in Dhaka said.

During a visit to three kitchen markets in Dhupkhola, Sutrapur, Laxmibazar and one wholesale market in Shyampur, it was found that onion prices had shot up by Tk 20 to Tk 30 compared to the previous day. Many shopkeepers in different areas were charging Tk 100.

In Shyampur wholesale market, local onions were selling at Tk 65 to Tk 70 while imported ones were going for Tk 50 to Tk 60. The prices were up by Tk 20 to Tk 25 from just the previous day.

“We have nothing to do, the price has gone up as India stopped exporting onions. The price will drop again when India resumes export,” said Monowar Hossain, a trader of Shyampur wholesale market.

### IN CHATTOGRAM

Most wholesalers in Chattogram are not selling onions even though the prices have doubled in a day. They have stopped selling in hopes of

## SHIMULIA-KATHALBARI FERRY

# Experimental crossing takes 7 hours

STAR REPORT

Authorities experimentally operated a ferry through an alternative channel on Shimulia-Kathalbari route yesterday, a day after the service was suspended for an indefinite period due to navigability crisis.

But the ferry took around seven hours to cross the Padma as opposed to one hour and 10 minutes through the regular channel.

The ferry carrying 14 goods-laden trucks started from Shimulia Ghat at 12:30pm and reached Kathalbari terminal through the alternative channel via Khejurbhari-Naria-Palar Char around 7:30pm, said BIWTC officials.

Shimulia point is located in Munshiganj while Kathalbari point is in Madaripur.

The authorities could not decide until yesterday whether they would resume the ferry service through the alternative channel as it takes a lot of time, said Mohammad Ali, manager (marine) of BIWTC at Shimulia Ghat.

further price hikes.

Wholesale traders said the price of onions has increased from Tk 35-40 to Tk 70-80 in a day at Khatunganj wholesale market due to the Indian export suspension.

Omar Farook, an importer and proprietor of ST Traders, told The Daily Star that in order to overcome this crisis, many traders have opened LCs [letters of credit] for onion imports from China and Egypt in the last few days.

According to the National Board of Revenue, on Sunday a total of 1,705 tonnes of onion entered Bangladesh through four land ports from India.

On the Indian side of Benapole border, at least 150 trucks were waiting to send their goods since Monday. As soon as traders came to know of India’s decision, they increased the price to Tk 100 from Tk 60.

Hearing of the price hike, the UNO of Sharsha upazila conducted drives in some wholesale shops and fined Tk 5,000 to Tk 15,000 yesterday morning.

In Rajshahi city markets, the wholesale onion price rose to Tk 80 per kg yesterday. The price was Tk 62 two days ago.

Indian onion prices also rose to Tk 80 per kg from Tk 35.

## Workers skeptical, feel harassed

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While the ceremony was going on, elderly retired workers as well as recently sacked workers with their family members were seen waiting outside the gate for the entire day. They also staged a protest when police and security officials tried to drive them away.

Md Moktar, a laid-off worker, said, “BJMC owes us five weeks wages from last year, festival bonuses, arrears from July 2015, provident fund and gratuity. They suddenly fired us and forced us out of the factory without paying a single penny. All of us are now jobless, doing menial works and even some of us are getting involved in criminal activities for survival.”

According to these workers, the entire process of payment is being carried out in an uncoordinated manner from the very beginning which has exacerbated their sufferings.

“Due to sudden job loss amid the pandemic, we were forced to leave our residences in Dhaka and returned to our villages. Then BJMC instructed us to open a bank account and to submit various types of papers to the mill authorities. Their only way of informing us to stick a notice on the outer side of the factory gate,” said

Md Monir, another laid-off worker of the factory.

“We have to rely on our co-workers who still live near the factory to know about BJMC’s new requirements. Many of our co-workers could not keep in touch with us and don’t know anything about BJMC’s instructions,” he added.

According to the ministry’s decision announced on June 28, 24,609 laid off permanent workers and 10,107 retired workers will receive their dues directly to their bank accounts.

Fifty percent of their dues will be paid through bank cheques and the other 50 percent through Savings Instrument.

But many of these workers don’t have any idea about Savings Instruments.

“Many of us are illiterate. We don’t know what Savings Instrument is and how to fill out its forms. The officers never explained to us about it. They only instructed us to bring our wife and to sign a document. When I asked about the document, he said I don’t need to know about it,” said Md Monir.

On September 14, KJML authorities put up a notice to inform the workers to bring in

their nominees by September 17 to process their payment through Savings Instruments.

Many workers came to Dhaka with their wives and children for this purpose yesterday but were not allowed in due to the ceremony.

“We have come from far away districts to present our nominees. I don’t have any place to stay here. You can see my wife and children waiting outside the gate for hours in this excessive heat,” said Akbor Ali, a former worker.

“This is the usual working style of BJMC officials. To do a simple task, they make us wait for days,” he added.

Besides, those who received the cheques yesterday were also quite apprehensive about the complexities related to Savings Instruments.

“I will get around Taka 12 lakh taka from the mill. Today, they gave me a cheque of around six lakh taka and they will give me Savings Instruments worth of Taka six lakh. I learned today that I will not be able to encash those instruments for next three years and will get some profit every three months out of those instruments.

So, I am actually getting Tk six lakh at a time which is too little even to repair my dilapidated house,” said a

worker, who got a cheque, requesting anonymity.

Asked about the allegations of harassment and delay in disbursement, Md Abdur Rouf, chairman of BJMC said, “We cannot deny that there are some instances of harassment as it is our first time. In the next phases of disbursement, we shall be able to reduce the rate of inefficiency.”

“I don’t agree that we made delay in disbursing payments. Funds from the budget of the current fiscal year got released in the first week of September and we started the payment in the second week. We are confident that we will be able to clear all the payments within the current fiscal year,” adds Rouf.

Golam Dastagir Gazi, Bir Protik, minister for jute and textiles, said in the ceremony, “Please keep faith in Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. All of you will get all your dues on time. We shall reopen these factories with modern machinery. The laid-off experienced workers will get the opportunity to work in the jute mills again.”

On June 28, he had announced that the mills would be shut down and 24,886 of its workers would be laid off in the process.

## Khaleda’s sentence

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extension of the suspension of jail sentences as her physical condition did not improve.

The former premier was freed from jail on March 25 after the government had suspended her jail sentence for six months.

Khaleda walked out of jail at a time when the world has been hit by Covid-19 pandemic. Due to the prevailing epidemic, she did not even visit any hospital for treatment. However, doctors visited her at home regularly and gave treatment.

Khaleda landed in jail on February 8, 2017 after being sentenced to five years’ imprisonment by a special court in Dhaka in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case.

On October 30 the following year, the High Court enhanced her punishment to 10 years after dismissing her appeal in the case.

The former premier was convicted by another special court in Dhaka in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case on October 29, 2018. She was sentenced to seven years’ rigorous imprisonment by the court.