

PRESS FREEDOM RSF report fictitious, intentional Says info minister

UNB, Dhaka

The recent report of Reporters Sans Frontiers is nothing but an “intentional and fictitious” story, Information and Broadcasting Minister Hasan Mahmud said yesterday.

He made the remarks while replying to a question from a journalist about the report that showed Bangladesh’s position below Afghanistan in this year’s World Press Freedom Index.

“Press freedom in Bangladesh is an example for developing countries in the world today. In many cases, the press in Bangladesh enjoys more freedom than many developed countries,” he told reporters after laying the foundation stone of the Multipurpose Building of Bangladesh Betar in Chattogram.

ATTACK ON UNO UP chairman, three others arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Police yesterday arrested four men, including a union parishad chairman, for their alleged involvement in the attack on Madhukhali upazila nirbahi officer Ashikur Rahman Chowdhury.

The arrestees are Saha Asadujjaman, chairman of Domain Union Parishad, Kobirul Biswas, 40, Ibrahim Mridha, 19, and Prince Mollah, 32, of Nischintapur village in Madhukhali.

According to police sources, two cases were filed with Madhukhali Police Station on Thursday night and yesterday morning in this connection.

Asaduzzaman, also a member of the executive committee of Madhukhali upazila unit of the Awami League, was made the prime accused in both cases.

Sumon Sheikh, driver of the UNO, filed the first case on Thursday night and Prabir Kumar Biswas, sub-inspector of Madukhali Police Station, filed another yesterday.

Twenty-seven named and 200-250 unnamed people were made accused in the two cases.

Police arrested Ibrahim and Prince on Thursday and Asadujjaman and Kobirul yesterday, said Sohridul Islam, officer-in-charge of Madhukhali Police Station.



A delegation of 20 Rohingya yesterday visited Maungdaw township in Myanmar to see the arrangements, including these houses, made for their resettlement.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

‘Large number of children’ killed in Sudan

Warns UN as fighting rages in Khartoum;
civilians complain of being forgotten

AGENCIES

The UN yesterday warned that large numbers of children were dying in the Sudan conflict, pointing to reports indicating that seven children were being killed or injured every hour.

“As feared and as warned, the situation in Sudan has become fatal for a frighteningly large number of children,” James Elder, spokesman for the UN children’s agency Unicef, told reporters in Geneva.

He said the agency had received reports from a trusted partner – not yet independently verified by the UN – that 190 children were killed and 1,700 injured in just the first 11 days of the conflict that began on April 15.

Elder pointed out that those numbers had been gathered from health facilities in Khartoum and the Darfur region, reports AFP.

That means it only covers the children that actually made it to healthcare facilities in those areas, he said, warning that “the reality is likely to be much worse”.

Hundreds of people have been killed and hundreds of thousands have fled their homes in Sudan since battles began three weeks ago between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan’s forces and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo’s Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

The sides have agreed to a string of short ceasefires, but none has been fully respected, and yesterday heavy gunfire echoed around Khartoum again and there was no sign of any

letup in fighting as civilians trapped in the Sudanese capital said their plight was being ignored by both the army and its rival, reports Reuters.

“It’s been four days without electricity and our situation is difficult... We are the victims of a war that we aren’t a part of. No one cares about the citizen,” said Othman Hassan, 48, a resident of the southern outskirts of Khartoum.

Unicef received reports from a trusted partner that 190 children were killed in just first 11 days of the conflict.

Across swathes of Khartoum, factories, banks and shops have been looted or damaged, power and water supplies have been failing and residents have reported steep price rises and shortages of basic goods.

“Sudan’s warring armies are showing reckless disregard for civilian lives by using inaccurate weapons in populated urban areas,” said Human Rights Watch Sudan researcher Mohamed Osman, in a report by the group documenting damage to hospitals and water treatment plants caused by fighting.

The Sudanese Doctors Union said one of the country’s main maternity hospitals, Aldayat in the adjoining city of Omdurman, had been looted and occupied by forces on Thursday.

Man held for killing wife, daughter

UNB, Lakshmipur

A man was arrested for killing his wife and daughter over a family dispute in Ramganj, Lakshmipur.

Jamal Uddin and his wife Raushan Ara Begum had been in a domestic dispute since their marriage, said Mahmudul Hasan, commander of RAB II Noakhali, CPC, at a press conference yesterday afternoon.

Jamal lived in Dhaka’s Rayedbagh area with his family. On April 15, he allegedly strangled Raushan to death and killed his one-year-old daughter by suffocating her while she was sleeping, said RAB.

He then left Dhaka for Noakhali loading the bodies in a wardrobe on a pickup. At one point, he aborted going to Noakhali and dumped the bodies in a canal in Ramganj.

On April 19, police found the decomposing bodies and subsequently filed a murder case with Ramganj Police Station against an unidentified accused.

Rain, thundershowers likely across country

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) yesterday predicted rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind in different parts of the country within 24 hours, till 9:00am today.

“Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely to occur at one or two places over Dhaka, Mymensingh, Khulna, Barishal, Chattogram and Sylhet divisions with hails at isolated places,” read a Met office bulletin.

The weather may remain mainly dry with temporary partly cloudy skies elsewhere over the country, the bulletin added.

Meanwhile, both the day and night temperatures will rise slightly all over the country, according to the bulletin.

A trough of westerly low lies over India’s West Bengal and adjoining areas.

6 members of a gang arrested in Teknaf

STAR REPORT

Rab last night arrested six members of a gang with firearms and bullets at Baharchara in Teknaf, Cox’s Bazar, said a Rab officer in a Facebook post.

The arrestees are Prakash Saleh Uddin, chief of Saleh group, his main associate Sohel, and four others.

They were arrested in a raid at a remote hill around 9:15pm, wrote Abu Salam Chowdhury, additional superintendent of police and senior assistant director of Rab-15, in a Facebook group of reporters.

The raid was conducted after a two-hour-long gunfight between a Rab team and Saleh group, he added.

Missing girl found dead; family claims murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Police recovered the body of a 12-year-old girl from a forest in Kotbaria village of Kewabunia union in Barguna Sadar upazila on Thursday evening.

Ripa Akter, daughter of former UP member Shahjahan Howlader, had been missing since Tuesday. She was a student of Kotbaria Kaderia Dakhil Madrasa.

Her body was sent to the Barguna General Hospital morgue for autopsy yesterday, said Barguna Sadar Police Station OC Ali Ahmed.

“The autopsy report will confirm how she died. If the victim’s family files a case, legal action will be taken after an investigation,” he added.

After the girl went missing Tuesday night, her father recorded a general diary (GD) with the Sadar police station the next day.

Meanwhile, Shahjahan said, “We suspect Al Amin, a neighbour, killed my daughter and left her body in the forest. He often harassed her.”

Al Amin has been on the run ever since the girl went missing.

This correspondent tried to contact Al Amin but his phone was found switched off.

Situation ‘not bad’

FROM PAGE 1

Asked whether the Rohingyas are satisfied with the arrangements, he said, “Both the parties must have a self-sacrificing mindset. We want to begin the repatriation.

“As per the accord... some [Rohingyas] may be relocated to the place of their origin, while others may be to a place nearby. It will go through a process.

“Myanmar officials will visit here and talk to Rohingyas. We are doing all these to build their [Rohingays’] confidence and to make them feel assured.”

However, Mohammad Selim, a member of the delegation, told reporters that Rohingyas would not return until they were granted citizenship.

“We visited the area and talked to them [Myanmar authorities]. They have told us we will be relocated there.

“But we don’t want to live in a camp in our country. We want to live on our own land in our village. We don’t want financial assistance.

“Besides, they told us we would not be given citizenship. We will be given some kind of permission to live there. But we don’t want that. We want citizenship.

“We will return to Myanmar only after our demands are met.”

Selim did not say anything about the resettlement arrangements made in Myanmar.

Yesterday was the first time a Rohingya delegation visited Rakhine since their largest influx in 2017.

A community leader, a teacher, an imam, and three women were among the 20 delegates.

The team departed Teknaf by a boat on the Naf river at 9:20am.

After the delegates reached Nakfura ghat in Myanmar, they were first taken to villages to see the construction work for their resettlement. Then they visited a transit centre in Maungdaw through which the repatriation would be conducted.

Patients hit hard by costly stents

FROM PAGE 1

The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority in India fixes the price of stents for foreign manufacturers, while the global companies supply at a discount to Nepal, considering the country’s economic status, according to Chowdhury.

“In the case of Bangladesh, however, they follow the European standard. If we can bargain with the companies, the price can be lowered,” he added.

On May 2, the DGDA along with the experts sat with the representatives of Boston Scientific Corporation and Abbott Laboratories at its office in Dhaka.

The representatives agreed to submit a proposal regarding a feasible price cap for their stents, The Daily Star has learnt from officials informed on the proceedings.

DGDA officials said they will also

sit with the rest of the principal companies as early as possible.

Chowdhury Meshkat Ahmed, professor of the Department of Cardiology at the BSMMU, however, highlighted another reason for the higher price.

“If the suppliers did not need to pay a commission to the physicians, health staffers and different middlemen, the price would have been much lower,” he said.

The Daily Star found credence to Ahmed’s claim after speaking with four local suppliers of cardiac medical devices.

“Mainly the physicians get the commission and it is 20-50 percent of the stent price. Every supplier has their own strategy in this regard. Some may also pay the other health staffers involved in the process,” said an official of a local supplier on the condition of anonymity.

“We will file a case if we don’t find the factory to be safety compliant,” he added.

Workers and locals alleged that various authorities refrained from taking action because of underhand dealings with factory officials.

About the allegations, Rajib said they would take action if they receive any official complaint against anyone. Abdullah Al Mamun, deputy director of DoE in Narayanganj, also said the factory did not obtain the final clearance for going into production.

“Although the mill authorities had clearance for construction of the factory, there was no final clearance for production. An Environmental Impact Assessment must be submitted for production,” he said, adding that the factory did not submit the EIA.

“Since they started production without clearance, our enforcement branch will take action. In this case, in addition to fines, their licence can also be revoked,” he added.

Ahmed went on to call for transparency in the supply chain. “The physicians need to stop taking financial benefits from the companies. Otherwise, patients will continue to suffer,” he said.

Each year, about 45,000 stents are implanted in around 25,000 patients, according to Chowdhury.

For now, the price hike of stents will leave more cardiac patients out of treatment, according to Mir Jamal Uddin, director of the NICVD.

“Were the price of stent less than Tk 50,000, it would have been bearable for our family amid the high inflation,” said Mohammad Unus, whose father-in-law was undergoing the same procedure as Ahmed’s father at the same time on March 20.

Inflation averaged 8.85 percent in the first 10 months of the fiscal year, way higher than the 5.6 percent target set for fiscal 2022-23 in the budget.

Shafiqul Islam, a supervisor of the factory, however, yesterday claimed that they ensured safety for workers while in production.

Shaheed Alam, sub-station officer of Araihaazar Fire Station, said the factory authorities did not inform them about the explosion.

“Being informed by others, we visited the site and found no fire extinguisher there. We also received allegations that the workers were not provided with safety gear.”

Preferring anonymity, a worker of the factory said, “Do the factory owners have the time to think so much about worker safety?”

“If they provide a safety jacket one day, they do not do it on another day. A majority of us work without a [safety] jacket,” he said.

“Would the workers have been so severely burnt if they were provided with safety jackets?” he asked.

No case has yet been filed in connection with the explosion and deaths.

ETHNIC TENSIONS IN INDIA’S MANIPUR 20,000 evacuated to camps

REUTERS, Guwahati

Authorities in India’s northeastern state of Manipur have evacuated some 20,000 people to camps under army protection to prevent escalation of ethnic violence just days after clashes between tribal and non-tribal groups.

There have been incidents of looting and arson in parts of the remote state, which borders Myanmar, in recent days and at least 20 people, including two local lawmakers were injured in clashes during a protest on Tuesday. Internet services have been suspended in the state to prevent social media from being used to stir up unrest.

“The situation is not fully under control but it is gradually improving,”

P. Doungel, the state’s top police official told reporters in Imphal, the state capital.

“More soldiers were being deployed to strengthen security and about 20,000 people were evacuated from violence-hit areas,” he said adding that three makeshift camps had been set up to lodge and protect people.

Tensions have been rising between the Meitei community, who live in mostly in the main valley, and numerous tribes in the hilly state.

The Meitei people have been agitating to be granted scheduled tribe status. But the recognised tribes in Manipur oppose that status being extended to the Meitei, who are the largest single ethnic group in the state.

Hasina holds talks with Sunak

FROM PAGE 1

King Charles III, head of the Commonwealth, at the Delegate’s Lounge.

Hasina also joined the King’s



reception for heads of states, governments and overseas representatives at the Buckingham Palace ahead of the coronation of the King and the Queen Consort today, reports BSS.

The PM reached London from Washington DC early yesterday on an official visit to the UK to attend the coronation of the British King. She will represent Bangladesh at the ceremony today.

She is expected to return home on May 9, concluding her 15-day visit to Japan, the US and the UK.

JOINT COMMUNIQUE SIGNED
Dhaka and London yesterday signed a joint communique to establish an “aviation partnership” for the necessary cooperation in the development of Bangladesh’s aviation sector, including purchase of passenger and cargo aircraft from Airbus, reports our diplomatic correspondent, citing a statement of the Bangladesh High Commission in the UK.

The statement said Bangladesh’s trade and investment relations with the UK and the other European partners of Airbus will be strengthened through this initiative.

“Bangladesh can also get long-term credit facilities from UK Export Finance scheme on easy terms for the purchase of aircraft from Airbus,” it said.