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President Mohammed Shahabuddin stands in solemn silence for some time after placing a wreath at the National Memorial in Savar yesterday, as a mark of profound respect to the memories of the martyrs of the Liberation War. Shahabuddin was sworn in as the 22nd President of Bangladesh at the Bangabhaban on Monday.

PHOTO: PTD

DHAKA'S INDO-PACIFIC OUTLOOK

No scope for further confusion: experts

PORIMOL PALMA

The home grown Indo-Pacific Outlook that Dhaka announced on Monday will clear the confusion of the global partners, which will eventually help Bangladesh boost trade and investments for achieving the country's development goals, said experts.

Bangladesh publicly articulated its position on the Indo-Pacific that it wants a free, open, inclusive and secure Indo-Pacific region, which is the focus of the global powers. With 60 percent of the world's population, the region is projected to be the largest contributor to global growth over the next 30 years.

Bangladesh considers the stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region to be a crucial factor in realising her "Vision 2041" while pursuing the principles of respect for national sovereignty and equality, political independence, and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

The outlook seeks peaceful settlement of international disputes, respect for international law and the principles enunciated in the UN Charter while striving for renunciation of the use of force in international relations and for general and complete disarmament.

This is a vision. When practical projects will be taken up and issues will arise, we can address them based on this vision. The outlook can also have revisions as required. Now, we need to explain this vision to our partners. We need expert diplomats for this purpose.

SHAHIDUL HAQUE
Former foreign secretary

Many experts say Western countries, especially the US and its allies want to counter China through its Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS).

China also has a global initiative called Belt and Road Initiative aiming to connect Europe and Africa through road, sea and airways. Bangladesh joined the initiative in 2016, and Western countries and their allies were concerned that Bangladesh was going into the Chinese bloc.

Former Chinese ambassador to Bangladesh Li Jiming in 2021 had said Bangladesh's relations with China will

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NON-RMG SECTORS

Safety compliances still a far cry

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA and
JAGARAN CHAKMA

Workplace safety in the RMG sector improved to a great extent. However, the safety and compliance in the non-RMG sectors are yet to improve as per the standards of the garment sector.

Improving the safety standards

KEY ISSUES

- Non-RMG industrial safety almost unaddressed
- Majority of accidents related to fire
- REASONS**
- Lack of unwillingness for improving safety standards
- Limited advocacy
- RECOMMENDATIONS**
- Implement safety standards immediately
- Collaboration between govt, relevant orgs

After the Hashem Foods incident, FBCCI, in collaboration with Bangladesh Investment Development Authority, identified 44,000 non-RMG factories, in which, safety compliances needed to be improved.

Jashim Uddin
President of FBCCI

Safety compliance in the RMG sector has improved because of the pressure from the international communities like Accord. Similar initiatives should be taken to improve non-RMG sectors too.

Nazma Akter
President of Sammito Garment
Sramik Federation

and compliances in the non-RMG sectors has been either ignored or there has been a lack of initiatives for improvement for many years.

As a result, fire incidents have been taking place in factories non-compliant with safety standards, taking the lives of workers and others. For instance, the devastating fire incident at Hashem Foods Ltd in Narayanganj's Rupganj in July 2021, took the lives of 52 workers, who were trapped in the factory building at the time of the fire.

When the factory caught on

fire, workers could not come out from Hashem Food's juice factory as they did not find the exit points. The reason behind that was the non-compliance of the factory to implement safety rules in the building.

Earlier, another devastating fire incident at Tampaco Foils in Gazipur's Tongi took the lives of 34 workers on September 10, 2016. The fire at Chakbazar in February 2019, also took the lives of 71 people. The chemical warehouses in Old Dhaka were supposed to be relocated to

another area. However, the work has not yet been completed to that end.

Although the latest Bangabazar fire did not take human lives, it gutted nearly 5,000 small shops. Traders faced a loss of around Tk 1,000 crore. The fire in New Market also burnt a good number of shops, gutting the goods bought especially for Eid sales.

Safety compliance in the non-RMG sectors has been largely ignored, said Md Jashim Uddin, president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI). "After the Hashem Foods incident, FBCCI, in collaboration with Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), identified 44,000 non-RMG factories, in which, safety compliances needed to be improved," said Jashim.

He also mentioned that under

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The benefits that Hamid will receive as ex-president

RASHIDUL HASAN

After holding the office of president for the longest time – 10 years spanning two consecutive terms – Abdul Hamid went into retirement on Monday and left Bangabhaban, the office and residence of the head of state.

But even after his retirement, Hamid is going to get some benefits, including retirement and medical allowances as per law.

The benefits a former president will receive is stated in the President's Retirement Allowance, Perquisites and Other Benefits Act.

According to the law, a person who resigns after serving at least six months in the office of president, or when the term expires, will get a monthly pension at the rate of 75 percent of the last monthly salary he was getting as president until his death.

As per the President's (Remuneration and Privileges) Act, 1975 (as amended up to May 2016), the monthly salary of the president is currently Tk 1.20 lakh.

As such, after his retirement, Abdul Hamid will get a retirement allowance of Tk 90,000 per month.

According to the law, if a person retires from

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Hasina opens VVIP terminal at Dhaka airport

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday inaugurated the newly constructed VVIP terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital.

She opened the terminal in the morning before she flew for Tokyo on the first leg of her two-week tri-nation official visit to Japan, the US and the UK.

Cabinet members and high government officials were present during the unveiling of the screen of the terminal's plaque.

Hasina is now visiting Japan from April 25 to 28 at the invitation of Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida.

She is expected to return home on May 9 after visiting the US and the UK.

Rizvi released from jail after 140 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP's senior joint secretary general Ruhul Kabir Rizvi walked out from jail 140 days after being arrested.

He was released from Keraniganj Central Jail at 4:00pm yesterday as he secured bail in all the cases filed against him, said party officials.

Around a hundred party leaders and activists welcomed Rizvi at the jail gate and from there he went to the party's Nayapaltan headquarters.

The BNP leader was arrested on December 7 last year following a clash between law enforcers and BNP men in front of the party's Nayapaltan headquarters centring the December 10 Dhaka rally.

He will remain our inspiration forever

Last respects paid to Pankaj Bhattacharya

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People from all walks of life bade farewell to veteran politician Pankaj Bhattacharya, president of Oikya NAP and one of the organisers of the Liberation War.

The body of Pankaj, who died on Sunday in Dhaka, was brought to the Central Shaheed Minar from the morgue of Samorita Hospital for civic tribute yesterday afternoon.

His body was cremated at Postogola Crematorium in Dhaka after the tribute.

He was given a guard of honour by Dhaka district administration at Central Shaheed Minar, led by Additional District Magistrate AKM Hedaitul Islam.

Awami League advisory council member Nurul Islam Nahid, joint general secretary Hasan Mahmud, cultural secretary Asim Kumar Ukil and BNP vice chairman Abdullah Al Noman paid their tributes.

Gonoforum President Dr Kamal Hossain, State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, Dhaka University Vice-Chancellor Prof Akhtaruzzaman, Workers' Party President Rashed Khan Menon, former president of CPB Mujahidul Islam Selim, cultural personalities Ramendu Majumdar, Mamunur Rashid, Pankaj Bhattacharya's political ally Chitta Ghosh, trustees of the Liberation War Museum Dr Sarwar Ali and Mofidul Hoque, Prof Mejbah Kamal, Adivasi leader Sanjib Drong, and activist Khushi Kabir also paid their respects, alongside various political, cultural and social organisations.

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People from all walks of life bade farewell to veteran politician Pankaj Bhattacharya, president of Oikya NAP and one of the organisers of the Liberation War, at Central Shaheed Minar yesterday. His body was cremated at Postogola Crematorium after the tribute. Pankaj Bhattacharya passed away in Dhaka on Sunday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED