

Foreign minister undergoes check-ups at BSMMU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BSMMU physicians yesterday recommended Foreign Minister Abdul Momen stay on “complete home rest” as he went to the healthcare facility for check-ups.

The doctors also changed some of his medication, said Sheikh Foyez Ahmed, consultant to the cardiology department at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

“We conducted several examinations on him. We will receive all the results tomorrow [today]. Then we will decide the next course of his treatment,” Foyez, also the personal physician of the minister, told The Daily Star last night.

The minister became sick on Sunday night, added the physician.

Momen could not accompany Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on her four-day India visit. He was dropped from PM’s entourage at the last moment but there was no official statement on this.

Diplomatic sources said he was left out of the tour, which began on Sunday, as his recent comments on India-Bangladesh relations triggered widespread criticism at home and abroad.

According to BSMMU consultant Foyez, the minister has been undergoing treatment for hypertension, diabetes, and several other complications for a long time.

“The minister lost consciousness on a flight while returning home from Turkey in March. I asked him for a medical follow-up.”

Doctors visited the minister at his residence Sunday night as he had vertigo and raised blood pressure.

Prof Fazlur Rahman, chairman of the cardiology department at BSMMU, led the foreign minister’s check-ups yesterday.

During the minister’s check-up, Prof Chowdhury Meshkat, head of the heart failure department, and Prof Abul Hasnat of the endocrinology department were present.

Momen’s wife also underwent a health check-up, reported the Prothom Alo.

India approves its first nasal vaccine for Covid

AFP, New Delhi

India yesterday approved a locally developed, needle-free and nasally administered Covid-19 vaccine for emergency use, in a boost to the country’s homegrown pharmaceutical industry.

The new inoculation was developed by Bharat Biotech, which had already developed an intravenous product greenlit by the World Health Organization last November.

27 dead as al-Qaeda launches attack on Yemen separatists

AFP, Aden

Twenty-one separatist fighters and six members of al-Qaeda’s Yemen branch were killed yesterday as an attack by the jihadists punctured months of relative peace in the war-torn country, government and security sources said.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) attacked positions held by the UAE-trained Security Belt group in Abyan province in Yemen’s south, the sources told AFP.

The violence came just days after the jihadist group released a video of a United Nations worker whom it abducted in the same province more than six months ago.

Tk 5 per km

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Metro rail service from Uttara to Agargaon is scheduled to launch in December and from Agargaon to Motijheel by December 2023.

As of last month, the entire project made a progress of 82.46 percent and the Dhaka-Agargaon section 94.14 percent, Quader said.

He inaugurated an exhibition and information centre to educate people about the metro rail at the metro rail depot in Diabari, Uttara.

He said wounded freedom fighters will get free rides and people with disabilities will get discounts.

MAN Siddique, managing director of DMTCL, said developing the software to issue the cards will not take more than a month.

Freedom fighters, people with disabilities and students, upon showing their identity cards, will get to visit the exhibition and information centre for free.

Others will pay Tk 10. The centre will remain open every day except Sundays and a maximum of 50 people will be able visit it at a time from 10:00am-12:00pm and 2:00pm-4:00pm.



The pump house, built on Rahimpur canal near the Kushiyara river in Sylhet’s Zakiganj upazila by Bangladesh Water Development Board in 2016, lies inoperative. Yesterday’s signing of a Bangladesh-India MoU on withdrawing water from the river by Bangladesh gives hope that irrigation of about 10,000 hectares of farmland would be possible using this pump house. The photo was taken on Friday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

KUSHIYARA WATER-SHARING DEAL Hope rekindled after all these years

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, back from Zakiganj

The Rahimpur canal in Sylhet’s Zakiganj upazila is only about three kilometres away from the source of the Surma and the Kushiyara rivers.

The 8km canal had been the lifeline of about 10,000 hectares of land, including several haors and beels in Zakiganj, Kanaighat and Beanibazar upazilas, for centuries when the water level in the Kushiyara was normal.

As the water level dropped significantly in the last couple of decades, the canal remains dried up during the dry season, hampering the cultivation of Boro paddy and winter vegetables.

To support the farmers by retaining water in the canal round the year, the Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) in 2010 had started the construction of a pump house on the Rahimpur canal and excavation of the water body and several other canals linked to it.

The works under the Upper Surma Kushiyara Project were completed in 2016 at a cost of Tk 65 crore.

The BWDB built a temporary dyke at the mouth of the canal to facilitate the construction, but the structure could not be removed after the completion of the project as the Indian authorities complained that no work could be carried out in no man’s land.

On August 21 this year, a meeting of the India-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission (JRC) agreed that the two countries would share the water of the Kushiyara.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) on withdrawal of 153 cusec (cubic feet per second) of water from the Kushiyara by Bangladesh was signed yesterday in New Delhi as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is now visiting the neighbouring country.

This is the first treaty signed between the two neighbours on sharing common river water since the inking of the Ganges river water-sharing agreement in 1996.

Earlier, India and Bangladesh finalised the Teesta water-sharing deal in 2010 and it was likely to be signed in 2011. But it could not be inked due to opposition from West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banarjee. Md Mahfuzur Rahman Bhuiyan, sub-assistant engineer of BWDB in Zakiganj, said many other canals are linked to the Rahimpur canal. “Once the irrigation project is made operational with the use of the pump house, more than 10,000 hectares of farmland will be benefited.”

Md Sheikh Farid, agriculture extension officer in Zakiganj, said the land along the canals is fertile, which produces huge Aman crop.

“But due to irrigation problems, the land remained unused during the dry season over the years. As a result, the upazila faces a shortage of vegetables in winter.”

If the irrigation issue is resolved, the farmers will be encouraged to cultivate vegetables in the dry season, he said, adding that at least one lakh people from Zakiganj and its adjacent areas will be benefited.

Visiting Rahimpur village and nearby areas on Friday, this correspondent came to know from farmers that they have been struggling to irrigate fields during the dry season for the last couple of decades. The news on the JRC meeting decision came to them as a blessing.

Ziaur Rahman, a resident of Rahimpur village, said they were happy to know that Bangladesh would be allowed to withdraw water from the Kushiyara after all these years.

Khalilur Rahman, an elderly farmer from Hasitola village on bank of Rahimpur canal, said the irrigation problem was affecting their farming gravely.

“We produce only Aman paddy. We cannot grow Boro paddy or any winter vegetables due to a lack of irrigation water.”

He said production of fish in haors and beels will get a boost if water is available in the canal during the dry season.

Asif Ahmed, executive engineer of BWDB in Sylhet, said, “Parts of the canal needs to be excavated again, and some works have to be done at the pump house. We will soon start working on removing the dyke to make the project operational.”

Jubo Dal leader lands in jail in DSA case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A local Jubo Dal leader was sent to jail in Pirgachha, Rangpur, yesterday, hours after he was accused of “insulting the prime minister on Facebook” in a case filed under the Digital Security Act.

Abul Kalam Azad, general secretary of Kalyani Union Jubo League, filed the case against his Jubo Dal counterpart Touhidul Islam, 36, said Mostafizur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Pirgachha Police Station.

A court sent him to jail after he was arrested.

Lightning strikes kill 3 in Kushtia, Natore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

At least three people were killed and seven others injured by lightning strikes in Kushtia and Natore yesterday morning.

In Baraigram, Natore, Belal Miyaji, 45, who was at a paddy field, died at the scene, said Abu Siddique, officer-in-charge of Baraigram Police Station, adding that another farmer standing nearby got injured.

In Kushtia’s Mirpur and Bheramara upazilas, Jahangir Alam, 45, and Ashrafur Islam, 40, were killed and six others injured in three incidents, reports UNB.

COVID UPDATE

1 dead, 313 new cases reported

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Officials yesterday reported one death from Covid and 313 new cases of the disease.

This takes the confirmed death toll from coronavirus to 29,329, said a press release from the Directorate General of Health Services.

The deceased was a male aged between 51 and 60, it added.

The new cases were detected after 4,662 individuals were tested during the 24 hours preceding 8:00am yesterday.

At least 197 Covid patients recovered within this time, said the release.

Palestinian killed in Israel West Bank raid

AFP, Jenin

A Palestinian was killed and 16 wounded yesterday when Israeli troops entered Jenin in the occupied West Bank to carry out a home demolition, the Palestinian health ministry said.

“The outcome of the Israeli aggression on Jenin at dawn today: a 29-year-old martyr and 16 wounded with bullets and shrapnel were admitted to hospitals,” the ministry said.

Palestinian official news agency Wafa identified the dead man as Mohammed Musa Mohammed Sabaaneh, 29.

Sabaaneh’s father, Musa Sabaaneh told AFP that a soldier “inside a jeep fired a bullet” at his son.

Scrap the decision to use EVMs

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“Digital fraudulence can also be done using EVMs. Like any electronic device, the results from EVMs can also be manipulated through programming. Besides, the technical team deployed at the field level during the election can also change the results,” the statement read.

The eminent citizens issued the statement at a time when a debate over the use of EVMs has already been sparked among political parties.

During talks with the EC, 14 parties have expressed doubts regarding EVM use.

Of them, nine have directly stated their stance against EVMs, while four, including the ruling Awami League, have expressed their support for the use of the machines, the statement read.

On the other hand, nine other parties, including the BNP, boycotted dialogue with the EC and have publicly said they were against the use of EVMs. Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal had earlier admitted that most political parties do not have faith in EVMs.

“Therefore, we fear that this distrust in EVMs from most of the political parties will be an obstacle for a competitive election,” the statement said.

It further said the EC would have to purchase more EVMs if it plans to use them at 150 constituencies.

According to experts, the estimated cost for the new machines would amount to at least half a billion US

dollars, the statement added.

“We request you [the EC] to ask yourself if spending such a huge amount of money would be reasonable amid the ongoing economic crisis,” the citizens urged.

They also said they believe the decision to use EVMs without first clearing the doubts people have regarding the machines will provoke unexpected conflicts.

“We are urging the Election Commission to withdraw its decision to use EVMs in the national elections,” the statement read.

The signatories include Barrister M Amir-ul Islam; Prof Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury; former caretaker government advisers M Hafizuddin Khan and Akbar Ali Khan; Justice Abdul Matin; Gonoshasthaya Kendra Founder Zafullah Chowdhury; former election commissioner Sakawat Hussain; former cabinet secretary Ali Imam Majumdar; former Bangladesh Bank governor Salehuddin Ahmed; Central Women’s University Vice-Chancellor Perween Hasan; local governance specialist Prof Tofail Ahmed; lawyer Shahdeen Malik; economists Debapriya Bhattacharya, Anu Muhammad and Ahsan H Mansur; photographer Shahidul Alam; environmentalist Syeda Rizwana Hasan; DU Prof Asif Nazrul; writer Rahnuma Ahmed; Executive Director of Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) Shamsul Huda; and rights activists Shireen Huq, Nur Khan Liton, Sanjeeb Drong and Salma Ali.

‘We’re facing global headwinds’

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Already, workers across the economy have gone on strike.

Truss has promised to scrap plans to increase corporation tax on big firms, and to reverse an increase in a payroll tax on workers and employers, designed to raise additional funding for health and social care, with the extra spending coming from general taxation.

“I know that we have what it takes to tackle those challenges. Of course, it won’t be easy, but we can do it,” Truss

said, adding that Britain would also continue to stand up for freedom and democracy around the world.

One major global ally, US President Joe Biden, offered his congratulations.

Johnson, who tried to cling to power in July despite ministers resigning en masse over scandals including parties during Covid lockdowns, appealed for unity.

“It’s time for politics to be over, folks,” he said in his farewell speech. “It’s time for us all to get behind Liz Truss.”