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TACKLING ECONOMIC CRISIS Bloomberg lauds PM's timely reform steps Predicts her party's win in next nat'l polls

BSS, Dhaka

Bloomberg news agency has praised Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her "timely reform steps" to negate impacts of the worldwide economic crisis in Bangladesh and predicted that the initiatives will help her party get elected for the fourth straight term in the next general election.



The agency also said Hasina "needs to push more reforms to receive all funds".

Bloomberg published an article against the backdrop of Bangladesh's receipt of International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans which it attributed to the South Asian country's timely reforms to maintain economic stability ahead of the next national election.

The article mentioned that Hasina's victory was expected not merely "because many of her opponents are behind bars or ensnared in legal cases" but due to her success in ensuring economic stability.

Following is the full Bloomberg article headlined "Bangladesh Leader Bets IMF-Mandated Rigor Will Pay Off in Polls" with two sub-heads: Sheikh Hasina needs to push more reforms to receive all funds. She is expected to win a fourth straight term in the elections.

Government leaders across the world have often balked at implementing reforms agreed with the IMF for fear of

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A teacher gives lessons to children at a daycare centre in the capital's Khilgaon. The Department of Women Affairs runs eight such centres in the city for children aged between six months and six years for only Tk 100 per month. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Child daycare for only Tk 100 a month

Low-income parents get cheaper, safe daycare service at the centres run by Dept of Women Affairs

AFROJA AFRIN

When their daughter Jannatul Mawa was born two and a half years ago, Romana Begum and her husband struggled to make ends meet on their meagre Tk 6,000 monthly income.

Romana began wrapping products at small shops and working as a domestic help to boost her family's income.

But this made it difficult to juggle work and childcare as she had no relatives in the city and was forced to take her daughter with her to work.

In January, Romana discovered a low-cost daycare centre in Azimpur run by the Department of Women Affairs that provided day-long childcare including three meals for only Tk 100 per month.

Since then, Romana has been dropping her daughter off there for the past two months.

At first, she would feel upset after dropping her child off, but she soon realised that it allowed her to concentrate more on her work.

"My daughter enjoys playing with other children her age at the daycare, and they provide three meals a day at no extra cost," Romana explained.

Hasina Begum, a domestic help in Shilpapara, earns Tk 7,000 per month, while her husband is unable to work due to

physical illness.

Their family recently moved to Dhaka, and Hasina found it difficult to focus on work while worrying about her children's safety and care.

When she heard about a low-cost daycare centre in the area, she immediately enrolled her two children, ages three and four.

"My children have been going to the Khilgaon government daycare for the past five months and the caregivers have been good to them. Now, I can focus better on my work and it has

Each facility has a daycare officer, a teacher, a health instructor, two cooks, four caregivers, two security guards, and a cleaner on staff.

made my life much easier as I no longer worry about my children all day," she explained.

The Daily Star spoke with a number of low-income parents who used government daycare services, and they all had positive things to say about their experience.

Private daycares, on the other hand, charge higher fees ranging from Tk 8,000 to Tk 10,000.

Samir Rahman*, a private service holder, told this

correspondent that he pays Tk 6,000 per month plus an additional Tk 2,000 for food for his child to go to a private daycare centre in Mohammadpur for five and a half hours a day.

For low income workers earning around Tk 7,000-8,000 per month, it is not feasible to spend such a substantial amount on a daycare given that they also have food and housing costs.

In Dhaka, the Department of Women Affairs (DWA) operates eight daycare centres for low-income families, which are located in Mogbazar, Kallyanpur, Mohammadpur, Khilgaon, Rampura, Azimpur, Faridabad, and Kamrangirchar.

These centres provide daytime care for children aged six months to six years from 8:30am to 5:30pm for a monthly fee of Tk 100.

There are also six daycares in the city for middle-income families that charge Tk 500 per month plus a Tk 500 admission fee.

According to its website, the DWA has set up a total of 43 daycare centres across the country, with 33 for low-income families and 10 for middle-income families.

This year, as of February, these 43 centres provided services to 1,728 children.

Each facility has a daycare

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Seven arrested in 10 DSA cases last month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Human rights body Manabdhikar Shongskriti Foundation yesterday demanded repeal of the Digital Security Act, stating that harassment of journalists and activists continues through its arbitrary misuse.

The organisation in a report said that seven people were arrested in 10 cases under the act in March alone. The number of cases under the DSA was five in February.

In a press release, signed by its Founding President Sultana Kamal, the rights body said they prepared the report based on the news published by 10 media outlets and verified it through human rights activists.

The foundation said seven of the cases filed under the DSA last month involved "images" of the country and high-ranking government officials being "tarnished" by critical posts, shares and comments.

Two cases were filed on charges of fraud while the other over alleged intimidation, public unrest and disorder.

According to the report, there were three cases against journalists under the DSA last month. Of them, two cases were filed against Samsuzzaman Shams, the journalist of Prothom Alo.

Among those arrested are a BNP activist, an Awami League activist, an actress, two youths and a government employee. The government employee died in the custody of the Rapid Action Battalion.

Through the arbitrary misuse of this law, a terrible campaign is being carried out to prevent people from expressing their opinions and to intimidate and silence everyone, the release reads.

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Ukraine 'will never forgive' Moscow

Says Zelensky on Bucha anniv; Russia rules out Ukraine halt despite Belarus' call for truce

AGENCIES

President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday that Ukraine would "never forgive" Moscow for its occupation of Bucha, a year after the town became a symbol of alleged Russian war crimes.

Russian forces pulled back from the commuter town northwest of Kyiv on March 31, 2022, just over one month after President Vladimir Putin ordered his troops to invade Ukraine.

AFP journalists on April 2 last year discovered the bodies of at least 20 people in civilian clothing, some with their hands tied behind their backs, lying in a street of the suburb.

Zelensky said Bucha had become "a symbol of the atrocities" committed by Russian forces, who have been linked to the extra-judicial killings of unarmed civilians in Bucha.

"We will never forgive. We will punish every perpetrator," Zelensky said in a statement on social media. "The battle for the foundation of the free world is taking place on Ukrainian land. We will definitely win. Russian evil will fall, right here in Ukraine."

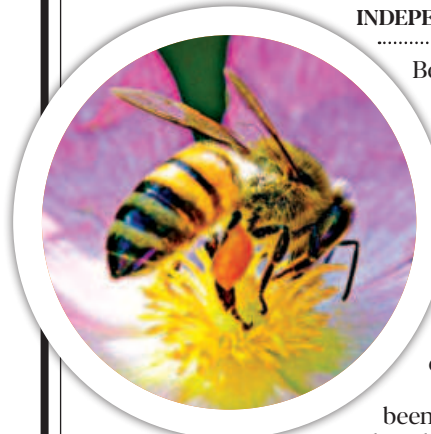
Ukraine and its Western allies have accused Russian troops of war crimes after the discoveries, pointing to an abundance of footage and witness accounts.

Prosecutors in Kyiv say Russian forces killed some 1,400 civilians around Bucha and that they have identified dozens of Russian soldiers responsible. But Moscow denies the accusations, claiming the atrocities in Bucha were staged.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Honey bees can help track microbes in cities: study

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK



Bees play an important role in the ecosystem as pollinators but scientists believe they may be helpful in other ways - such as providing insight into the health of people living in cities.

Scientists have been investigating urban honey bees to see if they can provide clues on the types of microorganisms that exist in cities - collectively known as the microbiome.

Elizabeth Henaff, an assistant professor at the NYU Tandon School of Engineering, in the US, said: "For those of us who live in cities - which is more than half of the global population at this point - it is important to be able to characterise the microbiomes of the cities that we live in, and work in, and sleep in."

Cities are dynamic ecosystems with humans, the urban environment, and a diversity of plant and animal inhabitants.

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A woman stands next to a residential house destroyed by a Russian missile strike, amid Russia's attack of Ukraine, in Kharkiv yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Many essential items see drop in prices

Says commerce minister

BSS, Dhaka

Prices of many essentials have already come down and the trend may continue which would ease the situation further, said Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi.

"Although prices of some products have increased in the holy month of Ramadan, some others have gone down now," the minister told reporters at his home in the capital yesterday.

Compared to previous years and in the context of the current global situation, Bangladesh is doing well, he claimed.

The minister said prices of essentials are decreasing gradually. Besides, edible oil, sugar and other products are being given to poor families through the TCB.

"Daily essentials are being sold now in the country at prices fixed by the government."

The minister said at the beginning

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