

Teesta water-sharing issue will be resolved

Hasina expresses hope as new Indian envoy calls on her

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has once again expressed hope that Bangladesh and India would be able to resolve the Teesta water sharing and other issues through discussion.

She said this when newly appointed Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma called on her at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

Verma told the PM that his country always gives Bangladesh the highest priority, according to a media briefing by PM's Deputy Press Secretary KM Shakhwat Moon.

"India has a policy for its neighbouring countries. But in this regard, Bangladesh always gets the highest priority in any case," he quoted the envoy as saying.

Verma termed Bangladesh a very good friend of India.

The Indian envoy said New Delhi and Dhaka would work together to curb terrorism in the region.

Hasina said Bangladesh maintains zero tolerance policy towards terrorism.

She urged Indian businesses to invest in 100 economic zones of the country.

Verma said trade and connectivity between Bangladesh and India increased remarkably in recent years.

The Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement for facilitating economic relations between the two neighbouring countries also came up for discussion at the meeting.

The Indian envoy said New Delhi will cooperate with Dhaka in power and energy sectors.

He appreciated the socio-economic development in Bangladesh under Hasina's leadership.

45th BCS examination applications from December 10

STAR REPORT

The online application process for the 45th Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examinations will begin at 10:00am on December 10 and will end at 6:00pm on December 31.

Bangladesh Public Service Commission yesterday published a circular regarding the exams.

As per the circular, 2,309 civil service officials and 1,022 non-cadre government officials will be recruited through this exam.

Kamal doesn't know

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Previously, he asked for a written complaint for irregularities in the stock market.

"How can he expect that his duties will be performed by others? It is his duty to figure out which part of the banking system is in shambles. Why will the journalists inform him about this in writing?"

The three banks under discussion are controlled by one Chattogram-based business giant, which also owns four other banks.

One group owning seven banks is a high-risk factor for any economy, Islam said, while urging the government to act fast and wrest control of the banks from the group.

"If the loans are linked with them, then something suspicious is going on here. I don't understand why the government is not intervening," he added.

Anu Muhammad, a former professor of Jahangirnagar University's economics department, echoed the same and termed Kamal's comment irresponsible.

"The finance minister has made it his duty to safeguard and hide people



Newly appointed Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

Russia attacks Ukraine on multiple fronts

Says Zelensky as Nato seeks to shore up Moscow's neighbours

AGENCIES

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russian forces were trying to advance in the northeast and east and "planning something" in the south, while Nato yesterday sought to reassure other countries that fear destabilisation from Moscow.

Ukraine's General Staff said its forces had repelled six Russian attacks in the past 24 hours in the eastern Donbas region, while Russian artillery had relentlessly shelled the right bank of the Dnipro River and Kherson city in the south.

Winter weather has hampered fighting on the ground, and Zelensky has told Ukrainians to expect a major Russian barrage this week on Ukraine's stricken electricity infrastructure, which Moscow has pounded roughly weekly since early October.

"These are president (Vladimir) Putin's new targets. He's hitting them hard," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said after Nato talks in Bucharest.

Putin had focused his "fire and ire" on Ukraine's civilians by bombing more than a third of its energy system supplying power and water, but the strategy would

not work, Blinken said, adding that Nato was also concerned by China's ties with Moscow.

The Nato allies yesterday offered to help nearby Moldova, Georgia and Bosnia-Herzegovina - all under pressure from Russia - Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said.

"If there is one lesson from Ukraine it is that we need to support them now," Stoltenberg told a news conference, while Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Reinsalu told Reuters "the beast also wants to take control of the Western Balkans".

Zelensky said Russian forces were attacking Donetsk and Luhansk which make up the eastern Donbas as well as Kharkiv in the northeast, where Ukraine pushed them back in September.

"The situation at the front is difficult," he said in his nightly video address. "Despite extremely large losses, the occupiers are still trying to advance" in the east and "they are planning something in the south," he said, without elaborating.

Russia said its forces had taken full control of two settlements in the Donetsk region and destroyed a warehouse in the Dnipropetrovsk region containing

HIMARS shells.

In Spain, an employee of Ukraine's embassy in Madrid was "lightly" injured yesterday when a letter bomb blew up as he handled it, a police source said.

"National Police were informed around 1:00 pm (1200 GMT) of an explosion at the Ukrainian embassy in Madrid. It happened when one of the embassy employees was handling a letter," the source said.

Police have opened an investigation "which includes the participation of forensic police," the source said without giving further details, reports AFP.

In Kyiv, snow fell and temperatures were expected to remain below freezing as millions in and around the capital struggled to heat their homes despite attacks on infrastructure that Kyiv and its allies say are aimed at harming civilians, a war crime.

Workers have raced to repair the damage even as they anticipate more; electricity supplies crept back up towards three quarters of needs yesterday, national grid operator Ukrenergo said, a full week after the worst Russian barrage so far left millions of people shivering in cold and darkness.

Of OMS queues and desperation

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STRUGGLE FOR OMS GOODS

The Daily Star correspondents visited eight OMS shops in the capital over the last one week and found a large number of women, elderly people and youths in the queues.

Around 9:15am on Sunday, Kazi Shirin, who is six months into her pregnancy, came near Azimpur Agrani School only to find a queue of 200 people. Since returning from there would be a luxury she couldn't afford, she stood in the line for an hour. Then an employee of the shop noticed her condition and gave her the products.

Another woman named Aklima Khatun from Chankharpool area said she stood in a queue near Nilkhet intersection on November 23 and 24 to buy rice and flour, but she failed on both days.

In front of a shop In Kazipara last week, this correspondent saw a few men violently shoving each other for a place in the queue around 8:45am.

Noted economist Prof Selim Raihan said inflation put tremendous pressure on people with limited income since the beginning of this year and that's why the lines in front of the mobile shops were getting longer.

He added that the stocks of subsidised goods should be larger to meet the demand. "I hope the policymakers will take measures considering the current situation," said Selim, the executive director of the South Asian Network on Economic Modelling.

Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder and Food Secretary Ismiel Hossain are currently abroad. The Daily Star made several attempts to reach them on WhatsApp, but neither of them responded.

With observer's departure

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"companies" existed only on paper.

Apart from Islami Bank, the group is now controlling six other banks.

"The government should take immediate measures to take over the bank from S Alam Group. Otherwise, the confidence of depositors will erode," Mansur said.

This is the time to protect the confidence of depositors in the banking sector in the interest of the whole economy, said Mansur, a former economist of the International Monetary Fund.

"The officials of the central bank who had taken the decision to withdraw the observer should be made accountable," said Mustafizur Rahman, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

The decision taken by the central bank allowed scamsters to take

loans ignoring banking norms, he said.

Contacted, GM Abul Kalam Azad, spokesperson of the central bank, said the observer was withdrawn from Islami Bank as the official who had played the role was promoted to the post of executive director from general manager.

As per the central bank policy, general managers are usually assigned to play the role of observer in private banks, he said.

Asked why another general manager was not assigned to play the role, he declined to elaborate further. At present, six banks have observers and five other lenders have coordinators.

The central bank now appoints coordinators instead of observers and there is no difference between the two roles.

IBBL LOAN SCAM ACC yet to decide on probe

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

The Anti Corruption Commission is still undecided about launching a probe into Tk 7,246 crore loan anomalies at Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd.

"Newspaper clippings have been submitted to the commission ... No decision has been made yet," said an official, preferring to be unnamed.

While the ACC is yet to make up its mind, the central bank has begun investigation after the anomalies surfaced in the media.

Wishing anonymity, an ACC official said at the Islami Bank, they are seeing patterns similar to that seen in the activities of former NRB Global Bank Managing Director Proshanta Kumar Halder, aka PK Halder.

The allegations against the country's largest private bank, in terms of deposits and loans, surfaced five years after a Chattogram-based business group took over the bank violating norms.

The group had appointed some representatives of "companies" under its umbrella as directors of the bank. The "companies" existed only on paper.

Marts Business Ltd, which took out a loan of Tk 981 crore from Islami Bank between November 1 and November 10 this year, gave a fake address.

Of the total amount disbursed, Islami Bank's Gulshan Circle-2 branch gave Tk 1,011 crore to Nabil Grain Crops in July even though the company had

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MILITANTS' ESCAPE Another cop suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another policeman has been suspended for negligence in duties during the snatching away of two condemned convicts from a Dhaka court premises 11 days ago.

Constable Mahmud Alam was suspended on Tuesday, Jasim Uddin, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star.

Earlier, the DMP suspended six police personnel, including an inspector, on the same grounds.

Unidentified people attacked police personnel and snatched Moinul Hasan Shamim and Abu Siddiq Sohel, both operatives of banned militant outfit Ansar Al Islam, from the court premises on November 20.

The two were among eight militants sentenced to death by a Dhaka court in February last year for murdering Jagriti Publications publisher Faisal Arefin Dipan in 2015.

Man shot dead in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Unidentified criminals shot a motorcyclist dead and injured his pillion rider at Sajek in Rangamati's Baghaichhari upazila yesterday morning.

Deceased Sukhen Chakma, 20, was a resident of Midpoint village in the same upazila, said police.

According to locals, Sukhen and his cousin Sajib Chakma, 21, were going to Daripara from Midpoint on a motorcycle around 8:30am.

After they travelled about half a kilometre, criminals intercepted the motorcycle on a road and opened fire on them, leaving the two injured.

Sukhen died of his injuries on way to a local hospital, locals added.

Ex-Jubo League leader killed during factional clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A former Jubo League leader was killed

and seven other people, including a municipality councillor, were injured in clashes between two factions of Jubo League over establishing supremacy in Kashipur area of Jhenidah's Kaliganj upazila on Tuesday night.

Deceased Ariful Islam, 45, was a former general secretary of ward-8 Jubo League in Kaliganj and a

supporter of local Awami League leader Russell.

Ariful's wife Reshma Khatun said her husband was stabbed in front of their home in Bede Palli around 9:00pm.

"Supporters of Councillor Mehedi Hasan Sajal and Monirul Islam attacked our home and stabbed him," she alleged.

Ariful died of his wounds on his way to the capital.

Salam Murshedy occupying

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Meanwhile, a High Court bench is scheduled today to hear a rule issued earlier over the matter.

The bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Khizir Hayat Lizu issued the rule and order after Supreme Court lawyer Syed Sayedul Haque Suman filed a writ petition on October 30.

On November 1, the HC issued a rule asking the authorities concerned to explain why their inaction to take steps against Murshedy for illegally occupying the house of the Public Works Department in Gulshan should not be declared illegal.

They were also directed to produce documents regarding the house before the court.

Secretary to the housing and public works ministry, chairman of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) and Murshedy were asked to submit the documents.

Lawyer Suman submitted the petition as a public interest litigation.

He also requested the HC to direct the Anti-Corruption Commission to dispose of the application he placed on August 11 for conducting an inquiry into this issue and take necessary steps against those involved in handover of the property of the Public Works Department to Murshedy.

Citing the petition, he earlier told The Daily Star that he collected

documents from different sources, including social media, and found that Rajuk has given the ownership of the luxury house to Murshedy, lawmaker from Khulna-4 and senior vice-president of Bangladesh Football Federation, by forging documents.

Yesterday, lawyer Suman said the authorities concerned submitted some documents to the court through an affidavit, and a hearing will be held today.

He said Murshedy has been occupying the house illegally for over two decades.

THE PROBE

The housing and public works ministry on September 8 formed a three-member committee, led by its Joint Secretary Mahmudur Rahman Habib, to investigate the incident after a letter was sent by ACC on August 22.

Sources said the graft watchdog sent the letter to the ministry after receiving a complaint from Suman in this regard.

The committee members visited the house and checked different documents before submitting the report.

In the report, it said the process of handing over the house to Murshedy was not done following the rules.

The Daily Star tried to contact Kazi Wasi Uddin, secretary of the housing and public works ministry, for comments, but failed.