

Allow freedom of expression, hold dialogue

Reiterates UN

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The United Nations has stressed the need for all sides to engage in dialogue and asked the authorities to allow for freedom of expression, for freedom of assembly and freedom of the media.

Farhan Haq, deputy spokesman for the UN secretary-general, made the comments in response to a question at the daily press briefing at the UN headquarters in New York on Wednesday.

"Well, we've discussed this a few times in recent days, and you're aware of what Stéphane [spokesperson for the UN secretary-general] and I have said about the United Nations' concerns and its efforts concerning Bangladesh," Farhan said when he was asked about the disappearance of an opposition [BNP] spokesperson.

The deputy spokesman said, "I don't have anything new to add on the issue today [March 18], but the concerns that you were mentioning are in line with what we've been talking about."

"And so we're continuing to hold the authorities to those points and, of course, we would be concerned about any breaches of that," Farhan added.



Wife of missing BNP leader Salahuddin Ahmed, Hasina Ahmed, wearing glasses, goes to the Prime Minister's Office yesterday to submit a memorandum asking for premier Sheikh Hasina's initiative to find Salahuddin.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMAN

WANTS PM'S INITIATIVE

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Jannati freed on bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Young entrepreneur Jannati Hossain was released on bail yesterday after eight months in jail in a case filed over the death of her business partner Mostamsir Ashraf.

"What has been done to me was an injustice," Jannati told The Daily Star over the phone, referring to her horrible days in prison.

She was released from Dhaka Central Jail in the evening. Her mother, relatives and a host of well-wishers received her at the jail gate.

"I'm deeply sorry for what I've done. I know how it feels when people lose their dear ones. I could have died as well," she said, referring to the car accident she was involved in.

On July 11 last year, Jannati while driving Mostamsir's car crashed into a parked police van near Mohakhali flyover.

Mostamsir, who was in the passenger seat, was gravely injured and died on the way to hospital, police said. Tejgaon police sued her for reckless driving.

Ten days later, Mostamsir's family filed a case against Jannati, her brothers Jubair and Junaid, father Delwar Hossain and husband Raymen Siddique, alleging that it was a planned murder to take over his business.

Last year, during the hearing of the bail petition, a High Court judge "felt embarrassed" while another one refused to hear the petition without

mentioning any reason. Lower courts denied her bail twice.

On March 12, the HC granted bail to Jannati in the case following a bail petition filed by her.

The Supreme Court on Monday upheld the HC's bail to her after the government moved a petition before the SC chamber judge, seeking a stay on the HC bail.

Greece, Ukraine crises dominate EU summit

AFP, Brussels

Greece's Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras will plead with European counterparts at a summit in Brussels Thursday for cash to keep his country afloat and in the euro as officials warned that the situation was becoming "dangerous".

European Union leaders will also debate whether to extend economic sanctions against Russia over the Ukraine conflict until December, although they will likely delay the decision until later this year.

While Greece is not officially on the agenda for the meeting of the bloc's 28 leaders, a senior EU official said it was the "elephant in the room" amid fears of a catastrophic "Grexit" from the single currency.

Solar Impulse-2 crosses airspace of Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Swiss-built Solar Impulse-2 plane on a historic round-the-world journey crossed Bangladesh airspace yesterday.

The fuel-free, purely solar-powered aircraft took off yesterday morning from the northern Indian town of Varanasi and was expected to land for its next stop in Mandalay in Myanmar.

The plane entered Bangladesh over Jessore/Satkhira area around 12 noon and flew over Rangamati/Bandarban around 3:00pm before heading for Myanmar.

The aim of the five-month-long journey is to give a global spotlight to solar power, lightweight composite materials and other green technologies.

Impulse-2 is powered by more than 17,000 solar cells on its wings that recharge the plane's batteries, enabling it to fly during the day or night.

The single-seat plane which flies ideally at around 25 knots, or 45 kph, is also carrying 1,300 lbs of lithium-polymer batteries on board and its wingspan is wider than a Boeing 747's. It, however, weighs about as much as a family car.

Swiss pilots Bertrand Piccard and Andre Borschberg are taking turns flying the world's first aircraft powered by solar energy as they attempt to go around the globe. They began the journey on March 9 when Borschberg flew the first leg of the trip from Abu Dhabi (UAE) to Muscat, Oman.

For the second leg, Piccard was at the controls. The 1,465-kilometer (910-mile) flight from Muscat to Ahmadabad in western India took nearly 16 hours, and took the plane over the Arabian Sea in its first sea crossing.

On Wednesday, pilot Borschberg flew the aircraft to Varanasi from Ahmadabad.

The Solar Impulse 2 is slated to make 12 stops during its 35,000-kilometre world trip, including two stops in China, before it crosses over the Pacific Ocean.

Wife seeks PM's intervention

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document to an office assistance of the Prime Minister's Office around 11:25am.

She was accompanied by one of Salahuddin's cousin and his wife.

"She [the PM] is also a mother, wife, like me; she can understand my mental situation and ask the law enforcers to produce my husband before people immediately," Hasina Ahmed told reporters later.

The memorandum has also urged the PM to issue "special" guidelines (for the law enforcers) in a bid to trace the BNP joint secretary general.

"If my husband committed any crime or is accused in any case, he should be produced before the court without any delay for starting his proper trial," Hasina Ahmed added in the memorandum.

On March 10, some 20 to 30 people detained Salahuddin from a house at Uttara in the capital, introducing themselves as law enforcers, especially as Detective Branch of police personnel, reads the document.

Following a writ petition filed with the High Court, police headquarters, Dhaka Metropolitan Police, Rab, Criminal Investigation Department and Special Branch of police submitted five separate reports to the court, claiming they

neither arrested nor detained the BNP leader.

"Despite repeated attempts in the last nine days, [we] failed to know any whereabouts of Salahuddin. Even [we] did not get any satisfactory help from the law enforcers in this regard."

Hasina Ahmed, also a former BNP lawmaker, asked for an appointment with the PM in the memorandum.

HT Imam, an adviser to the PM, yesterday told BBC Bangla service that it was the "big question" whether the BNP leader, who stands accused in several cases, went into hiding as police were looking for him.

He said it was certainly the state's duty to find out whether Salahuddin was missing or hiding himself (somewhere).

Meanwhile, Dhaka City BNP has announced that it would bring out processions at all thanas and wards in the capital tomorrow, demanding safe return of the party leader.

Mirza Abbas and Habib-un-Nabi Sohel, convener and member-secretary of the BNP unit, declared the programme in a statement yesterday.

PHONE CALL

Meanwhile, after a "tip-off from an unknown caller" that Salahuddin was in Char areas of Fulchhari upazila in

Gaibandha, police last night conducted a drive but could not find the BNP leader.

Around 12:30am today, Ashrafur Islam, Gaibandha superintendent of police, told The Daily Star that they searched the areas after the deputy commissioner in Dhaka Metropolitan Police (Uttara division) had told them about "the phone call from an unidentified person."

Fulchhari UNO Mustafizur Rahman, who was with the police team during the drive, said it continued for about four hours from around 8:30pm.

The Daily Star could not be sure who received the phone call of the unknown person. According to police sources, it was a senior official of Uttara division DMP. However, there was official confirmation about this last night.

"It has been found that the phone call was made from Chittagong area," the Gaibandha SP said, suspecting that it was only to create confusion. The number was later found switched off, he added.

Around 10:30pm yesterday, Salahuddin's wife told The Daily Star said they learnt about the tip-off from media reports and the BNP sources. "But nobody confirmed that Salahuddin was in Gaibandha."

Bangladesh on track despite all obstacles

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invested section against her government, saying, "Those people even criticised us when Bangladesh qualified to play Test matches".

Now Bangladesh is showing its capacity with defeating cricket giant England and sweeping to quarterfinal round. "One day we will surely win the world cup," she said amid applause from the audience after news broke that India lost its third wicket in the quarterfinal match with Bangladesh at Melbourne Cricket Ground.

"Bangladesh is going ahead and will go ahead. None will be able to hinder the advancement of the nation," the PM added.

Laying importance on scientific studies, Hasina said, "Science is linked with everything. None can move by ignoring

science. A country cannot progress without its development in the area of science and technology."

Congratulating the recipients of the fellowships and donations, she urged them for conducting their research with utmost devotion and responsibility.

"The fellowships and donations are being provided from the taxes of poor people of Bangladesh. So I hope you will ensure maximum utilisation of the public money," she told her audience.

After independence, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had undertaken multipurpose programmes for taking forward the country in science and technology.

Among those, the atomic commission was upgraded, industrial research was strengthened and green revolution was

implemented apart from giving importance to agricultural research, Hasina said.

The PM also said her government had given utmost priority to science and technology based education at school level. Subjects related to science and information technology are being included in the curriculum of primary and secondary schools.

She mentioned that the government support to scientific research and studies had already yielded result. Invention of genome sequence of jute by Bangladesh has opened up new opportunities for the jute sector.

"Considering the limited resources of the country, we have to proceed with proper management of the resources along with their economic and sustainable use," Hasina told the function.

Tigers out, but not down

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The first mistake was made when Bangladesh were looking to take control of the match. Imrul Kayes came forward from deep and claimed a catch off Rohit, but to their horror the Tigers saw square-leg umpire Aleem Dar had called a no-ball for the delivery's excessive height. Replays showed the batsman had met the waist-high ball well in front of his normal stance as the ball was on its way down, but the decision was not referred so it was not reversed.

On the other hand, when Shikhar Dhawan caught Riyad's lofted shot in this second attempt, whether his left-leg disturbed the rope or not remained a big question, as replays proved inconclusive. Another flashpoint was when a confident lbw shout from Mashrafe against Suresh Raina failed to convince Ian Gould and was ruled out even after a review. Raina played his part after his hundred in the last game with a 57-ball 65. And these unseemly issues took centre stage of discussions despite India's comfortable victory in the end.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board has taken these misgivings seriously and taken the matter to the ICC with an official complaint.

In the end however, Bangladesh failed to live up to the expectations in front of 51,000 spectators at the big bowl and the MCG was at the crux of both of their largest defeats in this World Cup, against India and Sri Lanka, in the group stages.

Sharma and Dhawan provided a solid platform after India skipper MS Dhoni decided to bat with the threat of a late shower looming, before Shakib Al Hasan provided a much-needed breakthrough in the 17th over to send Dhawan back to the dressing room, ending a 75-run partnership. Rubel Hossain followed up by claiming the prized wicket of Virat Kohli in the next

over as the Tigers began to claw their way back into the game.

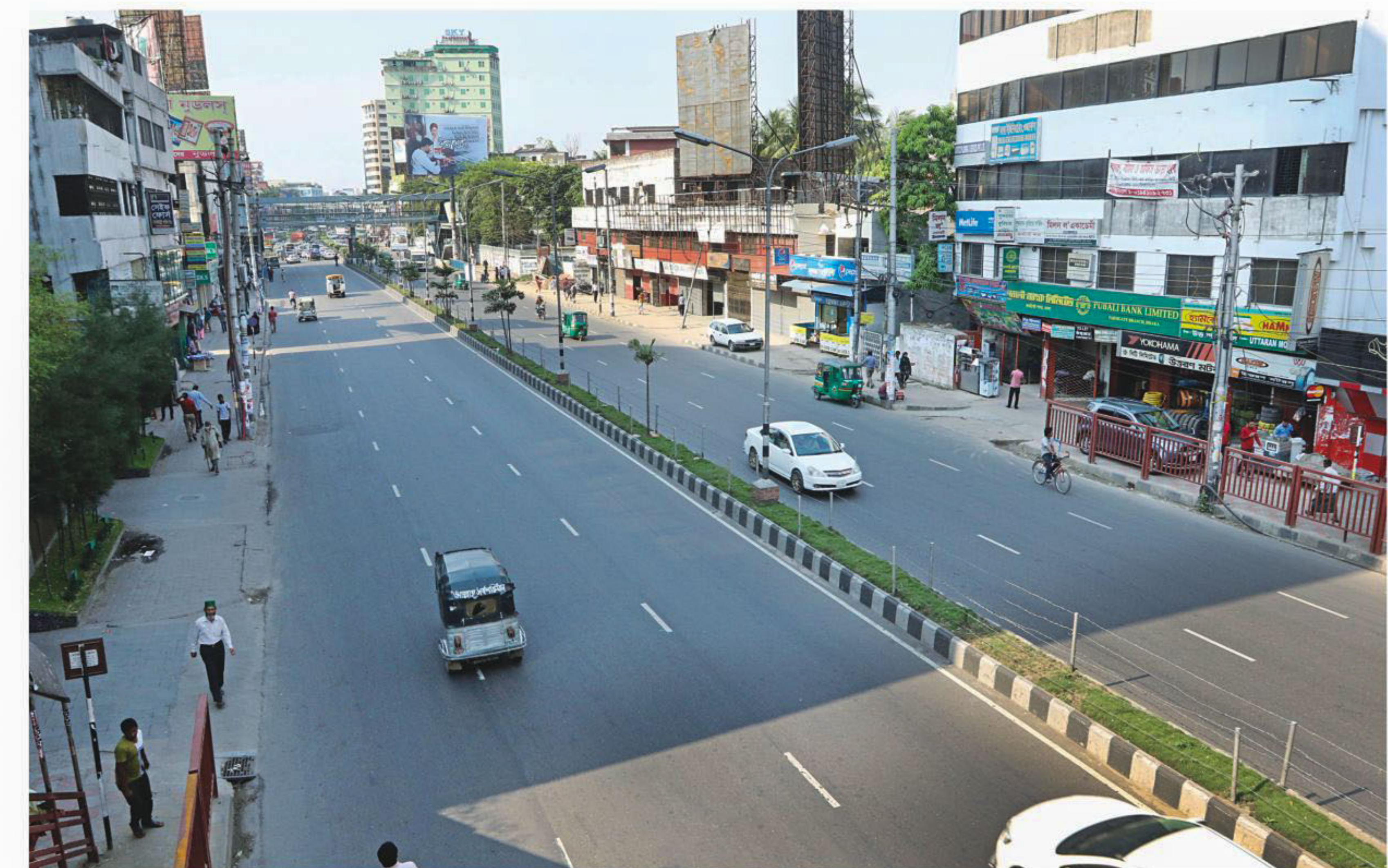
Taskin Ahmed then dismissed Ajinkya Rahane to bring a cock-a-hoop celebration with his skipper Mashrafe as India looked in some trouble at 115 for 3, but Raina joined Sharma, who also offered a return catch to Nasir Hossain when the right-hander was on 24, to snatch the initiative with a dominant 122-run fourth-wicket stand. India however had a calculative batting effort all through their innings to pass the 300-mark and the defensive bowling from Bangladesh and poor fielding also helped them keep their score ticking.

The anticipated rain finally came, stopping the match when India were 186-3 in 38.1 overs, but play resumed after a 10-minute recess and ended without any further intervention from Mother Nature.

No team successfully chased down more than 300 runs at MCG, so the writing was on the wall for Bangladesh after India finished at 302-6 in 50 overs, but the lacklustre batting from the Tigers surprised everyone, especially as they established themselves as a good batting unit throughout the tournament.

Tamim Iqbal hit some boundaries but Bangladesh didn't get the required start from their openers while the middle-order, after Mahmudullah was dismissed, batted without any purpose against the Indian bowlers, who bowled in right areas and were supported by their electrifying fielding.

In the end, the Tigers' dream turned into a nightmare as they went down by over a hundred runs, but they can still come back home with their heads held high after fulfilling their dream of progressing into uncharted territory, the knockout stages of the World Cup, for the first time in Bangladesh's cricketing history.



With the Tigers taking on India at the MCG yesterday, streets of Dhaka became almost deserted as the city dwellers were glued to their TV screens. The photo of Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue was taken near Farmgate where heavy traffic has become common even on a hartal day.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN