

HUMAN RIGHTS Bangladesh seeks time to respond to UN

DIPLOMATIC
CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has sought a week from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to respond to a letter wanting to know the country's human rights issues and the government's relations with rights bodies.

"We have sought some time so that we can provide a suitable response to the organisations," Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen told journalists.

On June 27, OHCHR sent a letter to Bangladesh's Permanent Mission to the UN in New York, seeking response on the cases of human rights abuses -- including enforced disappearances, killing of Rohingya leader Mohibullah, harassment of rights activists and revoking of registration of rights body Odhikar.

The UN Human Rights Council's Working Group
SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

BISWAJIT MURDER

Another life-term convict held in Dhaka
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab has arrested a fugitive convict who was sentenced to life-term imprisonment for killing Biswajit Das during a blockade enforced by BNP-led alliance 10 years ago.

Kamrul Hasan (35) was arrested from Dhaka's Paltan area on Sunday night, said Bina Rani Das, operations officer of Rab 3.

On December 9, 2012, Biswajit (24) was hacked to death in broad daylight by BCL activists while he was on the way to his tailoring shop at Shakharibazar in Old Dhaka during the blockade.

In 2013, Dhaka Speedy Trial Tribunal-4 announced the verdict in the murder case. The trial court sentenced eight accused to death and 13 to life imprisonment. The convicts later appealed against the verdict.

On August 6, 2017, the High Court upheld the death penalty of two of the eight convicts
SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

**PRAYER
TIMING**
JULY 19
Faiz Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-15 12-45 5-00 6-54 8-15
JAMAAT 4-50 1-15 5-15 6-58 8-45
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Amid the ongoing heatwave, a sudden drizzle surely brings a sigh of relief, as is evident in the smiles of a rickshaw-puller and the passenger. This photo was taken on Satmasjid Road yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Wait for BRT service gets longer

Likely to become functional from July next year; authorities start process to hire operator, procure 130 buses

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Operation of the country's first dedicated rapid bus service -- from Dhaka airport to Gazipur -- is likely to start in July next year, more than six and a half years after its original deadline.

The infrastructure has gone over double the estimated cost.

Dhaka Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Company Ltd has started the process to procure 130 air-conditioned buses and assigning operating companies to start services.

The development came at a time when the extended deadline of the long-delayed project ended last month, with around 22 percent of physical works still unfinished.

All basic structures are expected to be ready by December this year, while it would take six more months to complete all other processes, including procurement of buses and hiring operators, said Shafiqul Islam, managing director of Dhaka BRT Company.

"We will start operation of BRT in July next year," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

However, at a press conference in September last year, Shafiqul said operation would start from December this year.

Asked about the delay, he said although basic infrastructure would be completed by this December, some other works



REASONS FOR DELAY

- Issues related to land acquisition
- Shifting utility services
- Lack of drainage
- Contractors' poor performance
- Pandemic

AT A GLANCE

- Process to get 130 AC buses started
- 22pc of physical works still unfinished
- All basic structures expected to be ready by this Dec
- Latest deadline was June 2022

would remain incomplete.

The project -- formally known as Greater Dhaka Sustainable Urban Transport Project -- witnessed 77.77pc progress till this June.

The project was taken up in November 2012, to be completed by December 2016, at a cost of Tk 2,037.9 crore.

But it got delayed due to various reasons, including issues related to land acquisition and shifting utility services, lack of enough drainage, insufficient money flow of contractors and the pandemic.

The project has gone through four revisions, with its total cost

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Keep market open
for all agencies
Says platform of recruiters
on sending workers to
Malaysia
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A platform of recruiting agencies yesterday demanded amendment to some clauses of the agreement signed between Bangladesh and Malaysia over recruitment of Bangladeshi workers, saying those go against Bangladesh's sovereignty.

Organising a press conference at the capital's Jatiya Press Club, members of Shomnilito Sonmonoy Front, Baira also demanded keeping the Malaysian labour market open for all valid Bangladeshi recruiting agencies.

Besides, they further demanded repeal of or amendment to the decisions taken during the Joint Working Group meeting between Bangladesh and Malaysia in Dhaka on June 2.

Addressing the conference, Mostafa Mahmud, secretary general of the front, said as per clauses of the signed memorandum of understanding (MoU), the Malaysian government shall select Bangladeshi recruiting agencies from a list supplied by the Bangladeshi government.

This means the Malaysian government has full power over selecting recruiting agencies from Bangladesh, Mostafa said.

"We vehemently oppose this," he said, adding that all valid recruiting licence-holders should be provided with the opportunity.

Reading out a 10 point demand, the front's president
SEE PAGE 4 COL 8



To commemorate the martyrs of the Language Movement, a gate was supposed to be constructed beside Dhaka Medical College. However, many years have passed since the construction work got halted. At present, the unfinished structure is being used by locals to hang their clothes, while many plaster its surface with posters. This photo was taken at Aamtolia area recently.

NARAIL MAYHEM

Demand for justice reverberates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Civil society members in the capital and Chattogram have condemned the recent spate of attacks on the minority community in Narail.

In Dhaka, Sammilita Samajik Andolon yesterday formed a human chain in front of National Museum and placed a five-point demand.

The demands included an impartial inquiry commission to uncover the root cause of the attacks, disposing of all cases of violence against the minorities under speedy trial laws within six months, fair compensation for all victims, a ban on religion-based politics, and enacting National Minority Commission and Minority Protection Act.

The organisation's general secretary Saleh Ahmed, presidium member Asit Baran Roy, international affairs secretary Parvez Hashem and others spoke in the protest programme. It was presided over by Dhaka University Prof and presidium member Robayet Ferdous.

"There have been many cases of violence against minorities, but no information is available whether any cases have been settled or whether the perpetrators have been punished," said Prof Ferdous.

PROTEST IN CTG

Different socio-political organisations staged a demonstration in the port city yesterday protesting the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Review freedom fighters' benefits Recommends JS body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Liberation War Affairs Ministry yesterday recommended that the government review the ration and benefits provided to freedom fighters.

It also recommended sending urgent letters along with necessary directions through virtual meetings to all district hospitals and 22 specialised hospitals aiming to ensure medicare facilities for freedom fighters.

The decisions were taken at the 30th meeting of the Standing Committee on Ministry of Liberation War Affairs of the 11th National Parliament held at Sangsad Bhaban with Shahjahan Khan in the chair.

It recommended the Ministry take necessary measures through discussions with Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) regarding the further reduction of service charge from 8 percent on loans given to the freedom fighters.

The meeting also recommended necessary amendments to the draft booklet containing various benefits provided to freedom fighters and their families.

CJ constitutes 50 HC benches

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique has constituted 50 High Court benches for conducting judicial functions as the court will reopen tomorrow following annual vacation.

Among the 50 benches, 30 are two-judge (division) benches and 20 are single-judge benches, according to a notification issued by the chief justice yesterday.

Both the Appellate and High Court Divisions of the Supreme Court went on annual vacation on July 3.

Both the divisions will reopen on Wednesday.

4 more hajj pilgrims die in Saudi Arabia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four more Bangladeshi hajj pilgrims died in Saudi Arabia during this year's pilgrimage. Of them, two were female and two male. With the three, a total of 23 Bangladeshi pilgrims died so far in Saudi Arabia during this year's hajj. Hajj Management Portal, Religious Affairs Ministry said in its website.

The three pilgrims died between July 14 and July 17. Nothing was mentioned on the website about the cause of their death.

A total of 60,146 Bangladeshi pilgrims went to Saudi Arabia to perform hajj this year. This year hajj was held on July 8. The return hajj flights started from July 14.

In 2019, around 1.27 lakh Bangladeshis were allowed to perform hajj. Due to the pandemic, the congregation was held on a limited scale in last two years. This year, around one million Muslims performed hajj in Saudi Arabia.