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## INDECENT COMMENTS ON WOMEN

# PM asks Murad to quit by today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has asked State Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murad Hassan to resign from the cabinet for his offensive and derogatory remarks on women that sparked waves of criticism.

"The prime minister has asked him to step down from his post within 24 hours," Obaidul Quader, road transport and bridges minister and also general secretary of the ruling Awami League, told reporters last night.

"The prime minister gave this directive when I talked with her this evening," he said, adding that he has conveyed the message to the state minister at 8:00pm.

The directive came as outrage continued to pour in over the comments Murad made during an online interview and also during a phone conversation with two film actors.

Women's rights activists, political leaders, lawyers and a cross section of people deplored the remarks terming those indecent, vulgar, racist, and misogynist. They demanded his immediate removal from the cabinet and legal action against him.

During an interview on Facebook page NahidRains Pictures, the state minister made some offensive comments on BNP Chairperson Khaleida Zia, acting chairman Tarique Rahman and his daughter Zaima Rahman. It was on December 1.



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A potato field partially submerged by rainwater in Munshiganj's Tarki village yesterday. Stagnant water can seriously harm potato plants. *Bottom*, a farmer tries to salvage rain-hit Aman paddy in Khulna's Alaipur village and water from the Sakhbaria river rushes in following breach in an embankment in the district's Bedkashi area.

PHOTO: SAJJAD HOSSAIN/HABIBUR RAHMAN/STAR



## 50YRS OF BANGLADESH-INDIA TIES

# Focus should be on trade, connectivity

Says Hasina on Friendship Day; Modi reassures of expanding relations

UNB, Dhaka

Mentioning that the Bangladesh-India relationship is anchored in history and culture, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the two countries now should concentrate on people-to-people contact, trade, business and connectivity as the issues became increasingly important for the two sides.

She said this in her video message screened at a programme marking Maitri Divas (Friendship Day).

Indian Council of World Affairs arranged the event in New Delhi yesterday on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of India-Bangladesh Diplomatic Relations as India recognised Bangladesh on December 6, 1971.

Hasina said the relationship between the two countries is anchored in history, culture, language and shared values of secularism, democracy, and countless other commonalities. "Our bonds of friendship have further been strengthened, diversified



and expanded in recent years due to regular high-level political interactions and exchanges."

Despite restrictions imposed by Covid-19, the relationship at all levels has remained stable and strong, she said, adding that this was evident in excellent cooperation and collaboration in dealing with the pandemic.

"Our partnership is not confined to treaties, MoUs, bilateral agreements that provide the formal structures for our working relations. Today, our broad

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# A retreat from '71 commitments

Prof Rehman Sobhan points to absence of unqualified freedom of expression

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For expression of dissent there should be unqualified freedom to express oneself, and not having this is a significant retreat from the commitments made during the time of the country's liberation, Prof Rehman Sobhan, chairman of Centre for Policy Dialogue, said yesterday.

"The capture of our electoral institutions by the business elite, the dominance of money and force in our electoral contestation have further moved us away from Bangabandhu's vision of a just democratic order where the voices of the less privileged members of society could be clearly heard in our institutions of governance," he said.

Prof Sobhan was speaking at the inaugural session of a four-day international conference, organised by CPD and the South Asia Program, Cornell University, to mark 50 years of Bangladesh.

He said much of the gains of the country in the last 50 years have eroded because of an unjust governance system and the inability of the state to enforce law.

Economic and social injustice is also compounded by a decline in democracy as manifested in the weakening credibility of the electoral process, erosion in the freedom of the media and unfair access to public services, he said at the virtual conference.

"Over the years, the machinery to conduct elections have become increasingly partisanised," he said, adding, "Such

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## FARMERS IN SOUTHERN, CENTRAL REGIONS

# Rain brings fear, tears

STAR REPORT

The untimely rain that lashed different areas of the country for the last two days could result in extensive damage to crops, especially winter vegetables and seedbeds.

Farmers who were expecting to harvest their vegetables and preparing seedbeds are in fear of losses.

Officials and experts said this untimely rain will have an impact on winter vegetables but if the rain continues and water remains on cropland for much longer, then damage to crops will be severe.

Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) officials said they have been collecting information on the damage to crops and it will take some time to get a full picture.

Officials said currently the crops being cultivated are Aman paddy, potato, onion, lentil, various vegetables, maize and wheat.

Depression formed over the Bay of Bengal has triggered incessant rains for the last two days across the country.

Jashore witnessed the maximum rainfall, 163mm, in the 24 hours since 6:00pm on

"My crop was supposed to ripen within the next two to three weeks... I fear that over half my crop will be damaged."

ABUL HOSSAIN  
A FARMER IN  
PATUAKHALI

Sunday, said a bulletin of Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD).

The BMD 24-hour forecast, released at 6:00pm yesterday, is for light to moderate rain and likely thundershowers in many places in Dhaka, Chattogram, Sylhet, Khulna and Barishal divisions.

"Weather may remain mainly dry elsewhere over the country," said the forecast.

Dr Hamidur Rahman, former director general of DAE, said this untimely rain can have both positive and negative impacts on crops.

"If there is stagnant water due to the rain, crops will be damaged, especially winter vegetables including tomato, potato and eggplant," he said, adding that the rain however is a blessing for maize cultivation.

But if the rain continues for a few more days, the damage to crops will be huge, he said.

Md Asadullah, director general of DAE, said the soil is very dry right now and the rain will not have any adverse impacts on the crops, but they will be damaged if the rain persists for a few more days.

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## ROAD SAFETY DEMO

# Braving rain, students continue protests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Even in the incessant rain, students of several schools and colleges took to the street again yesterday in Dhaka and some other districts to demand safe roads.

In the capital, a group of students gathered at Rampura Bridge around 12:30pm, wearing black scarves over their faces in honour of victims of road accidents, to protest for their 11-point demand.

Like previous days, they carried placards demanding safe roads, and the end of corruption and mismanagement in the transport sector.

They also demanded justice for Notre Dame College student Nayeem Hasan and SSC candidate Mainuddin -- two victims of recent accidents.

Speaking on behalf of the students, Shohagi Samia, a student of Khilgaon Model College,

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Students demonstrating for safe roads hold a candlelight vigil at the foot of Central Shaheed Minar in the capital. The programme was organised last night by a platform of common students in Dhaka.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## 560 MODEL MOSQUE PROJECT

# Rise in cost, delay by 3yrs



REJAUUL KARIM BYRON and DWAIPAYAN BARIUA

The government is set to extend the duration and budget for constructing 560 model mosques-cum-Islamic cultural centres all over the country for the second time by another three years.

The development means the cost of the project, which was taken up in 2017 with the view to promoting Islamic values and culture in the country, will increase 8.17 percent now.

The project, which will be implemented by the Bangladesh Islamic Foundation, will now cost Tk 9,435 crore and end in June 2024.

The proposal for the amended project cost and duration will be placed at today's meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council.

At the time of taking up the project, 90 percent of the estimated Tk 9,062.4 crore outlay were supposed to come as a grant from Saudi Arabia.

But after waiting for more than a year, the foreign

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