

BANGLADESH
UPDATE



312
New cases in 24hrs



15,74,948
Total cases



27,961
Deaths



15,38,193
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE



5,188,772
Deaths



259,476,245
Total cases

Build culture of tolerance

President calls upon political parties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President Abdul Hamid yesterday stressed the need for building a culture of tolerance and mutual respect among the political parties.

He said unity among all, irrespective of religion, caste, and creed, is required to implement Bangabandhu's promise to build "Sonar Bangla".

"Unity must be built against communalism, undemocratic practices and violence. Political parties need to build a culture of tolerance and mutual respect," the head of the state said while delivering his speech at the Jatiya Sangsad.

Hamid addressed the House on the occasion of the special discussion in parliament to mark the Golden Jubilee of Independence.

The day's sitting began around 3:05pm, with Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury in the chair.

The president in his written speech, approved by the Cabinet on Monday, highly lauded Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her strong and indomitable leadership, successes in various sectors, successfully tackling the Covid-19 pandemic and making Bangladesh a role model in the world in terms of development.

"Let us forget the differences among parties and opinions in the Golden Jubilee of Independence and pay the debt we owe to the millions of martyrs by accelerating the democratic journey and socio-economic development of the country," the president said.

Talking about good governance, Hamid said political leaders, civil society members and stakeholders, irrespective of party affiliation, must work together to establish good governance in the country.

"All-out efforts are going on to establish good governance in



the country. The Anti-Corruption Commission, the National Human Rights Commission and the Information Commission are actively discharging their responsibilities [in this regard]."

He said the rule of law has been established by speedily disposing of verdicts in the Bangabandhu murder case, war crimes and other sensational cases, including those for crimes against humanity.

"The government's 'zero tolerance' policy to curb corruption, drugs, militancy, terrorism and extremism and communalism has brought relief to the country, which is being lauded worldwide," the president said.

Pointing to the pandemic, Hamid said it has temporarily hampered the country's development and progress, but couldn't stop it.

"Due to timely and far-sighted steps taken by the government, coronavirus infection and mortality rates in Bangladesh are relatively low compared to many developed countries."

Hamid said under the able leadership of the prime minister, Bangladesh has made tremendous progress in socio-economic conditions. Bangladesh is now one of the 11 countries in the world which are termed "emerging eleven" for future development.

"Today, Bangladesh is the 41st largest economy in the world."

The president said the poverty rate has come down to 20.5 percent in 2019 from 40 percent in 2005 as a result of the strong leadership of the PM.

He said under the strong and far-sighted leadership of the prime minister, Bangladesh is moving towards rapid development.



Demonstrating students of Notre Dame College block the Gulistan intersection yesterday after their fellow student Nayeem Hasan was run over and killed by a garbage truck earlier in the day.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

White Elephants they're now

FROM PAGE 1

their 20-year life span. AFCCL and CIUFL were commissioned in 1981 and 1987 respectively while JFCL started production in 1991.

The performance of SFCL in Sylhet, which started production just five years ago, is already low.

In contrast, Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company Limited (KAFCO), the lone multinational joint venture in the sector, is almost at par with the global standards for consumption-production ratio.

Commissioned in 1991, KAFCO produced 5.30 lakh tonnes of urea at 27.97 mcf/tonne efficiency in 2019-2020.

Experts said the low efficiency of the state factories had been an open secret for years. The wastage has already stressed the country's fast depleting natural gas reserve and incurred huge economic losses.

These factories are running on government subsidies that have been increasing with every passing year, they added.

In FY 2015-16, the subsidy for these four factories was Tk 235 crore, which nearly tripled to stand at over Tk 659 crore in FY 2019-20, according to the industries ministry's 2019-20 annual report.

Eminent energy expert Dr Ijaz Hossain said the government was in a great dilemma here.

"The dilapidated factories are like an old model car which needs lots of fuel but we can't dump it as we don't have the ability to purchase a new one. If we stop production then the country will face urea shortage which will be more problematic," said Dr Ijaz, a former professor of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet).

Bangladesh needs around 24.41 lakh tonnes of urea each year. Of this, the state-owned factories cater around 8.77 lakh tonnes while the rest 16 lakh tonnes are imported, according to the agriculture ministry.

Dr Ijaz said he was against continuing production in old and dilapidated fertiliser plants, adding, "The country cannot afford to waste natural gas or sell it at a cheaper price as the LNG price is rising day by day worldwide."

He said, "The factories get gas at a subsidised price. But they have to calculate their production cost with the international LNG market price to be economically viable."

He said uninterrupted gas supply was key to improving efficiency.

About the low efficiency of SFCL in Sylhet, he said, "It is not working

efficiently because the proposed design was not followed to build it."

A top BCIC official acknowledged that there might be some flaws in the design, and said the issue was now under investigation.

THE NEVER-ENDING CYCLE

Over the last five years, the wastage of gas at the four factories is about 67,727,250 mcf or about 37,110 mcf per day, according to government estimates.

The government acknowledged such waste of gas across the country in the Power Sector Master Plan (PSMP) 2016.

If the international benchmark was followed, the country could have saved 130mmscf gas daily which is equivalent to 1,000MW power, observed the PSMP 2016.

The report also made various recommendations to improve efficiency, but very little has changed.

In the last five years, six government-owned fertiliser factories that also included the now-decommissioned Palash Urea Fertiliser Factory and Gorashal Urea Fertiliser Factory produced 42.80 lakh tonnes of urea at an average efficiency rate of 39.42 mcf/tonne.

The government closed the age-old Palash Urea factory in 2018 and Gorashal the following year.

Of the four factories in question, only Shahjalal Fertiliser factory operates regularly. Last year, CIUFL was out of operation for 359 days, Ashuganj for 211 days and JFCL for 206 days, BCIC data show.

Ashuganj Managing Director AKM Anowarul Haque said they closed the plant last month for overhauling and maintenance.

"It's normal that a 40-year-old factory will not give you optimum output. We conducted overhauls every 10 years. We need another three months to resume operation," he said.

The newest one, Shahjalal fertiliser factory, also has been wasteful as it produces urea with an efficiency of 34.33 mcf/tonne.

Sunil Chandra Das, general manager (operation) of the factory, said they could produce urea at optimum level had the machine run at 100 percent load.

"We can run our machine at 80-82 percent load and there is no option to increase the load manually. We have not even got urea at 25 mcf/tonne when the test run was conducted," he told The Daily Star recently.

He said the plant efficiency was supposed to be 22.5mcf/tonne.

Asked if the design was followed properly, Sunil said, "Maybe there was

some problem with the design."

The government built the 5.8 lakh tonnes per year capacity SFCL plant for Tk 5,409 crore, according to the industries ministry's 2019-2020 annual report.

But in the last five years the average annual production of SFCL, built by a Chinese company using technology from the USA and the Netherlands, is around 3.4 lakh tonnes.

KAFCO IN BETTER CONDITION

KAFCO, a joint venture with 43.5 percent government share, produced 20.07 lakh tonnes of urea in the last five years with an efficiency of around 28.76 mcf/tonne.

Its efficiency was calculated with the gas distribution data from Karnaphuli Gas Distribution Company Limited (KGDCL).

KAFCO is successful because it invests a lot of money for proper maintenance, officials said.

"The government buys urea from KAFCO at an import price and their income is good enough to invest in maintenance. A machine should be overhauled every 18 months, which we couldn't do since 2010," said Shaheen Kamal, director (production and research) of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC).

In the case of KAFCO, the government sells gas at import prices as well.

WHY THE LOSS?

Shaheen Kamal said they sell urea to the government at a much cheaper price.

"We charge the government just Tk 14,000 a tonne, when the import price is around Tk 72,000 now. We save the government Tk 58,000 per tonne," he said.

He also faulted the age-old machinery and low pressure of gas for the low production.

"It's not possible to get the desired service from a machine of the '90s like the modern ones. We are trying to become efficient but we need time."

Citing the example of Jamuna Fertiliser Company, he said the factory ran almost daily but it faced low pressure of gas for 330 days a year.

"The economic life of those factories decreased considerably. The machines are almost 30-40 years old and we are putting extra pressure on the machines. We need 8-10 days to start a machine, which needs gas equivalent to Tk 3 crore," he added.

BCIC Chairman Shah Md Imdadul Haque said he was not aware of any report about gas wastage. "We produce a unit of urea at Tk 22 and sell it at Tk 14. That's why we incur loss."

LATEST

UNGA adopts resolution on Bangladesh's graduation from LDC

UNB, Dhaka

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has adopted a historic resolution on Bangladesh's graduation from the LDC category.

"What better way to celebrate 50th anniversary of our independence and birth centenary of Bangabandhu! Fulfillment of national aspiration and prime minister's vision 2021," Bangladesh's permanent representative to the UN Rabab Fatima tweeted yesterday.

PBI REPORT

Kishore to lodge no-confidence

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore will file a no-confidence petition against the probe report submitted by Police Bureau Investigation over the torture on him in custody.

Kishore's lawyer yesterday submitted an application seeking permission for filing the no-confidence petition on the next scheduled date.

After granting the petition, Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka fixed February 23, 2022, for submitting the petition against the probe report, said Additional Public Prosecutor Tapash Kumar Pal.

Earlier on October 17, Mohammad Mizanur Rahman, superintendent of police at PBI, submitted the report to the court.

In the probe report, the IO said they did not find any evidence that one or more people picked up Kishore from his home and tortured him physically and mentally in May last year.

Kishore's allegations of torture against 16-17 unnamed individuals in plainclothes were not primarily proved, the IO added in his probe report.

The cartoonist filed the case on March 10 stating that he was picked up from his residence around 5:45pm on May 2 last year and tortured until May 4 and that he found himself in a Rab office on May 5.

Kishore filed the case under the Torture and Custodial Death (Prevention) Act, seeking redress. Judge KM Emrul Kayesh then directed the PBI to investigate the complaint.

When he filed the case, Kishore told the judge how he was brutally tortured before he was shown on record as arrested in a case filed under the Digital Security Act.

After languishing in jail for almost 10 months, the cartoonist walked out on bail on March 4 this year. He then told journalists how he was tortured and wrote multiple times on Facebook about his ordeal in custody.

The probe report, written by the PIB officer, said the victim could not provide any information about the 16-17 men in plainclothes, who supposedly picked him up.

The investigator did not find any "seizable evidence", it said, adding that the complainant could not produce any evidence before the investigator.

During the investigation, people around the scene were asked about CCTV footage, but could not provide any information, the report adds.

Sudan PM calls for halt to post-coup sackings

AFP, KHARTOUM

Sudan's newly reinstated Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok on Wednesday ordered a halt to sackings and a review of all appointments made after his detention in last month's military coup.

Top General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan had grabbed power and detained Hamdok on October 25 but, following international condemnation and mass protests, reinstated the premier last Sunday.

After the coup Burhan had dissolved major institutions and dismissed the heads of state media, public companies and banks as well as many provincial officials.

Khaleda getting

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, the BNP yesterday announced an eight-day programme to press home their demand for allowing Khaleda to go abroad for better treatment.

Party Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir announced the programme at a press conference at its Nayapaltan headquarters in the capital.

The programme, which begins today, includes demonstrations, rallies, human chains, silent processions and prayers.

The party alleged that a quarter which has a vested interest was spreading rumours about Khaleda's health.

"The rumours have no basis. I think a quarter which has a vested interest is spreading rumours with an ill motive in a planned way," Fakhrul told the press conference.

Yesterday, a total of 2,582 journalists issued a joint statement urging the government to release the BNP chairperson and allow her to go abroad. "Khaleda Zia is critically ill and

undergoing treatment at the capital's Evercare Hospital. Doctors said she is now fighting for life... so we are urging the government not to consider the issue from political perspective, but on humanitarian grounds," they said in the statement.

Gonoshasthaya Kendra Trustee Zafrullah Chowdhury yesterday demanded that Khaleda be sent abroad for treatment immediately.

"After seeing her yesterday [Tuesday], I can say Khaleda Zia is fighting for life. I cannot say how long she will survive. She is being murdered and the prime minister and the law minister are responsible for this," he said at a press conference at Gonoshasthaya Kendra.

Khaleda has long been suffering from arthritis, diabetes, dental and eye problems. She was sent to prison on February 8, 2018 in a corruption case. Amid the coronavirus pandemic, she was released temporarily on certain conditions on March 25 last year.

Rab arrests accused athospital

FROM PAGE 1

Sajon, Ashikur Roki, Alam, Jishan Mia, Masum, Saimon and Rony, the OC added.

Contacted, Mustafizur Rahman, director of Cumilla Medical College Hospital, said Sumon was arrested at the hospital.

Five others who suffered bullet injuries in the attack are: Awal Hossain Rizu, 23, Rasel, 29, Majedul Haque Badal, 39, Jewel, 40, and Sohel Chowdhury, 43. They were undergoing treatment at the hospital.

All of them are associates of the councillor, said locals.

Councillor Sohel was also the panel mayor of Cumilla City Corporation and president of ward-17 Awami League unit, while Haripada was its member.

Meanwhile, Home Minister

Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal at a programme in the capital yesterday said, "Our police force is working. We hope to unveil the reasons behind the killing within a day or two."

Locals said Sumon is the uncle of another accused Shah Alam, who stands accused in different criminal cases, including murder, extortion, drugs and possession of illegal arms.

Besides, Shah Alam's elder brother Mohammad Alam is also involved in yaba trade, claimed locals.

The name of Shah Alam came to the fore after some witnesses of the murder incident claimed that they could identify him among the killers.

His house is just around 50 yards away from the councillor's office where the killing took place.

Locals alleged that Shah Alam has a

gang that extorts money from shops in the city's Bou Bazar area.

They, however, could not confirm whether there was any rivalry between councillor Sohel and him.

But Shah Alam's friend Sabbir and his supporters were locked in a clash with those of the slain councillor near the councillor's office on November 15.

Locals said the clash happened as Sabbir was stalking a girl and the councillor's followers protested it.

Apart from Shah Alam, other accused in the double-murder case, including "Jail Sohel", Sabbir and Sajon, stand accused in different criminal cases, said police.

Farooque Ahmed, superintendent of Cumilla police, visited the councillor's house yesterday and assured his family that the killers would be brought to book.

ইসলামী ব্যাংক
বাংলাদেশ লিমিটেড
ইসলামী শরী'আহ মোতাবেক পরিচালিত

মানুষের কল্যাণে
শিল্পের ক্রমোন্নয়নে

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