

Dipu brings golden joy

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All the attention of media in the morning was on kata events of karate, where Humaira Akhter Antara won the first medal for the country, a bronze, before Hassan Khan Sun, a gold-medallist from the 2010 SA Games, followed suit. Another bronze came from the women's team event.

Sun was tipped to win a gold, so his third-place finish had deflated the Bangladesh contingent. Just at that time came the good news from taekwondo as Dipu secured a first gold medal for the red and greens on the second day of the Games and the first medal-deciding day.

Dipu was almost lost for words when the Bangladeshi journalists thronged to him for photographs and comments. The lanky man gathered his thoughts before saying: "I'm still in a trance. I can't express my feelings in words. We've here to represent the nation and the fact that the first gold came through me makes me very proud."

Hailing from Rangamati, Dipu started taekwondo in 2001 after being influenced by his elder brother, who used to practice the sport once. Watching martial art movies of Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan had also played a part in growing his interest towards taekwondo, which is a Korean form of martial arts, making its first foray into the SA Games in 1999.

But he never participated in the South Asian Games despite winning

a few gold medals in unofficial tournaments abroad. Winning gold in this competition was obviously something very special.

"I had a dream of raising the Bangladeshi flag on a stage like this with the national anthem playing. The dream started when I got called for the national team camp after three years of service for Bangladesh Army. Today that dream has come true," Dipu said with a broad grin of satisfaction.

The day got better for Dipu as he later bagged a bronze medal, pairing with Mousumi Akter. Bangladesh grabbed five more bronze medals in other events of taekwondo and looked on course to record their best-ever tally in this sport.

Bangladesh first won a gold medal in taekwondo 2006 in Colombo before doubling the tally at home four years later. However, Bangladesh finished with only three bronze medals in the last Games in India three years ago.

Bangladesh Olympic Association secretary general Syed Shahed Reza, who was moving from one venue to another along with his colleagues, expressed confidence that Bangladesh would fare far better not only in taekwondo, but in other disciplines as well. "As I said before, we will do much better than previous times. I'm very happy with this gold medal and I am sure there will be more gold medals from taekwondo," Reza said.

Hawker eviction



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The eviction drives are poorly planned as hawkers return, usually, hours after being removed, experts said. Hawker leaders also claim that about Tk 900 crore is extorted from them every year, allegedly by police, political influential and city corporation officials. This is also a reason why they can return so easily.

"In many cases, we reclaim a footpath in the morning, but they [hawkers] return to the same place in the evening," a meeting source quoted DSCC Mayor Mohammad Sayeed Khokon as saying at the 13th board meeting of the Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA) on Sunday.

During the previous board meeting held on June 19, a 12-member special committee was formed to free footpaths from grabbers, and identify and remove illegal vehicles from the streets within two months.

Khokon was made chief of the committee, while DNCC Mayor Md Atiquil Islam, the DMP commissioner, and chairpersons of BRTA, Rajuk, BRTC were made members.

Khandakar Rakibur Rahman, executive director of DTCA, submitted a report to the meeting, which said the DSCC had evicted illegal occupation on 32 spots and reclaimed 10.35 kilometre of footpaths till November 19.

It had also made about 29.65 km footpath useable for pedestrians.

The eviction drive was carried out largely in Gulistan, Paltan, Motijheel, Sadarghat, Eskaton, Jatrabari, New Market, Elephant Road and Khilgaon.

The DNCC too carried out such drives and freed about 16km long footpaths in Uttara, Gulshan, Khilkhet, Karwan Bazar, Mirpur, Mohakhali, Shyamoli and Agargaon areas.

The report also mentioned the places and dates of the drives.

According to the locations mentioned in the report, these correspondents yesterday visited Gulistan, Paltan, Motijheel, Farmgate, Green Road, Karwan Bazar and found many hawkers on the footpaths there.

The pedestrian's suffering was yet to cease.

A source said that expressing frustration over the issue, the DSCC mayor told the meeting that the number of hawkers was rising and it seemed the whole city nowadays would turn into a market in the morning.

"It's not possible to keep the footpath free of illegal occupation unless each of the police stations keep continuous monitoring in its areas," the DSCC mayor was quoted as saying.

A source quoted Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner Md Shafiqul Islam, who was present at the meeting, as saying that they did not have the necessary manpower

and logistical support, like vehicles, for continuous monitoring of the footpaths.

The city has around 440kms of footpaths.

VESTED INTEREST, POOR PLANNING THE CAUSES

"What do we do? We've families to feed. The government promised us rehabilitation, but there is no progress in that," a hawker, Sabuj, told these correspondents during their visit to Motijheel.

After Sunday's meeting, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said both the city corporations would intensify their eviction drives, but he made no mention of the problems plaguing the drives or about the rehabilitation programmes.

In 2017, the DSCC had prepared a list of around 6,000 hawkers in different areas under its jurisdiction and allocated Tk 3 crore for their rehabilitation.

The work for it, however, has been going on at a snail's pace, forcing the hawkers to return to the streets, the street vendors claimed.

Contacted, DSCC Chief Estate Officer Rasel Sabrin said he was new and unaware of the rehabilitation programme.

Rasel said they had fixed 10 designated spots in the capital -- such as in the Baitul Mukarram mosque area, near Ideal School and College, Segunbagicha and Dilkusha -- for holiday markets. "But they [the hawkers] are more interested in crowded places," he added.

Urban designer Iqbal Habib blamed a lack of combined planning behind the messy situation.

He said occupied footpaths were a major reason behind traffic congestions, as pedestrians were often forced to use the main roads to avoid the crowded walkways.

He said more than 40 percent of the trips in the Dhaka city were between one and half kilometres, and if the footpaths could be kept free, then people would use those instead of commuting by road.

Iqbal said hawkers should be registered first and be rehabilitated on the free spaces beside footpaths.

But such planning was absent to serve vested interest, Iqbal alleged.

There are over 5 lakh hawkers in the country and each of them pays Tk 200 to Tk 250 every day to "linemen," who serve as private agents of extortionists, said MA Kashem, president of Bangladesh Hawkers Federation.

"Though the government has recently launched a drive against extortionists, toll collection from hawkers is yet to be stopped," he added.

Khandakar Rakibur Rahman, also a member secretary of the 12-member special committee formed to free footpaths, told The Daily Star, "There might have been some problems in the strategy. We could not involve all. We should change the strategy."



Workers of the nine state-owned jute mills in Khulna-Jashore industrial belt stage demonstrations yesterday to press home their 11-point demand, including payment of pending wages and implementation of a wage commission. Workers claim they are due up to 11-weeks' wages. Story on page 5.

PHOTO: DIPANKAR ROY

Choose hope or surrender

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out of the Paris Agreement.

In his impassioned appeal, Guterres cited new findings from the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) confirming that the last five years have been the hottest ever recorded.

Concentration of planet-warming CO2 in the atmosphere has also reached levels not seen in three to five million years, the WMO will report this week.

"The last time there was a comparable concentration," Guterres said, "the temperature was two to three degrees Celsius warmer, and sea levels were 10 to 20 metres (32 to 66 feet) higher than today."

A major UN science report last year reset the Paris accord's threshold for a climate-safe world from 2C to 1.5C, concluding that the global economy must be "carbon neutral" by 2050 to stay under that threshold.

"What is still lacking is political will -- to put a price on carbon, to stop subsidies on fossil fuels, to stop building coal power plants," Guterres said.

"The best available science, through

the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), tells us today that going beyond that (1.5C) would lead us to catastrophic disaster."

President Hilda Heine of the Marshall Islands warned that breaching the 1.5C barrier would spell the end of her water-bound homeland.

"The most vulnerable atoll nations like my country already face death row" due to rising seas and devastating storm surges, she said via a remote video link-up.

Governments that fail to come forward with strong carbon-cutting commitments over the next year are effectively "passing sentence on our future, forcing our country to die."

'LEADERS CANNOT FLEE'

The talks in Madrid are focused on finalising rules for global carbon markets, and setting up a fund to help countries already reeling from climate-enhanced heatwaves, droughts, floods and storms made worse by rising seas.

Frontline negotiators describe COP25 as "technical talks" setting the stage for next year's meeting in Glasgow.

where countries must confront the yawning gap between the Paris targets and current emissions.

But events outside the conference hall in Madrid may change the agenda.

"A key question will be to what extent the growing social movements throughout the world will be factored into decisions of the COP25," said Laurence Tubiana, CEO of the European Climate Foundation and, as a former negotiator for France, a main architect of the Paris Agreement.

A climate action group steeped in civil disobedience, meanwhile, laid plans to descend on the Spanish capital.

"Extinction Rebellion calls on Rebels Without Borders to come to Madrid," the group said in a tweet, using the hashtag #UltimatumCOP25.

"Extinction Rebellion reminds leaders they cannot flee the climate and ecological emergency," the group said separately in a press release.

"Civil disobedience and direct nonviolent actions coordinated by global rebels will fill Madrid's streets and squares."

Take responsibility for climate migrants

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become an existential threat for climate vulnerable countries like Bangladesh. "We are fighting the battle on two fronts.

First, mitigation measures to reduce and eventually reach zero emission in future. Second, adaptation measures in areas where irreparable damage has been done."

Hasina said Bangladesh, the largest delta in the world, is the worst-affected country by adverse impacts of climate change. "Up to 2050 from now, our annual GDP loss will be 2 percent and at this rate by 2100, the loss will be a staggering 9 percent."

She said when people would become vulnerable and left with no choice to survive, they would resort to any action endangering state, regional and global security. "Their weakness and vulnerability make them easy prey for threats like radicalisation and we are already experiencing its devastating effects all over the world."

Mentioning that Bangladesh is the first LDC to establish a Climate Change Trust Fund, the PM said Bangladesh has so far spent more than \$415 million from its own resources for mitigation and adaptation purposes. "We are set to spend as much as \$10 billion to make the country less vulnerable to natural disasters."

She said the presence of 1.1 million Rohingyas, who fled persecution in Myanmar, in Bangladesh has caused an environmental and social havoc in Cox's Bazar, an environmentally critical area, with the loss of forest, hills, biodiversity and livelihood of locals.

'ADDRESS MIGRANTS' NEEDS'

Speaking at another event at Feria de Madrid, Hasina yesterday urged the international community to initiate discussions on creation of an appropriate framework to address the needs of the people who became displaced due to climate change.

"Relocation and protection of displaced persons need due focus in global discourse to ensure their protection. We need to commence

discussions on creation of an appropriate framework to address the needs of people displaced due to climate change," she told an event titled "Action for Survival: Vulnerable Nations COP25 Leaders' Summit".

The PM urged all nations to join their hands to combat climate change to secure the children's future.

"We are possibly confronting the gravest global challenge of our time.... Our children will not forgive us if we fail to ensure their future. Every moment, the cost of our inaction is devastating every living person on earth. The time to act is now."

Pointing at the leaders of Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), Hasina said, "We now have a situation where the most vulnerable countries, which deserve the highest level of priority, are failing to access whatever support that is being realised."

She said major emitters show extreme reluctance on mitigation, which may wreck the international climate regime and put the climate vulnerable countries like Bangladesh at peril. "Hence, we shouldn't hesitate to demand accountability for inaction."

"We are also looking towards the 2020 Climate Adaptation Summit in the Netherlands to strengthen our adaptation efforts," she said.

She said the vulnerable countries suffer the most due to their limited capacity to cope with and specific geographical features. "We are bearing the brunt of the damage though we made negligible or no contribution to the menace. This constitutes a serious injustice and must be acknowledged by the global community."

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, Costa Rica President Carlos Alvarado Quesada, Marshall Islands President Hilda Heine, and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet Jeria, among others, spoke at the event.

'KEEP UP PRESSURE ON MYANMAR' Meanwhile, Hasina yesterday renewed

her call to the world community, including the European countries, to keep up pressure on Myanmar so that it takes more than one million Rohingyas back.

She made the appeal during her meetings with Netherlands Prime Minister Mark Rutte and European Council President Charles Michel at Feria de Madrid on the sidelines of the COP25.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen briefed reporters after the two meetings.

The PM said Rohingyas were cutting down trees in the hilly areas for making their shelters. She said the government was trying to relocate the Rohingyas to Bhashan Char temporarily after preparing good facilities for them to give them a risk-free shelter.

Hasina said Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi would be in The Hague next week to attend the hearing of the International Court of Justice. "You should put some pressure on Myanmar and continue it," she added.

During the meeting with the European Council president, Hasina said Bangladesh was in continuous dialogue with Myanmar. "But the problem is the Rohingyas won't go back unless they get the assurance of having Myanmar citizenship."

The premier said the Rohingyas felled all the trees around their living places. "You can help us solve the Rohingya problem," she told Charles Michel.

The Bangladesh foreign minister said the PM agreed to take over the presidency of the Climate Vulnerable Forum as President of Marshall Islands Hilda C Heine during the climate conference proposed her name for taking the responsibility.

Hasina said she would take over if other leaders of the member countries agreed on the proposal.

During the meeting with her Dutch counterpart Mark Rutte, the PM invited him to attend the celebrations of the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman next year. Mark accepted the invitation.

Private sector may face credit crunch

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significantly," Ahsan said.

Lack of reforms in the NBR also aggravated the revenue collection situation, he said.

Import of industrial raw materials has been alarmingly decreasing in recent months, delivering a blow to export earnings, he said.

The sluggish revenue collection raises questions about the GDP growth figures of recent years, he said, adding that a strong growth usually helps the government with revenue collection and avoid heavy bank borrowing, Ahsan said.

As per the government data,

Bangladesh pulled off an 8.13 percent GDP growth in fiscal 2018-19, one of the highest in the world.

A Bangladesh Bank official wishing not to be named said government borrowing from savings certificates and bonds decreased recently due to a 10 percent tax slapped on the profits. This is forcing the government to borrow more from banks as an alternative.

Salehuddin Ahmed, a former governor of the central bank, said,

"The government is trying to arrest

high interest rate on lending. But it will become difficult as the high

government borrowing will worsen the ongoing liquidity crisis."

The government bank borrowing would be an impediment to bringing down the high interest rates on lending, he said.

He said the state's bank borrowing would increase further as the government is extremely focused on financing mega infrastructure projects.

An inflationary pressure is likely to impact common people, he said.

Syed Mahbubur Rahman, chairman of the Association of Bankers, Bangladesh, a forum