

WB assures full support to Dhaka

PM for transparent relationship with the global lender

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Bank stands ready to help Bangladesh navigate through the current economic challenges brought on by the Russia-Ukraine war, and achieve resilient and inclusive growth, said its South Asia chief.

On the other hand, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said Bangladesh wants to maintain an open and transparent relationship with the multilateral lender.

She made the statement when Martin Raiser, vice-president for World Bank South Asia region, and Abdoulaye Seck, its newly appointed country director, called on her at her office yesterday.

Ihsanul Karim, PM's press secretary, briefed reporters after the meeting.

After the meeting, WB in a release said, "The war in Ukraine, the impacts of the Covid pandemic, and the climate crisis have created unprecedented challenges for the global economy."

"Every country is struggling to cope, and Bangladesh is no exception," said Raiser.

Bangladesh can sustain rapid growth by strengthening the macro, fiscal and financial sector reforms and continuing investment in human capital and climate resilience.

"We are ready to lend our full support to these efforts at this challenging time," he also said after meeting Hasina.

Raiser thanked Hasina for the country's leading role in climate change adaptation and disaster preparedness.

"The World Bank is proud to be a part of Bangladesh's tremendous development journey for the past 50 years.

"Bangladesh provides valuable insights and important lessons in rapid poverty reduction and sustained growth for many other countries around the world," said Raiser after concluding his second visit to Dhaka after assuming the role in July.

During his three-day visit, Raiser also met Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal and Bangladesh Bank Governor Abdur Rouf Talukder and discussed policy measures to mitigate recent global shocks and build economic resilience.

They also discussed the WB's support for Bangladesh's development priorities.

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Bangladesh Chhatra Union, a left-leaning student body, stages a human chain at the foot of Raju memorial sculpture on Dhaka University campus yesterday demanding reduced prices of education materials. They wrote their demands on large leaves.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Coming months 'will be difficult' for Ukraine

Warns Nato chief; Zelensky visits recaptured Kherson, says hundreds of Russian war crimes documented

AGENCIES

Ukraine faces difficult months ahead and Russia's military capability should not be underestimated, Nato secretary general Jens Stoltenberg said yesterday, as President Volodymyr Zelensky visited the newly recaptured southern city of Kherson.

Stoltenberg praised the "incredible courage" of Ukrainian forces following Russia's withdrawal from the strategic southern city of Kherson, and urged continued international support for Kyiv.

"The coming months will be difficult. Putin's aim is to leave Ukraine cold and dark this winter," he told a press conference in The Hague after meeting the Dutch foreign and defence ministers.

We should not make the mistake of underestimating Russia," Stoltenberg said, stressing that Moscow's forces "retain significant capabilities, as well as a large number of troops".

"Russia has demonstrated the willingness to bear significant losses," Stoltenberg added.

Moscow's withdrawal from Kherson "demonstrates the incredible courage of the Ukraine armed forces but it also showed our continued support for Ukraine", Stoltenberg said.

The recapture of the city by Ukrainian troops

is the latest in a string of setbacks for the Kremlin, which invaded Ukraine on February 24 hoping to achieve a lightning takeover and topple the government in days.

But Russian forces failed to capture the capital, Kyiv, and have since been pushed back from large portions of territory in the south and east.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday visited the newly liberated city. On Sunday he said evidence had been uncovered of hundreds of new "war crimes" carried out by the Russian occupiers.

Stoltenberg said Russian forces had "shown extreme brutality".

"You have all seen the horrific scenes from the liberated territories and the indiscriminate attacks on civilians and critical infrastructure," Stoltenberg told reporters. It was not clear whether he referred to Kherson specifically.

The city of Kherson was the first major urban hub to fall to Russian forces and the only regional capital Moscow's troops gained control over, reports AFP.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov yesterday declined to comment on Zelensky's visit to Kherson but insisted, "This territory is part of the Russian Federation."

Man held for torturing woman over land dispute

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Police yesterday arrested a man on charges of torturing and molesting a woman after tying her to a tree in Gonergaon of Narsingdi Sadar's Shilmandi union.

The arrestee, Md Mujibur Rahman, 60, the victim's neighbour, had been involved in a long-standing land dispute with her father, police sources said.

Al Amin Mia, additional superintendent of police in Narsingdi, confirmed the arrest at a press conference at the district SP's office this afternoon, our local correspondent reports.

According to police, Mujibur's sons, Md Nayeem, 30, and Md Nazmul Hasan, 34, on November 10 tied the 22-year-old woman to a tree, then physically tortured and molested her.

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Natore man held for raping minor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Police yesterday arrested a man in a case filed for raping an 11-year-old girl in Bagatipara, Natore.

Alamgir Hossain, the girl's neighbour, was arrested in Mariya Hazampara village of the upazila, said Sirajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Bagatipara Police Station.

The girl's father said his daughter was playing with Alamgir's daughter at his house on Sunday. At that time, Alamgir picked her up and took her to a deserted place and raped her.

The girl came home and told her parents and later her father filed the case.

5 get life term for murder in Faridpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A Faridpur court yesterday sentenced five men to life in prison for a 2012 murder.

The convicts are Nur Islam, 45, Monir Sheikh, 35, Enayet Amin, 40, and Md Miraz, 40, said Assistant Public Prosecutor Nawab Ali Mridha.

The court also fined the convicts Tk 20,000 each, in default, they are to serve four more months in jail.

On July 28, 2012, police recovered the body of Shahidul Islam, 30, of Dhuljuri village under Alfadanga upazila, a ride-sharer by profession, in the Konagram area.

On May 2, 2013, Sirajul Islam, the then sub-inspector of Alfadanga Police Station submitted the charge sheet against these five men.

Sherpur man beaten dead by brother-in-law

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A man was beaten to death in Nalitabari, Sherpur on Sunday night.

The victim Albert Marak, 40, of Hatipagar village in the upazila, reportedly got into an argument with his brother-in-law Utsab Malik, 21, around 10:00pm.

At one point, Utsab struck Albert on his head with a bamboo stick, killing him on the spot.

Emdadul Haque, officer-in-charge of Nalitabari Police Station, said police later recovered the body and arrested Utsab.

The victim's wife Shuva Marak filed a case with the police station accusing Utsab yesterday.

One killed, 6 hurt in village clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A man was killed yesterday and six others were injured in a clash between two groups of villagers over establishing supremacy in Shaillkupa, Jhenidah.

According to sources, Kofil Uddin and Mannan Islam, both members of local wards under the upazila, had a long-standing dispute.

As tensions boiled over, their supporters got into a clash last morning leaving Syeed Biswas, 45, dead and six others injured in BLK Bazar, said Aminul Islam, officer-in-charge of Shaillkupa Police Station.

Govt buckles up as tough 2023

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Also, the cabinet in principle approved the draft of Bangladesh Dairy Development Board Act, 2022. As per the draft, technical support and cooling storage facilities would be provided to farmers for proper preservation of cattle feed.

The meeting also gave the final nod to the draft Zoo Act, 2022.

The cabinet endorsed the draft of an agreement to complete immigration procedures of hajj pilgrims in Bangladesh, instead of Saudi Arabia.

UN probes allegations of Egypt 'surveillance' at COP27

AFP, Sharm el Sheikh

United Nations officers running security at the COP27 climate summit in Egypt said yesterday they are probing allegations of surveillance and misconduct by Egyptian police towards delegates.

Participants at COP27 -- including activists, rights defenders, and civil society groups -- have raised cases of "surveillance" during the summit, which opened on November 6 at Egypt's Red Sea resort city of Sharm al-Sheikh.

The UN Department for Safety and Security, which works with Egyptian police to secure the summit, said yesterday it had "been made aware of allegations" of violations of the code of conduct and was "investigating these reports."

But Wael Aboulmagd, representative of Egypt's presidency of the COP27 said the allegations were "ludicrous", he told reporters.

"Some people we've been talking to, from the developing world in particular, are tired of these apparently intentional distractions from climate issues," Aboulmagd said.

Claims surfaced after the German delegation hosted an event featuring Sanaa Seif, sister of jailed hunger-

striker and pro-democracy activist Alaa Abdel Fattah.

Seif was heckled by pro-government attendees at two press conferences, who called her brother a "criminal", not a "political prisoner".

Seven months into a hunger strike, Abdel Fattah escalated his fast to include water on November 6 as world leaders arrived for COP27 to protest the conditions he said he and about 60,000 other political prisoners face in the country.

He has since started taking liquids again, according to a letter that prison authorities handed to his family yesterday.

Egypt, which has sought to burnish its image by hosting the climate talks, has come under fire during the summit over its human rights record, with the fate of Abdel Fattah grabbing attention.

A German diplomatic source said a complaint was lodged with Egypt as the delegation "felt we were being watched."

Liane Schalatek, associate director of the Heinrich Boll Stiftung foundation in Washington, told Germany's ZDF broadcaster that said she felt "watched" and was "clearly more uncomfortable than at any other COP before."

Ballot stuffing

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The Centre for Governance Studies (CGS) hosted the programme in collaboration with Friedrich Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Bangladesh. CGS Executive Director Zillur Rahman moderated the event.

"The Japanese embassy in Dhaka even issued a statement expressing concerns following the general election of 2018. This was a very unusual thing to do for the embassy," he added.

He expressed hope that the upcoming national elections would see participation from all major political parties.

The envoy said he was aware of the election commission's efforts to conduct a free and fair election as well as the government's assurances of the same, which he cited as "very important".

"So, naturally we expect that next election to be better ... free and fair. This is our sincere hope," he added.

Iran claims evidence of foreign role in protests

AFP, Tehran

Iran said yesterday it had provided evidence to countries whose nationals it claims participated in unrest that has rocked the country in recent weeks.

"Regarding foreign nationals detained in Iran in connection with riots, information, evidence and explanations have been provided to the countries concerned," foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani told reporters.

At the beginning of October Iranian authorities announced the arrest of nine foreign nationals who it claims were connected to the wave of protests triggered by the death of Mahsa Amini.

Those arrested include citizens of France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Poland.

WB to steer Dhaka rivers back to life

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and canals, and dumping of solid waste, discharging industrial wastes and untreated sewage into these rivers have made "water quality unusable for any purpose", the WB said in the inception report for the technical assistance.

Urbanisation, often encroaching on the city's vast flood plains, has jeopardised its unique river morphology and its lifeline.

"The restoration of Dhaka rivers and their respective services is a complex challenge, requiring an integrated and well-coordinated approach on a large scale," the WB said, adding that it has experience supporting similar river restoration programmes in the Netherlands, Singapore, Vietnam, India, Indonesia, Colombia and the US.

While the government has already taken steps to this end, there is "a pressing need to step up the efforts".

The Dhaka River Master Plan approved by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in 2019 to free all major rivers in and around Dhaka and Chattogram cities from encroachment and

pollution by 2030 forms the starting point for the UIP.

"The problems are of such a scale that no project on its own will solve all problems, and all efforts -- large and small -- will continue to some extent to the needed improvement."

The UIP requires enormous investments, exceeding the available funds that are available, the WB said.

"There is not enough money -- and capacity as well -- to realise all proposed projects, at least right away."

Subsequently, the WB suggested splitting the programme into three phases: short-term development until 2025, medium-term development from 2026 to 2030, and long-term development after 2030.

The seven development issues identified by the WB are: river pollution, illegal encroachment and management of the use of riverbanks, circulation and navigability, cleaning the riverbed (focused on dredging), beautification and living standards, water flows and climate resistance.

As per preliminary estimates, \$20 billion would be needed for the

programme.

The WB will act as the lead financier and bring in funding from other donors, according to officials from the Economic Relations Division.

Once the WB hands in the technical assistance report in April next year, the government would decide on the next plan of action, Sharifa Khan, ERD secretary, told the press briefing on Sunday.

The existing river-based plans including the Dhaka River Master Plan, Clean Dhaka Master Plan 2018-2032 and the status of the projects being taken under these plans will be reviewed by the WB for the report.

It will also recommend financing strategies for the investment programme.

Local governments on both sides of the rivers have an interest in the restoration of the Dhaka rivers, so their opinion would be solicited for the report.

All government agencies, from Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority to Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority, Rajuk and so on will be brought on board for the UIP.

have found evidence of Chonpara slum's drug peddler Rayhan Mahmud and his gang's involvement in the murder.

On Saturday, Rayhan, an associate of the slain City Shaheen, was picked up by law enforcers in Barisal, claimed his family members.

His wife Dalia Begum claimed two of Rayhan's associates, Uzal and Roni, were also apprehended.

She told The Daily Star that officers alleged that her husband killed the Buet student. "But my husband is not involved in the murder. He was home asleep when it happened."

Shaheen Miah alias City Shaheen, 35, wanted in 23 cases was killed in "crossfire" with Rab on Thursday.