

Keep watch on moral compass while building your careers

Wahiduddin Mahmud tells graduates at IUB convocation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Graduates should explore and build their careers keeping eyes on their moral compass, said renowned economist Wahiduddin Mahmud yesterday.

He made the comment while speaking as the convocation speaker at the 23rd convocation of Independent University, Bangladesh.

The country has achieved materialistic progress but there is a downturn in moral standards in the society, he said.

Bangladesh has achieved remarkable socioeconomic progress, defying the early predictions of many doom cells, he further said.

About the downturn of moral standards, he said, it was a global phenomenon in this era of excessive consumerism and hyper-capitalism with an unprecedented concentration of wealth amid extreme inequality.

"This is why you need to have eyes on your moral compass while exploring and building a career."

He then said, "Don't be discouraged if you cannot find any role model. In Bangladesh, we are running out of role models. The few we had were of limited editions. They are almost gone," he added.

"Do not feel frustrated even when you will see that merit is devalued and morality is in decline at times in your working life," he added.

The noted economist said that acquiring education and productive skills is a lifelong pursuit.

High-quality human capital shapes the future of a country and it is the basis of economic development. Physical infrastructure is important for economic development, but without human capital, it is only like a skeleton, able to do little on its own, he further said.

Education Minister Dipu Moni, while speaking as chief guest, said students often run after jobs once they graduate from university.

Instead, they should aim at becoming entrepreneurs and creating employment, she said, adding that

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Education Minister Dipu Moni giving a student gold medal at the 23rd convocation of the Independent University, Bangladesh. The programme was held on the university campus yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

IRAN-SAUDI ARABIA RAPPROCHEMENT DEAL

Tehran proposes locations to Riyadh for ministerial talks

REUTERS, Dubai

The Iranian government has proposed to Saudi Arabia three locations for a meeting at foreign minister level, Iran's foreign minister said yesterday, citing the latest messages with Riyadh since the countries agreed to re-establish ties.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian told a news conference in Tehran his country had agreed to such a meeting, although he did not list the three locations or say when such a meeting might take place.

Separately, an aide to Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said that Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz had invited Raisi to visit Riyadh in a letter welcoming the deal agreed on March 10 to restore ties within two months, after years of hostility.

Raisi "welcomed the invitation," Mohammad Jamshidi, political deputy

at the president's office, said on Twitter without mentioning a timeframe.

The Saudi government's communications office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Saudi state media has not reported on the letter.

The deal between the region's Sunni Muslim and Shi'ite powers, brokered by China, was announced after four days of previously undisclosed talks in Beijing between top security officials from the two rival Middle Eastern powers.

Amirabdollahian also said Tehran was ready for the mutual reopening of embassies.

Saudi Arabia cut ties with Iran in 2016 after its embassy in Tehran was stormed during a dispute between the two countries over Riyadh's execution of a Shi'ite Muslim cleric.

Amirabdollahian said Iran also hoped

steps would be made to normalise its ties with Bahrain, a close Saudi ally that followed Riyadh in severing diplomatic ties with Iran in 2016.

Bahrain, a Sunni Muslim-ruled monarchy with a majority Shi'ite population, has repeatedly accused Iran of fomenting unrest in the island state, which Tehran denies.

"An agreement was reached two months ago for Iranian and Bahraini technical delegations to visit the embassies of the two countries. We hope that some obstacles between Iran and Bahrain will be removed and we will take basic steps to reopen the embassies," Amirabdollahian said.

Bahrain's government communications office did not immediately respond to a Reuters' request for comment.

Bahrain, together with other Gulf Arab states, welcomed the agreement between Riyadh and Tehran to restore relations.

Another farmer abducted in Teknaf

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A farmer was abducted while working at his crop field and taken to the hills of Teknaf upazila of Cox's Bazar last morning.

Md Syed, 45, was taken from Jummapara of Hnila union just days after nine villagers were similarly abducted in Baharchhara union.

Teknaf Police Station Inspector Nasir Uddin Majumdar said they were investigating the matter.

On Thursday, masked criminals took hostage a group of nine villagers, including two children, who went to the hills of Baharchhara union to collect firewood and demanded ransom for their release.

The children managed to cleverly escape the criminals an hour later.

The next day, police rescued seven abducted people and arrested three men.

Madrasa girl killed after rape in M'singh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A madrasa girl was strangled to death after she was presumably gang-raped by unidentified persons in Mymensingh's Dhobaura upazila, said a police inquest report.

The 11-year-old's body was recovered from the Netai river around 11:00pm Saturday night and the next morning it was sent to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Police detained four of the girl's neighbours for interrogation, said Tipu Sultan, officer-in-charge of Dhobaura Police Station.

The third grader went missing from her house Saturday evening and could not be found by family members and neighbours.

Cop killed in Magura road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A policewoman died in a road accident in the Kushundi Bazar area of the Magura-Faridpur highway in Magura Sadar upazila last morning.

Mother of two children, Laboni Bhadra, from the district's Shalikhra upazila, was working as a constable for the Rajbari Rail Police, just like her husband Prosenjit Biswas.

The couple was headed to work in Rajbari from Shalikhra around 10:00am on Prosenjit's motorbike when Laboni fell off onto the road before a bus from behind ran her over, said Magura Sadar Police Station OC Jabbarul Islam.

The policewoman's body was sent to Magura Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

Everything was wrong with the bus

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and another person died while undergoing treatment at Panchar Islamia Hospital."

Two were declared dead after they were taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said Mohammad Masud, assistant-in-charge of the DMCH police outpost.

Uzzal Sikder, an injured passenger at Shibchar Upazila Health Complex, said he heard a woman yelling at the driver and pleading with him to slow down when the bus was in Gopalganj.

Uzzal said he fell asleep and when he could open his eyes, he found people were dragging him out of the wreckage.

"I saw a severed hand of a fellow passenger. Another one was bleeding profusely from his ear. I am so lucky to be alive," he said.

Witness Saiful Islam said the front end of the bus was ripped apart on impact and some bodies were found in the crumpled and mangled front part. "We rescued some injured and sent them to hospital," he said.

SUSPENSION ORDER FLOUTED
Sheikh Mahabub-e-Rabbani, director (road safety) of the BRTA, said the

suspension order on the bus was issued following a crash in Gopalganj that killed three people.

According to media reports, this bus rear-ended a parked sand-laden truck in Gopinathpur area of Gopalganj Sadar on Dhaka-Khulna highway on November 17 when it was heading for Khulna from Dhaka.

Three people, including the driver of a truck and the conductor of this bus, were killed and eight others were injured.

The Mirpur circle office of the BRTA issued the suspension of operation order after the crash.

The Daily Star could not reach the bus owner for comments.

In September, two buses collided head-on in Rangpur leaving at least eight dead and over 50 injured. None of them had route permits and one of them had no valid fitness certificate.

THE VICTIMS
Of the deceased, 17 died in Madaripur.

The local administration identified them as Sweetsy, Md Kabir Sheikh, Afsana Mimi, Masud, Sheikh Abdullah Al Mamun, Md Ismail, Md Hedayet Bahar, Md Farhad Sikder, Anadi Ranjan Mazumder, Mostak Ahmed, Md Sajib,

Chinmoy Prosoon Ghosh, Mohadev Kumar Sadukha, Md Ashfaquzzaman Linkon, Rashed Sarder, Yusuf, and bus driver Md Zahid.

Their bodies were handed over to their families, said Md Rajibul Islam, Shibchar upazila nirbahi officer.

Bus conductor Minhaj Biswas and madrasa teacher Sheikh Yakub Ali died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, said hospital sources.

COMMITTEE FORMED
Madaripur district administration has formed a four-member committee to probe the crash.

The committee, led by an additional district magistrate Pallab Kumar Hazra, was asked to submit the report within three working days, said Rahima Khaton, deputy commissioner of Madaripur.

The district administration also announced financial assistance of Tk 25,000 for each of the families of the deceased, the DC said.

The Accident Research Institute of Buet will investigate separately, said its director Prof Shamsul Hoque.

[Our Shariatpur correspondent contributed to this report.]

Of dresses and dolls

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bus to join work after attending his sister-in-law's funeral that was held on Friday.

"They [Rashed's daughters] had told him they would never speak to him again if he didn't bring back dresses and dolls for them. Now, they really will never be able to speak to him again...," Shafiqul Islam, father-in-law of the victim, told The Daily Star.

He urged the authorities to take steps to bring an end to reckless driving.

The bus left Khulna's Fultala bus counter at 4:00am for Dhaka with 43 passengers on board.

After the accident, 10 injured passengers were brought to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Of them,

two died on the way to hospital, while eight were undergoing treatment till the filing of this report at 8:00pm.

The deceased were identified as a supervisor of the bus Minhajur Rahman Biswas, 20, from Gopalganj, and passenger Sheikh Akbar Ali, 65, from Bagerhat.

Minhaj was a college student in Gopalganj, said Saiful Islam, supervisor of another Emad Paribahan bus just 20 minutes behind the one that fell into the ditch.

"His [Minhaj's] father is a paralysis patient and his elder brother was unable to support the family of five alone. So, he used to work as a bus supervisor to support his own education," he told The Daily Star

when he and the owner of Emad Paribahan came to receive the body from DMCH yesterday.

Saiful added, "As soon as we reached the spot, we found Minhaj and the driver Jahidul Islam dead."

He, however, claimed there were no technical issues in the bus. "It was drizzling since morning... However, I can't say why or how it fell into the ditch."

Akbar, a retired madrasa teacher, boarded the bus with his son-in-law Jahangir Hossain to come to Dhaka for his cataract surgery.

While Akbar died on the way to hospital, injured Jahangir was taken to Shibchar health Complex for treatment.

Focus on inflation, macro stability

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the upcoming budget.

"It is not possible to implement in this budget but you can try in future. But there must be some sort of announcement of the planned tax reforms in the budget. How will modernise the tax system and administration? How will our tax-GDP ratio rise to 11 percent? In this budget, we want to see some tax exemption withdrawal," he added.

Selim Raihan, executive director of SANEM, echoed the same.

"Scaling up tax-GDP ratio in line with IMF's conditions will not be easy," he said. The Daily Star has learnt from people familiar with the discussions.

Reforms under the IMF programme should be transparent and the relevant stakeholders must be engaged. The progress can be monitored, too.

"We want to see how the reforms in tax, banking sector and public fund management are panning out."

There is intense inflationary pressure in the economy and it is exerting tremendous stress on low and middle-income households.

"This must be immediately addressed," said Raihan, also a professor at the University of Dhaka's economics department.

He also called for ensuring macroeconomic stability.

"There might be a brewing global financial crisis -- we need to be careful. At the same time, we must give emphasis to stimulating private investment and attracting foreign investment in a big way in light of LDC graduation," he added.

Rehman Sobhan, chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, called for addressing the income inequality and abnormal wealth accumulation by a few.

The budget must have an indication that the government is serious about recouping money from defaulters, he said, according to meeting participants.

He also called for ensuring that loan defaulters do not get a nomination to contest in the polls.

As per law, loan defaulters cannot be candidates in the polls. But they tend to reschedule their soured loans just before the nomination papers are due to get rid of the defaulter tag.

"This is manipulation to get election participation. We must not circumvent the law," Sobhan added.

Meanwhile, Binayak Sen, director general at the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, said the poverty rate has come down to 14-15 percent and extreme poverty to less than 10 percent in the forthcoming Household Income Expenditure Survey.

However, economists expressed scepticism about the drop in the poverty rate amid the elevated inflation for a good year or so.

"The way that the price level is increasing, and the impact it had on low and middle-income people, it is counter-intuitive that the number of people below the poverty line would decline. However, we have to see detailed figures to pass an informed judgement," Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the CPD, told The Daily Star.

Rahman did not attend the virtual

They must be identified

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government built "Digital Bangladesh", she said due to digitalization, the scope for work has increased and so have cybercrimes.

Hasina said there are some anti-state forces who see nothing positive, no matter how well Bangladesh does. There is another class of people who defame Bangladesh before foreigners and they get financial or other benefits for it.

Talking about the sanction imposed on Rab officials by the US, the premier asked the force members not to be upset hearing the words from others but rather move with self-confidence.

"This is our country that we got through the sacrifice of blood. In this country, we know who does what job and we'll judge them. We'll have to work with this confidence."

About the activities of teenage gangs, Hasina said parents, teachers and public representatives alongside law enforcement agencies have also the responsibility to work for eliminating teenage gangs. "The

teenage gangs must be stopped."

The premier also asked the Rab to focus more on protecting the youth from drugs.

"We're getting self-sufficient and developed financially. But the impact of drugs is getting worse at the same time. Many people are getting addicted," she said, adding that this social disease is spreading.

She said a family suffers immensely if any member gets addicted to drugs. "We've been able to contain it largely. But all will have to be more active in this case."

Hasina asked Rab to play an effective role in maintaining the country's peace, security and stability to ease Bangladesh's journey from a developing country to a developed and prosperous nation by 2040.

Talking about the commodity prices during the Ramadan, she asked the authorities concerned to ensure that no one suffers during the time.

"We see a peculiar trend in our country. Some people try to make profits during the Ramadan though it is a month of austerity. All should

pay attention so that the people don't suffer."

Hasina said the Rab has successfully been conducting drives against food adulteration.

She also appreciated the force for successfully tackling terrorism, militancy, and piracy in the Sundarbans.

The PM said, "I believe that the force will play its role as it did in past with due dutifulness, effectiveness and activeness to maintain peace and stability in the country."

In another development, Hasina said India can use Bangladesh's sea and airports in Chattogram and Sylhet if it wanted.

She said this while Ram Madhav, member of the Governing Council of India Foundation, called on her at the Gono Bhavan yesterday.

PM's Deputy Press Secretary KM Shakhawat Moon later briefed reporters.

Hasina said her government puts emphasis on the connectivity in the region that will lead to a better people-to-people contact.

Former Taiwan president Ma to visit China in landmark trip

REUTERS, Taipei

Former Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou will visit China this month, his office said yesterday, the first time a former or current Taiwanese leader has visited since the defeated Republic of China government fled to the island in 1949.

The trip will be at a time of heightened tensions between Beijing and Taipei as China keeps up its military and political pressure to try and get democratically-elected Taiwan to accept Chinese sovereignty.