



ROLE IN SCIENCE
Help more girls, women tear down barriers
PM urges int’l community
UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Friday urged the international community to provide opportunities and help more women and girls excel in science.

“It is unfortunate that women represent only 12 percent of scientists and 30 percent of researchers globally,” she said.

The premier said this in a video statement screened at the 8th International Day of Women and Girls in Science Assembly, held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

“Today, we celebrate the women and girls who are making important contributions to the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics,” she said.

Hasina urged women and girls to act as the agents of change themselves. “The women and girls in science and technology must remember that they are not alone. The steps they take would help open the door further for their sisters around the world,” she said.

She also focused on her government’s steps for development of women in Bangladesh.

Turning to Bangladesh, the PM said, “I have made it a priority to have our women and girls lead in every sphere. Our women are doing very well in the field of research and higher education.”

She said scholarships are being

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Carrying iron rods, two rickshaw-vans moving against the traffic on Dhaka-Chattogram highway near Rayerbagh bus stop in the capital yesterday. Such violation of traffic rules on one of the busiest highways may cause crashes. But it seems that the authorities concerned do not take action against this practice.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Indian regulator probes Adani’s links to investors

REUTERS, Mumbai/New Delhi

India’s market regulator is investigating Adani Group’s links to some of the investors in the conglomerate’s aborted \$2.5 billion share sale, two sources said, amid growing concern in New Delhi about a US short-seller’s allegations against one of the country’s top industrial groups.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is looking into any potential violation of Indian securities laws or any conflict of interest in the share sale process, said the two sources who have direct knowledge of the matter.

The watchdog is investigating relationships between Adani and at least two Mauritius-based firms – Great International Tusker Fund and Ayushmat Ltd. – which participated as anchor investors, among others, said the sources, who spoke on the condition of anonymity due to the confidential nature of the probe.

Under India’s capital and disclosure requirement rules, any entity related to a company’s founder or the founder group is ineligible to apply under the anchor investor category. One of the sources said the focus of the probe would be whether any of the anchor investors are “connected” to the founder group.

The ports-to-energy conglomerate – controlled by billionaire Gautam Adani, one of the world’s richest people – has seen shares in its seven companies lose more than \$100 billion in market value since the Jan. 24 report by Hindenburg Research, which accused it of improper use of offshore tax havens and stock manipulation. Adani has denied the charges. Last week, the group’s flagship entity Adani Enterprises ADEL.NS pulled its secondary share offering, India’s largest ever, because of the sharp selloff.

SEBI and the Adani Group did not respond to requests for comment about the investigation. Great International Tusker Fund and Ayushmat Ltd. also did not respond to requests for comment.

Also under the SEBI scanner are Elara Capital and Monarch Network Capital, two of the 10 investment banks that managed the share offering, the sources said, adding that SEBI had approached the two firms last week.

The roles of Elara and Monarch are being examined by the market watchdog to rule out “any conflict” in the share offering process, one of the sources said.

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Farmer hurt in tiger attack in Sundarbans

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

A farmer has been attacked by a tiger in the Sundarbans when he was herding cattle there.

Fazlu Gazi, 62, of Bagerhat’s Sharankhola upazila, was admitted to Bagerhat Sadar Hospital on Friday.

Fazlu’s wife Feroza Begum said they let their cattle graze freely. On Tuesday, the cattle went to the forest crossing the dried Bhola river.

The tiger attacked Fazlu when he went to the forest to bring the cattle back home, she added.

According to the victim, there were some boatmen on the spot. Seeing the tiger, Fazlu and the boatmen started screaming. Later, the tiger left him and fled.

“I received wounds on my right leg,” Fazlu said.

Asim Kumar Samaddar, superintendent of Bagerhat Sadar Hospital, said the wounds were deep.

“The victim cannot afford medical expenses. We are providing him with our all-out support,” he added.

Child raped in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A five-year-old girl has been raped in Jhenidah’s Moheshpur upazila.

The victim’s father filed a case against Fazlur Rahman, 42, of the upazila’s Kullah village, on Friday.

According to the case statement, the accused lured the girl with orange, took her to a nearby orange orchard, and raped her on Thursday afternoon.

The girl was admitted to Moheshpur Upazila Health Complex for treatment, her father said.

Khandakar Shamim Uddin, officer-in-charge of Moheshpur Police Station, said the accused went into hiding. The law enforcers were conducting drives to arrest him.

Iran celebrates 44th anniv of Islamic revolution

AFP, Tehran

Tens of thousands of Iranians yesterday rallied in Tehran and other major cities to mark the 44th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, as their president said months-long protests had been defeated.

For the past two years, the 1979 overthrow of the Western backed shah was commemorated mainly by Iranians who drove around cities in their cars or on motorcycles due to Covid restrictions.

But this year, waving flags, they took to the streets of Tehran on foot and converged on Azadi (Freedom) Square, one of the capital’s most prominent landmarks, despite chilly temperatures.

200 hurt in AL-BNP clashes

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said Kazi Shanawaz, officer-in-charge of Jamalpur Sadar Police Station.

Police arrested six BNP men from the scene, the OC added.

In Araihaaz, Narayanganj, at least 13 people, including three policemen, were injured in a clash between police and the opposition party.

Lutfar Rahman Abdu, former joint convener of Narayanganj BNP, said the activists were marching on Dhaka-Sylhet Highway around 1:15pm when police suddenly attacked them and used firearms, leaving 10 injured.

OC Azizul Haque of Araihaaz Police Station said the BNP activists threw brick chips at policemen who were trying to clear the road. The police retaliated with rubber bullets and teargas shells.

Three policemen were injured, he added.

In Bogura’s Adamdighi and Sonatala upazilas, opposition activists said police foiled their programmes. However, the latter refuted the allegation.

In Sirajganj town, at least 10 people were injured and five motorcycles were set on fire during a clash between AL and BNP men in the Paikpara area.

In Hatibandha upazila of Lalmonirhat, at least six BNP men were injured in an attack by AL activists, locals said. However, the AL

refuted it.

Police said no clash happened.

In Naogaon, at least five BNP men were injured in an attack allegedly by the AL men in Tilokpur area.

However, AL leaders said the BNP activists had beaten up Chhatra League activists.

In Noakhali, BNP leaders alleged that over 50 activists were injured in six incidents of attack by the AL men.

But AL leaders said the clash happened between two groups of BNP activists.

In Bhola, BNP leaders alleged that over 50 of them were injured in eight separate incidents of attack in three upazilas. The AL refuted the allegations.

In Hnila Union of Teknaf, Cox’s Bazar, at least 15 people were injured and an AL leader’s car was vandalised during a clash.

Leaders of both parties blamed each other.

Police said additional law enforcement personnel were deployed to avoid further violence.

In Sreepur upazila of Gazipur, the BNP said attacks by the AL left nine of their activists injured. But AL leaders said they were the ones who got attacked by firearms-wielding BNP men.

A photo in which a man brandishing a firearm from a BNP

procession went viral on social media. [Our correspondents from the districts contributed to the story.]

Russia says it staged major strike on Ukrainian energy facilities

REUTERS

Russia carried out a “massive strike” on critically important energy facilities of Ukraine’s military-industrial complex on Friday, the Russian defence ministry said yesterday.

In a daily update, the ministry did not identify the energy facilities it claimed to have hit. It said the strike had also blocked the transport of foreign weapons and ammunition by rail to battlegrounds in Ukraine.

Ukraine’s armed forces said late on Friday that Russian forces had fired more than 100 missiles and mounted 12 air and 20 shelling attacks. It said 61 Russian cruise missiles were destroyed.

Ukraine’s Energy Minister German Galushchenko said Russia had hit power facilities in six regions with missiles and drones, causing blackouts across most of the country.

Not before 2028

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Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan, on many occasions, said the delays cannot be resolved until the construction of the rail bridge and installation of the dual-gauge double line from Joydebpur to Ishwardi.

The government took up a project in January 2016 to construct the 4.8km dedicated double-line rail bridge with a Japanese loan. The construction is going on in full-swing and the project authorities are hopeful about opening it by December 2024 or early 2025.

On the other hand, the Joydebpur-Ishwardi double line project, taken in November 2018, was supposed to be implemented within December 2024 under government-to-government initiative between Bangladesh and China.

The BR even completed negotiations with the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation for the project implementation and the Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase in December 2018 approved a Tk 11,586.68-crore proposal for the work.

But, China in March 2021 declined to finance the project citing “lack of in-depth preliminary work and insufficient feasibility study”.

China’s decision came four months after the Prime Minister’s Office in November 2020, following

a decision of the cost review committee, directed BR to slash Tk 1,495.52 crore (12.91 percent) from the project’s contract price.

Several BR officials, however, said China’s refusal to give the loan might have something to do with geo-politics.

After the refusal from China, the Bangladesh government turned to Japan for the project’s funding and the country agreed, BR’s Director General Quamrul Ahsan confirmed to The Daily Star.

Following a discussion with an “appraisal mission” of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), BR has prepared a Technical Assistance Project Proposal (TAPP) for reviewing previous feasibility study, prepare detail design for the line and bidding document, BR sources said.

Out of Tk 318.49 crore, Japan is supposed to provide 234 crore and loan agreement is expected to be signed within May, they said. The project is supposed to be completed within June 2025.

The feasibility study for Joydebpur-Ishwardi double-line project was done under a separate project in 2015 and the Chinese company had reviewed it. The company was supposed to prepare a detailed design within their contract price before starting physical works, they said.

But BR now has to hire a consultant

to review that study, which is likely to take six months. Then a detailed designing will start, after which they have to revise the project cost, they added.

“We hope to start physical works of the project at the end of 2025 and it may take three to four years – 2028 to 2029 – to complete,” Quamrul Ahsan told The Daily Star yesterday.

He admitted that the synchronisation between the line and the bridge will not take place right after the completion of the bridge.

Asked, he said the prices of all construction materials have increased in the global market and that may be reflected in the project cost.

“However, it would depend on the detailed design.

“We had nothing to do but go for an alternative financier after China pulled out from the project. So, it is taking time to start,” he added.

BR sources said the new line will be set on the north side of the existing line and the project authorities will have to acquire 56 acres of land for this purpose.

While the consultants will draw the detailed design for the entire Joydebpur-Ishwardi line, Japan may provide funds for Joydebpur to Bangabandhu Bridge East Station (around 80km) in the first phase, the added.

Maimed, many are left in the lurch

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the various challenges of ailing or injured returnee migrant workers, as many of them need a long-term treatment and face financial difficulties.

They said that once such migrant workers return home, they should be brought under a specific “social safety net” scheme to ensure their survival. Besides, migrant workers should be made aware of their health and safety issues before their migration, they added.

According to WEWB website, it disbursed around Tk 14.4 crore among 1,508 returnee migrant workers for treatment from 2010 to January 2023. Of them, 383 got financial support last year – the highest in a single year.

In a recent report, Oviyashi Karmi Unnayan Program (Okup), a migrant rights group, said it provided medical support to 228 returnee migrant workers from 2019 to 2021.

Of them, 21 percent received it for the workplace injuries they sustained

in the host countries.

Okup Chairperson Shakirul Islam said they have been demanding a special social safety net scheme for the injured and ailing returnee migrants for the past few years.

Under the scheme, medical support can continue until they recover fully. So far, the government has not introduced any such scheme, he said.

“There should be a needs-based sustainable reintegration of such returnees.”

Shakirul also suggested giving them instant cash support at the airport upon arrival.

He said in many cases, it takes more than the expected time for an injured migrant worker to receive the WEWB’s financial support. Besides, those who return home due to workplace injuries often do not get due compensation from employers, he added.

Shariful Hasan, head of Brac Migration Programme, said although providing Tk 1 lakh for treatment is

a positive step, it is not a sustainable solution.

He suggested the expatriates’ welfare ministry or welfare board take steps to ensure special care at government hospitals for those who need long-term treatment.

Also, migrant workers need to be aware of the health challenges in the host countries and the scopes of treatment there, he said, calling upon Bangladesh missions abroad to arrange regular health check-up campaign for Bangladeshi workers.

Contacted over phone, WEWB Director (finance and welfare) Shoaib Ahmad Khan said though they do not have other services except for cash and ambulance supports at present, migrant workers are now under insurance coverage through which they can get more benefits.

About compensation from employers, he said they took the required steps in this regard and many workers already received the compensation.

AL to reveal name

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not reveal the name of its candidate before the nomination papers are submitted to the Election Commission.

The papers will be scrutinised tomorrow. If there is more than one candidate, the election will be held in parliament on February 19. Members of parliament will cast their votes to elect the president.

The names being discussed for the AL candidate are Mashiur Rahman, PM’s economic affairs adviser; former chief justices ABM Khairul Haque and Syed Mahmud Hossain; Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury; AL presidium member and lawmaker Mosharraf Hossain and AL lawmaker Mostafizur Rahman.

According to section 5 (2) of the Representation of the People’s Order, 1972, all executive authorities of the government shall assist the EC in the performance of its functions, and for

this purpose, the president may, after consultation with the commission, issue such directions as they may deem necessary.

The tenure of Abdul Hamid, the longest serving president of the country, will expire on April 23. And according to the constitution, there is no scope for his re-election.

Article 50 (2) of the constitution reads that no person shall hold office as president for more than two terms, whether or not the terms are consecutive.

Hamid was appointed acting president of Bangladesh on March 14, 2013, while then president Zillur Rahman was in hospital in Singapore. Zillur died six days later.

Hamid was then elected unopposed as president on April 22, 2013, and was sworn into office two days later. On February 7, 2018, he was re-elected unopposed for a second term.

Imranur wins

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6.70 seconds in the heats – finishing third – earlier in the morning to seal a semifinal berth. Then he improved his timing to 6.61 seconds to move into the final as the second best, finishing second only on photo-finish to a Qatari sprinter.

The London-based sprinter then further improved his personal timing by clocking 6.59 seconds in the final to take home the gold medal.

This is the first time any Bangladeshi athlete has won a medal at this level of competition. Imranur’s previous best in this event was 6.64 seconds, which he clocked at the World Indoor Athletics staged in Belgrade in 2022.

Bangladesh’s fastest female sprinter Shirin Akter, however, bowed out from the heats after clocking 7.93 seconds in her 60m event on Friday.