

Lift sanctions against Russia

PM urges the West saying it's needed to stop sufferings of millions across the globe

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged the Western countries to lift the sanctions on Russia, saying that millions of people across the world were suffering as the sanctions impacted global supply chains and increased prices food and other commodities.

Because of the US-led sanctions, food prices are skyrocketing and people are suffering everywhere.

"Punishing the people of the world while trying to punish one country is tantamount to human rights violation. This is why I think it is imperative that the US step away from this. I think everybody will want this," she said while inaugurating a new building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dhaka, reports BSS.

The comments come at a time when people in Bangladesh are bearing the brunt of rising food, fuel and fertiliser prices and the government is being forced to take austerity measures that include limiting fuel use and electricity generation.

In late February, the Russia-Ukraine war started, bringing more miseries to the world still reeling from the pandemic.

The Western nations led by the US have frozen about \$400 billion of Russian central bank's assets and at least \$240 billion belonging to oligarchs. However, Moscow has roughly \$300 billion in foreign currency and gold reserves, and the ruble has now hit a seven-year high against the dollar.

The UN has warned that Russia's war in Ukraine could push up to 49 million people into famine or famine-like conditions because of its devastating impact on global food supply and prices.

According to Europmnitor.com, global inflation may reach 7.9 percent in 2022. The average annual global inflation between 2001 and 2019 was 3.8 percent.

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Vehicles are caught in a snarl-up on Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover in the capital's Joy Kali Mandir area yesterday, the last working day before the Eid. Holidaymakers heading home had to endure delays at city exits due to gridlock.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

More steps mulled to cut power demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The power outages the people are enduring nationwide could go on until September, and the government may change office and school hours and reintroduce home office to reduce electricity demand.

A meeting of high officials of the energy and power divisions came up with such recommendations for the government yesterday.

According to the officials, the government forecast of 14,500MW of daily power demand for September could be reduced to at least 12,500MW if the recommendations were implemented properly.

Use of decorative lights for social events and at shopping malls, shops, and homes has already been banned.

The decision to close all malls, shops and kitchen markets by 8:00pm every day will be enforced strictly after Eid.

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- No decorative lights at social events, malls, shops, homes
- Govt thinking about reducing working hours
- Govt may introduce home office for officials
- Schools may be asked to open earlier every day



Land grabbers have encroached on the Shitalakkhya in Ichakhali area of Narayanganj's Rugganj, narrowing down the river. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

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Dhaka Wasa to hike water prices by 5pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Water is going to be costlier for the city residents as the Dhaka Wasa has decided to increase the prices by 5 percent.

The approval came yesterday at a board meeting of the Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority.

"The new price will be effective from September 1," said Dip Azad, a member of the board and also the secretary general of a faction of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ).

The new rates will be Tk 15.93 per unit (1,000 litres) for residential

counterman of SI Travels, which provides service to different northern destinations.

Many people were seen travelling on trucks and pick-up vans ignoring the risk and government instructions.

However, those heading to the southern part of the country had a relatively hassle-free journey thanks to the opening of the Padma bridge, which established direct connectivity between the capital and the southwestern regions.

Launch operators had an apprehended that the opening of Padma bridge just ahead of the Eid rush will eat up their business. But many still opted to travel by launch for lesser fares than buses.

One such person is Mujibur Rahman, a low-tier private service holder, who chose to travel by launch to his village in Barishal instead of a bus trip through the Padma bridge because of the lesser fare. "I have to spend Tk 700 for bus service to reach Bhandari while I have to spend Tk 500 for launch," he said, adding that launches were overcrowded like on previous occasions.

As of 7:15 pm yesterday, 64 launches left the Sadarghat Launch Terminal, from where launches set off for different destinations in the Barishal division, and 30-35 more were scheduled to leave later in the evening.

About 140 launches left the terminal for different destinations two days before Eid-ul-Fitr,

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BUSINESS

FOREX RESERVES TO SLIP BELOW \$40B

Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserves could slip below \$40 billion for the first time in nearly two years due to regular import payments and a slowdown in remittance flow. The country will have to settle import payments worth \$1.96 billion next week and the reserve may fall below \$40 billion once the payments are adjusted.

STORY ON B1

Journey south easier, north still a hassle

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY and Shaheen Mollah

People heading for northern districts to celebrate Eid-ul-Azha in their village yesterday faced suffering for want of vehicles, overcharging and traffic congestion on the Dhaka-Tangail Highway.

One such sufferer is Zamir Ali, who hails from Nilphamari. He arrived at Gabtoli terminal with his family of four at noon yesterday to take a bus to his village.

At 6:30 pm, he was seen waiting in front of a bus counter opposite the terminal as the fares on the buses with available seats are prohibitive for him.

"My budget is Tk 5,000 but the non-AC buses are charging Tk 6,000 for four seats up to Rangpur and the AC buses Tk 8,800. I cannot afford it," he told the correspondent while looking for an alternative mode of transport.

The family went home to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr for Tk 2,200.

"But they are charging Tk 6,000. How do we get home now?" asked Ali, who holds a low-ranking job at a government hospital.

Bogura-bound Alamgir Hossain has a similar story: what cost Tk 450 normally is now Tk 1,200. "But I have no alternative but to take a seat on the bus," he told the correspondent at 5:30 pm.

"All the tickets were sold out around a week ago. Today hundreds of people came to us but we have nothing to do," said Abu Bakar Siddique,

Boris Johnson resigns after party revolt

Pledges to continue as UK PM till Tories elect his successor

AGENCIES

Scandal-ridden Boris Johnson yesterday announced he would quit as British prime minister after he dramatically lost the support of his ministers and most Conservative

lawmakers, but said he would stay on until his successor was chosen.

Bowing to the inevitable as more than 50 ministers quit and lawmakers said he must go, an isolated and powerless Johnson acknowledged that "no one is remotely indispensable" and accepted that it was the "will of the parliamentary Conservative party" that he should leave No 10.

"It is clearly the will of the parliamentary Conservative party that there should be a new leader of that party, and therefore a new prime minister," Johnson said outside 10 Downing Street.

Joined by his wife, Carrie, and a number of Tory supporters, Johnson said he was "sad to be giving up the best job in the world" and claimed it was "eccentric" to change governments at this stage. "I regret not to have been successful in those arguments," he said.

"When the herd moves, it moves," he said, in a reference to the cabinet and

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