

Russia against interfering in domestic affairs of Bangladesh

Says Russian embassy

UNB, Dhaka

Russia said it is invariably committed to its principle of not interfering in the domestic affairs of other countries, including Bangladesh.

"States like Bangladesh, which shape their foreign and internal policy to serve their own national interests instead of following the lead of external powers, take a similar approach," the Russian Embassy in Dhaka said in a statement yesterday.

According to the UN Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States and the Protection of their Independence and Sovereignty, dated 1965: "No State has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other state."

The sovereignty of many countries is exposed to unprecedented risk, the Russian embassy said, adding, "There are various ways of interfering in

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Ex-BCL leader 'snatched from Rab'

Law enforcers deny, claim he was let go

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

Chhatra League activists allegedly snatched an expelled leader of their organisation from Rab in Bogura yesterday but the law enforcers claimed that the leader was detained due to mistaken identity and was instantly released.

Abdur Rauf, former general secretary of the Government Azizul Haque College Chhatra League, is also the prime accused in a murder case.

Eyewitnesses said a team of Rab went to Satmatha where Chhatra League was holding a rally yesterday afternoon. Rauf was close to the stage of the rally.

When a member of the team was taking Rauf away, Chhatra League activists surrounded him and snatched Rauf away.

Several policemen were present at the scene, they said.

The Chhatra League activists then started chanting "Joy Bangla".

Footage of the incident went viral in social media.

Rab-12 Company Commander
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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inspects the BGB Day 2022 parade in the capital's Pilkhana yesterday. Story on page 12. PHOTO: BSS

'1.5-degree goal gasping for breath'

Says UN chief as he announces 'no-nonsense' climate summit in 2023

AGENCIES

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will convene a "no-nonsense" climate ambition summit in September next year and warned that there will be "no room for back-sliders, greenwashers, blame-shifters" or a repackaging of old pledges.

In a wide-ranging news conference to close out 2022, Guterres also said that he "will not relent in the pursuit of peace in Ukraine in line with international law and the United Nations Charter." A key principle of the founding UN Charter is respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity.

He is "not optimistic" about the possibility of effective Ukraine and Russia peace talks in the immediate future and believes the military confrontation will go on, but added that he "strongly hopes" there can be an end to the war in 2023.

On Iran, Guterres slammed as "totally unacceptable" a crackdown by authorities on protests over the death of a young woman in custody and said "we are witnessing massive violations of human rights that we strongly condemn."

Guterres expressed concern about the fate of a two-state solution for Israel and the Palestinians and "what the next Israeli government might do in that regard."

"It's very important that the whole of the international community be very clear explaining to the government in Israel that there is no alternative to the two-state solution and that no unilateral actions

should be taken putting into question the two-state solution," he said.

Combating climate change has been a key priority for Guterres, who is one year into his second five-year term. He said he will keep pushing for a climate solidarity pact that would require big emitters to make an extra effort to reduce emissions this decade and



ensure support for those who need it.

Countries are under pressure to ensure emissions are cut in half by 2030 and down to net-zero by 2050 - the only path to holding global warming to within 1.5 degrees Celsius.

"The 1.5-degree goal is gasping for breath," Guterres said. "I will convene a climate ambition summit in September 2023. I call on every leader to step up."

"The invitation is open," he said. "But there is a price of entry and the price of entry is non-negotiable - credible, serious and new climate action and nature-based solutions that will move the needle forward and

respond to the urgency of the climate crisis."

His comments came after countries reached a historic deal to reverse decades of environmental destruction threatening the world's species and ecosystems.

After the marathon COP 15 biodiversity summit in Montreal ran into the small hours, chair Chinese Environment Minister Huang Runqiu, declared the deal adopted and banged his gavel, sparking loud applause.

After four years of fraught negotiations, more than 190 other states rallied behind the Chinese-brokered accord aimed at saving Earth's lands, oceans and species from pollution, degradation and the climate crisis.

The cornerstone of the agreement is the so-called 30 by 30 goal - a pledge to protect 30 percent of the world's land and seas by 2030 - up from about 17 percent of land and seven percent of oceans currently.

Indigenous rights were addressed throughout the text, including in areas covered by the 30 by 30 pledge - safeguarding Indigenous peoples' right to remain stewards of land they use and ensuring they are not subject to evictions in the name of conservation.

The text approves the objective for rich countries to provide "at least US\$20 billion per year by 2025, and... at least US\$30 billion per year by 2030," approximately double and then triple the current international aid for biodiversity.

'17 BNP men picked up by law enforcers'

Allege party men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police detained 17 leaders and activists of the BNP and its associate organisations in Tangail yesterday, said the party leaders.

The law enforcers, however, refused to make any comment about the incident.

Maruf Sarwar, president of ward-3 unit of the BNP, Rakib Hasan, joint convener of the district unit BNP, and Touhidur Rahman, member of the district unit, were among the detainees.

They were returning from a memorial gathering for late Rafiqul Islam Faruk, said Durjoy Hode Shuvo, president of Tangail unit Chhatra Dal.

Advocate Farhad Iqbal, general secretary of Tangail district unit BNP, confirmed The Daily Star that 17 leaders and activists of the party were detained by police from the programme.

"Police pre-planned the detention to foil the mass procession of the BNP on December 24," he alleged.

As local journalists went to Tangail Police Station for information, the law enforcers refused to provide any data.

Sarkar Mohammad Kaiser, superintendent of Tangail police, and Abdus Salam Miah, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station, could not be reached over the phone after repeated attempts.

Contacted, Shariful Islam, additional superintendent of Tangail police (crime), said he was occupied and could not talk over the incident immediately.

Mother, daughter electrocuted to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A woman and her daughter were electrocuted to death in Pabna Sadar upazila's Dapunia union yesterday.

The dead were identified as Jahanara Khatun, 55, wife of Arob Ali Bishwas of Hatora village, and her daughter Alesa Khatun, 35.

Alesa was electrocuted while she was drying clothes. Hearing her scream, Jahanara rushed to save her but was also electrocuted. Both of them died on the spot, said Omor Faruk, chairman of Dapunia union parishad, quoting family members.

"Alesa had come to visit us on Monday and now have I lost both my daughter and wife," Arob, also a former member of Dapunia union parishad, told journalists.

Cattle thief dies in mob attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

A man was killed after being attacked by a mob in Gaibandha's Sadullapur upazila yesterday.

According to police and locals, the deceased Hafizur Rahman, 38, of the Chakmamrojpur village in Sadar upazila, was a cattle thief.

He and two others entered one Rafikul Islam's house in Dakkhinrangar village around 4:30am and stole jewelry and cash. They later went to Nuru Mia's house and stole his three cows, said Jahangir Alam, chairman of Damodor union parishad.

The villagers caught Hafizur while he and his cohorts were boarding their pick-up van. The others managed to flee.

"After being beaten up by the angry mob, Hafizur was sent to the Sadullapur Upazila Health Complex, where he died during treatment," said Pradip Kumar, officer-in-charge of the Sadullapur Police Station.

The body was sent for autopsy.

Number two is the number one 100 new

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They said about 20 new faces, mostly former student leaders and immediate past leaders of AL's front organisations, might get into the committee.

This time the AL has not invited any representatives of foreign political parties to the inaugural session of the council, but it will invite leaders of other political parties in the country, including the BNP and Jatiya Party.

Foreign envoys stationed in Dhaka will also be invited alongside eminent personalities of the country, ministers, and MPs.

Considering the ongoing financial crisis stemming from the Russia-Ukraine war and the pandemic, the council will be held over one day.

The party has allocated Tk 3.13 crore for the council and has already spent Tk 24 lakh on publications and publicity, Tk 5 lakh on office expenses, Tk 10 lakh on cultural programmes, Tk 1.54 crore on food, and Tk 1.20 crore on the stage and decorations, according to the sources.

The stage will be of the shape of a boat, and images of some achievements of the government, including Padma Bridge, metro rail, and Bangabandhu satellite, will be placed around the venue.

AL's campaign for the 2024 polls will be formally launched at the council and the activists and leaders would get a guideline from Hasina.

The party has already formed a three-member election commission led by AL advisory council member Yusuf Hossain Humayun to conduct the election at the council.

Talking to The Daily Star, AL Joint General Secretary Bahauddin Nasim said the council would elect dedicated, courageous and tested leaders. "As we want to make Bangladesh a smart country, the new committee will be comprising of young and experienced leaders."

He said the party's election strategy and declaration would be adopted by the council.

Asked about his expectations,

Nasim said they want a secular, democratic and prosperous Bangladesh free from fundamentalism and militancy and through the council, AL would take a step towards the goal.

Founded on June 23, 1949, the AL has transformed into an organisation of the masses by leading all democratic and socio-political movements and the Liberation War.

The party was initially floated as the East Pakistan Awami Muslim League at the historic Rose Garden in Dhaka, but the word "Muslim" was dropped during its third council in 1955 to make the party more inclusive and secular.

Hasina has been the party president nine times. Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Raman led the party four times and Abdul Rashid Tarkabagish was AL president three times.

Bangabandhu was AL general secretary five times, Tajuddin Ahmed four times, Zillur Rahman and Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury were AL general secretaries three times each. Abdur Razzak and Syed Ashrafur Islam were general secretaries twice.

Farmer killed on road

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

An farmer was killed after being hit by microbus on the Panchagarh-Banglabandha highway in Panchagarh's Tentulia upazila yesterday.

The Panchagarh-bound vehicle hit Fazlur Rahman, 65, of Tirmoi Dagbari village, in front of Gogoch BGB camp while he was crossing the road, said Zakir Hossain Mollah, officer-in-charge of Tentulia Highway Police Station.

Locals rescued and rushed him to Tentulia Health Complex with critical injuries. He died during treatment.

The driver had fled the scene after the accident, the OC said, adding that case was filed with Tentulia Police Station in this regard.

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surveys with aerial photos and drones, Peruvian and Japanese researches from Yamagata University earlier this month reported the discovery of 168 new designs at the Unesco World Heritage site on Peru's southern Pacific coast.

The geoglyphs, huge figures carved into the South American desert, date back more than 2,000 years and represent humans, cats, snakes, killer whales, birds and native camalids - animals such as llamas, guanacos and alpacas.

Jorge Olano, head archaeologist for the Nazca Lines research programme, said the new figures averaged between two and six metres (6.56 to 19.7 feet) in length. The purpose of the Nazca lines, which could only be seen from the air, remain a mystery.

This month's findings, however, are smaller and can be seen from the ground, Masato Sakai, a professor from Yamagata University who led the study, told Reuters.

The figures, iconic vestiges of Peru's rich history, are about a three-hour drive from the capital Lima.

Messi and Co

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in his room at the AFA complex next to the golden trophy.

Local media estimated that there were already more than 100,000 people waiting for the players at the Obelisco by mid-morning, with more crowds joining from streets on all sides.

Thousands had tracked the plane, the state airline Aerolineas Argentinas AR1915, all the way from Doha and a stop-off in Rome.

Argentina beat France 4-2 on penalties after a scintillating 3-3 draw, with Messi scoring twice and France's Kylian Mbappe netting three times.

Messi, 35, said the final would be his last match in the World Cup, though he intends to play a few more games for the national side.

2.7m farmers getting govt incentives

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seeds, 10kg of DAP and 10kg of MOP fertiliser free for cultivation on one bigha land, which will cost Tk 73 crore.

The remaining Tk 15 crore would be used for agricultural machines.

The ministry said it has already completed 50 percent of the distribution.

Earlier this year, flood hit the Sylhet division damaging crops. Marginal farmers were affected the most.

While the government promised a sufficient stimulus package so that the farmers can get back to cultivation, the money is inadequate and many farmers alleged anomalies in distribution.

Out of 30 farmers in a village, only 10 received the government help, said Abdul Jahur, a farmer of Ledarbond village in Sunamganj's Tahirpur upazila.

"Those favoured by local union parishad members get the help while we are cultivating on our own," he said.

Liton Miah, a farmer of Mohdipur village in Sunamganj's Dharmapasha

upazila, got 5kg of seeds and 20kg of fertiliser under the stimulus package, but it came in at least 10 days late.

"I already sowed seeds purchased by taking loan," he said.

Over 3.37 lakh farmers in the division were affected by the flood that lasted several months since May 12, according to the Department of Agricultural Extension in Sylhet.

According to the DAE, 2,495 lakh farmers got stimulus amounting to Tk 13,249 crore.

On November 10, the government allotted Ulsi and hybrid seeds along with fertiliser to cultivate this region's key crop, the Boro paddy.

Of the stimulus, 1.10 lakh farmers got 5kg of seeds and 20kg of fertiliser each to cultivate one bigha of land. At the same time, another 1.395 lakh farmers got 2kg of hybrid Boro seeds each for one bigha of land.

"We must understand that the country has limited resources and it is hard to support all farmers with all the seeds and fertilisers they need. It would be great if more stimulus could be allotted, but we are trying our best to stand by the farmers," said

Musharraf Hussain Khan, additional director of the DAE in the Sylhet division.

Asked about the anomalies, he said, "Our officials prepare the list with the help of local union parishad members and there might be favouritism due to their involvement. If we get serious allegations of anomalies, we will take necessary steps."

About the delayed distribution, he blamed the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) for it.

"They were responsible for the disbursement and they delayed a bit. Many farmers sowed seeds before the stimulus disbursement," he said, adding that the disbursement of corn and sunflower seeds is yet to begin.

Contacted, Obaidul Islam, additional general manager (seed distribution) of BADC, said 95 percent of the seeds and fertilisers have been disbursed.

"It is unfair to blame the whole process as we are trying our best to disburse with only 35 percent of the manpower."

[Our Sylhet correspondent contributed to this report.]

Govt revises down growth forecast

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The inflationary target for this fiscal year though will be revised upwards to Tk 7 percent from 5.6 percent.

In the first five months of the fiscal year, inflation averaged 8.77 percent. "After hitting a decade high of 9.52 percent in August, inflation started to drop. Inflation will come down further," he said, adding that an inflation target of 6 percent will be set for the next fiscal year.

The elevated inflation means the government's subsidy bills will overshoot the Tk 82,000 crore allotted in the budget.

"It can cross Tk 100,000 crore," the official said.

Subsequently, the revised budget will not be pared back much, in keeping with the trend that started

last fiscal year.

The revised budget would be Tk 657,971 crore, down about 3 percent.

In the face of growing demand for subsidies, rising interest burden and higher government wage bills, the finance ministry cut the budget for fiscal 2021-22 by about 1.69 percent - the lowest in recent memory.

Like last year, the government's interest burden is high. The lower economic activities mean tax collection will be less, so the government is borrowing more to meet its expenditure.

Interest expenditure is expected to increase next year too as the government comes up with an expansionary budget with an eye on the national elections, scheduled to take place in the first week of January 2024.

The size of the next budget is likely to be Tk 750,194 crore, up about 10 percent from this fiscal year's original budget.

However, in keeping with the government's austerity measures, the allocation for the annual development programme will be massively downsized.

About Tk 166,000 crore will be kept for development purposes, down 32.5 percent from this fiscal year.

The revenue target will be Tk 486,000 crore, up 12.2 percent from this year.

Of the sum, the National Board of Revenue will be tasked with bringing in Tk 442,000 crore, up 19.5 percent from this fiscal year.

The budget deficit is estimated to be Tk 264,194 crore.