

Dhaka treads carefully on Gulf crisis

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

As diplomatic crisis hits the Gulf, creating fears that it might affect Bangladesh's labour market in the region, Foreign Minister AH Mahmood Ali yesterday said they were "aware" of the Qatar-Saudi Arabia situation.

"We are aware of it," he said, responding to a question during a press conference on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's June 15-16 visit to Sweden, and refrained from discussing details of the situation.

On June 5, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Libya, the Maldives and Mauritius severed diplomatic relations with Qatar. The states accused Qatar of supporting terrorist groups, particularly the Muslim Brotherhood movement, as well as of interfering in other countries' domestic affairs.

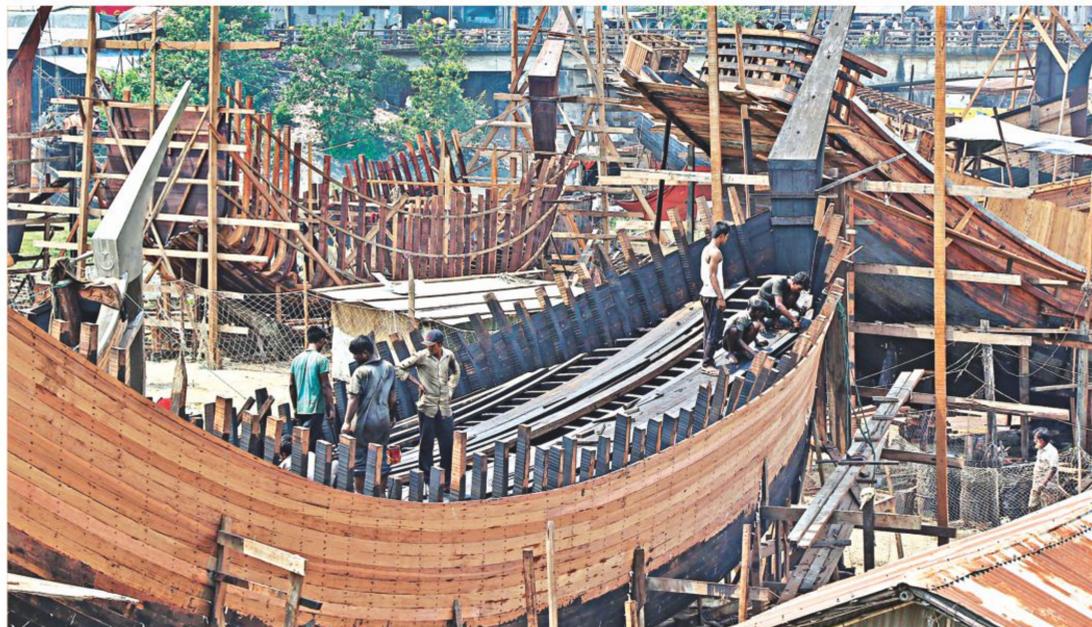
Yemen cut diplomatic relations citing Doha's links with Houthis.

The countries closed their air space, sea and border transports with Qatar, which relies heavily on imports from its neighbours. The crisis already affected Qatar's stock exchange and currency, and there have been panic buying amid fears of food shortages.

This is the biggest diplomatic crisis to hit the region in years, and Bangladeshi experts and businesses fear the situation would leave a bad impact on Bangladeshi migrants in the region.

Meanwhile, the Qatari foreign ministry rejected the accusations of Doha's interference in other countries' domestic affairs and expressed regret over the decision of the Gulf States to cut off diplomatic ties with it.

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Craftsmen passing busy time working on wooden boats in Chittagong city. Each of the watercrafts requires rigorous craftsmanship for around three months to complete the work. The boats then set sail on the Bay of Bengal for fishing. According to the boat makers, the dry season, especially from December to June, is the ideal time for making the fishing boats. The photos were taken from Razakhali canal near the third Karnaphuli Bridge recently.

PHOTOS: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Boats in the making

SHAHADAT HOSSAIN and ANURUP KANTI DAS, Ctg

While travelling over the third Karnaphuli Bridge of Chittagong city, one is bound to notice the shoreline of the Razakhali canal for its vibrancy.

With rows of some nearly finished and some unfinished wooden boats lined up by the banks of the water body and craftsmen busy working on the watercrafts, the area is abuzz with activities.

Visiting the area recently, it was seen that carpenters, fitters and mechanics -- all were passing busy time working on the wooden boats.

Some were busy constructing the hulls, sides and decks; while others engaged in putting the final touches.

Boat making is a mammoth task. It takes craftsmen over three months to build one while working for around eight to ten hours a day, they said.

And the dry season, especially from December to June, is the ideal time for making the fishing boats, they added.

The craftsmen said the construction work of around five fishing boats were going on in full swing while seven were already completed. The boats were around 50 feet in length and 15 feet in width, said Shah Alam, a boat maker for 36 years.

Different types of timbers including Garjan, Goda and Jarul were required for making a fishing boat, he said.

"We need some 1,200 feet of timbers for a boat," he said. "Timbers are imported from countries like Cameroon, Belgium, Malaysia and Myanmar."

Abdur Rashid, another boat maker, said it takes around four months of rigorous work to make a boat ready to set sail.

While, Akkas Ali, a fishing boat contractor, said four to five types of craftsmen are required to complete a boat. "A new boat could be used for upto ten years at a stretch," said Akkas, who is constructing five boats under contracts from the owners.

Md Babul, an engine fitter by profession, was working alongside his assistant next to an almost finished one. "We have to work with other mechanics as well and look after the entire work," he said.

Siraj Company, owner of three under-construction fishing boats, said, "This being the off season, new boats are getting constructed or repaired. They will be used for fishing in the Bay of Bengal from next month." It costs around Tk 60 lakh to Tk 70 lakh to make a fishing boat, he said.

SAGOR-RUNI MURDER Court wants to know probe progress again

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday again asked Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) to submit by July 11 the progress report on the case filed over the killing of journalist couple Sagor Sarowar-Meherun Runi in February 2012.

Metropolitan Magistrate Khurshid Alam passed the order as Assistant Superintendent of Police Mohiuddin Ahmed of Rapid Action Battalion and also investigation officer (IO) of the case, failed to submit any probe report yesterday.

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And so it begins...

Tickets for bus, train go on sale today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of holidaymakers are expected to throng different bus terminals and Kamalapur Railway Station in the capital this morning to collect advance tickets for buses and trains to go home for Eid festival, to be celebrated in the last week of the month.

As experienced before, a large number of people will start gathering at the bus counters and the railway station soon after midnight.

Private bus operators will start selling advance tickets from different bus counters from 5:30am, said Faruk Talukder Sohel, chairman of Bangladesh Bus-Truck Owners' Association.

When asked about the allegation that many bus owners increased fares ahead of Eid, Sohel said, "The big companies never increase fares. Some relatively small ones do...It's not possible for us to control that." Bangladesh Railway will begin selling

advance tickets at Kamalapur Railway Station from 8:00am today for June 21, said Nahid Hossain Khan, its deputy director.

Advance train tickets for June 22, 23, 24, and 25 would be sold on June 13, 14, 15 and 16 respectively.

State-run BRTC will start selling advance bus tickets from June 20. Some 900 buses will be in operation to ensure smooth journey of homebound people, said Mizanur Rahman, chairman of BRTC.

SPECIAL LAUNCH SERVICE FROM JUNE 20 Special launch service for Eid will start from June 20, said Zainal Abedin, joint director (Dhaka river port) of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA).

The decision was taken at a meeting participated by BIWTA officials, representatives of launch owners, workers' associations and law enforcement agencies, he said.

Also, selling of advance launch tickets

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OC among 8 sued over extortion

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Eight people, including the officer-in-charge of Badda Police Station, were sued yesterday on charge of demanding Tk 2 lakh as extortion in the capital.

Nurunnahar Nasima Begum, a resident of Badda, filed the case with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka against the eight, including four policemen.

After hearing the case, Metropolitan Magistrate Mazharul Islam recorded statement of the complainant, took cognisance of the extortion charge and ordered Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to investigate the case.

The accused are: OC MA Jalil, Sub-Inspector Md Shahid, ASIs Deen Islam and Md Abdur Rashid, civilians Jahanara Rashid Rupa, her husband Ataur Rahman Kayser, and two others Rokeya Rashid and Md Shukur Ali.

According to the case statement, Nurunnahar had long been at loggerheads over the ownership of a piece of land with her stepdaughter Rupa.

Both Nurunnahar and Rupa live at the same house at Badda along with their respective family members.

The case statement said Rupa, her husband Kayser and two others--Rokeya and electrician Shukur--went to

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90pc Dhaka residents against govt for price hike of essentials

JP lawmaker tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Main opposition Jatiya Party (JP) lawmaker Shawkat Chowdhury yesterday told parliament that 90 percent people of Dhaka city are against the Awami League-led grand alliance government due to price hike of essentials.

"There are 18 seats in Dhaka city. But I doubt whether we [considering JP a component of AL-led alliance] will be able to win a single seat," he said participating in the discussion on the proposed budget.

"What I am telling is the truth. I am telling what people are thinking [about the government]. I don't care what you [AL lawmakers] are thinking about my opinion. But I must say that the total situation should be analysed," he also said.

Pointing to the price hike of rice, the JP MP said plenty of rice is being produced in the country but the price is still high.

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People to reelect AL Hopes prime minister

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday hoped that people will reelect Awami League in the next general election to maintain the continuity of development in the country.

"In the next election, I believe the people who are now getting the benefits of development will surely vote for 'boat' and reelect Awami League to maintain the continuity of development and thus turn Bangladesh into a mid-income country by 2021 and a prosperous one by 2041," she said.

Hasina said this when leaders of Awami League and its associate bodies met her at Gono Bhaban in the morning, marking the ninth anniversary of her release from prison.

On this day in 2008, Hasina was released from the special sub-jail set up on the premises of Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban after remaining captive there for nearly 11 months. She was arrested from her Sudha Sadan residence at Dhanmondi on July 16, 2007 during the military-backed caretaker government, which assumed power amid the political changeover of 1/11, 2007.

She said, "Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is not amongst us now. But, I believe it's my duty to

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No polls without BNP: Khaleda

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday said there would be no election in the country keeping her party away.

"The Awami League came to know that if a fair election is held, they will surely be defeated. That's why they want to keep BNP away from the election through various conspiracies. But the election cannot be held without BNP. It will be held under an election-time supportive government, not under Sheikh Hasina," she said.

The former prime minister came up with the remarks while addressing an iftar programme hosted by Muktiyodha Dal in the capital.

Khaleda alleged that in many parts of the country, popular BNP leaders were being harassed, labelled as Rajakars and war criminals, and arrested. "The illegal government has taken an evil strategy to keep them away from the polls."

She cautioned that the tenure of the Awami League was coming to an end, and the party's leaders would have to flee as 2018 would be the people's year.



With Eid approaching, cobblers are busy making shoes at a factory in East Madarbari area of Chittagong city. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Policy soon to boost leather-goods, footwear export

UNB, Dhaka

The government has initiated a move to formulate a policy for capacity building of leather goods and footwear manufacturers to boost export.

Officials at the commerce ministry said they have already drafted a policy taking into consideration the government's Vision 2021.

In the draft policy, it was proposed that 16.5 percent cash incentives to the exporters against their exports would be provided and a national design

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To get respite from unbearable heat, people from lower income groups rest under the Keane Bridge over the river Surma in Sylhet yesterday. The mercury reached 34.6 degrees Celsius in the district on the day.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASTIR

Celebrating

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Years of Glory

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