

PM to visit Rome from July 24-26 She'll attend three-day UN food summit

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to visit Rome, Italy to attend the UN Food Systems Summit from July 24-26, said Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen yesterday.

During this visit, two Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) – “Cooperation in the Field of Energy” and “Cultural Exchange Programme” are likely to be signed between Bangladesh and Italy, Momen said at a press briefing at the foreign ministry.

Hasina will leave Dhaka for Rome on Sunday to attend the “United Nations Food Systems +2 Stocktaking Moment” (UNFSS+2) conference at the invitation of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

The UNFSS+2 conference will be held at the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) headquarters in Rome with the theme “Sustainable Food Systems for People, Planet and Prosperity: Diverse Pathways in a Shared Journey”.

The foreign minister said, “The

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NEW AL ALLIANCE It'll be made up mostly of Islamist parties

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

The Awami League has decided to forge a new electoral alliance eying the upcoming national polls, after facing backlash from some of its 14-party alliance partners over the planned inclusion of some Islamist parties in it.

The current 14-party alliance is pro-left -- the majority of it being comprised of leftist organisations.

The new political alliance is likely to include three to four registered Islamist political parties and some other pro-democratic parties, said sources. The leftists vehemently oppose the political ideologies harboured by the Islamists.

This move to form a new alliance is likely to take shape in September, said sources.

Sources said AL's 'ideological' alliance with the 14 parties will remain intact, while the new alliance will be considered as AL's electoral alliance.

The government has taken the initiative as some political parties showed their interest in joining the

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I love the culture of dropping in at parks after the day's end to unwind. Whether for walks or just to enjoy evenings with a book in hand, Dhakaïites are once again open to the idea of relaxing in parks. It is true that most people go to parks for their morning and evening walks but the fact that we are now able to sit on benches, enjoy open-air public music sessions, sit on the lush grass carpet and hold impromptu picnics creates a whole new notion of enjoying open spaces.

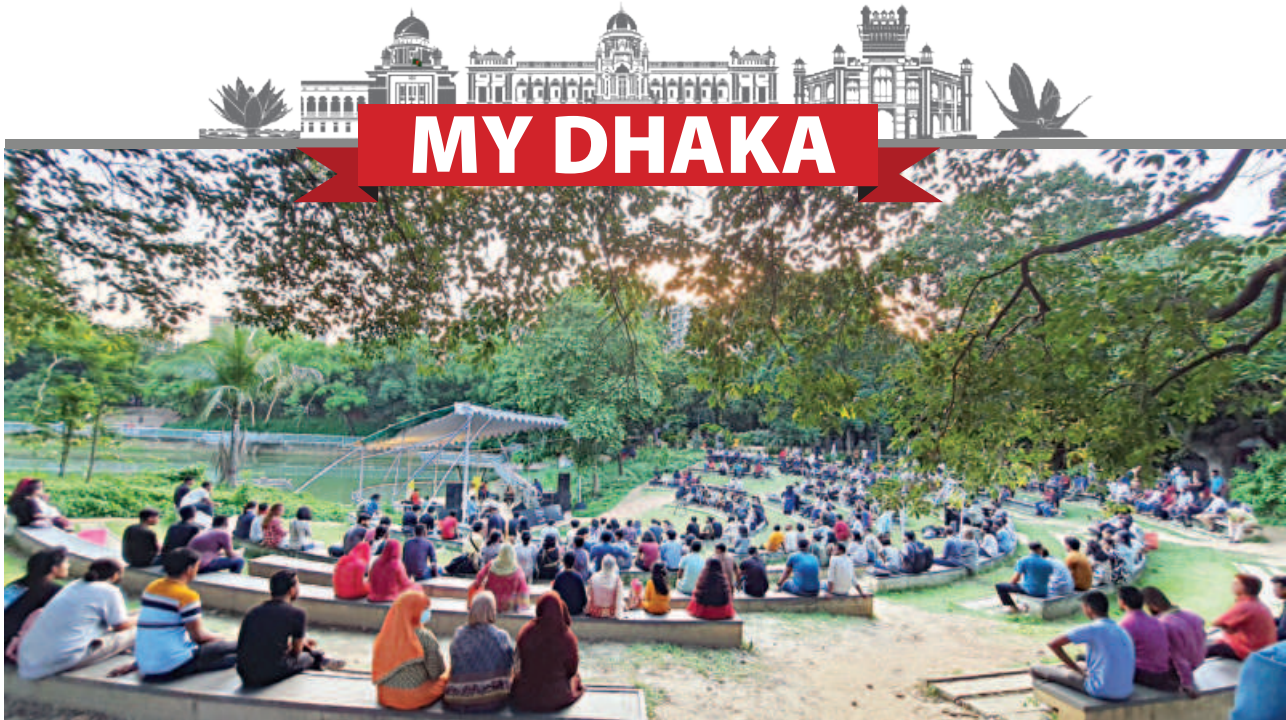


PHOTO: NB MANSOOR

Enjoying time at CITY PARKS

RBR

Earlier, parks were avoided as they became breeding grounds for nefarious activities. However, Dhaka is evolving and with it we are being able to get rid of that horrid invasion of beautiful public spaces.

We get to see lavish fashion shows and high teas being held in the parks now; outdoor art classes, wellness events, and the addition of cafes and bookstores within park premises nudge us to play with the idea of spending some time at these places.

Like the recent Dhaka Sessions Live @ The Park: Dhaka City Sound was an enthralling contemporary music session at Shahbuddin Park amphitheatre. People joined after office hours, young people were seen dancing to the tunes, the light summer breeze and the golden rays of the setting sun gave the park ambience a wonderful feel.

The famous Ramna Park is a gorgeous green space that fills our minds and souls with zen-like energy. The lake, the old café, the children's

play zone, those humongous old trees housing the birds and the bats, the rich green rolling grass where walking bare-footed is so reinvigorating; Ramna makes you feel alive.

I love watching the wild ferns growing on the lakesides, the birds making nests, the stray cats lazing



around, and the health-conscious walking with all their vigour; parks are colourful places and for lazy ones like me, it is the perfect place to just sit and daydream.

The idea of urban parks was to allow city dwellers to unwind, children to

play, elders to get fresh air, and health-conscious people to exercise or walk. But unfortunately, we tend to resist such things by playing the community welfare card.

In Uttara, there was once a notice that you cannot wear shorts while you are in the park. Then the selfish claim that the park belongs to the people of a certain area and others cannot venture in. Well, whatever the reason for such assertions, parks are meant for fun activities and for people to appreciate.

The possibilities of passive and active recreation opportunities are endless in parks and the park authorities should allow it. It increases the need to lead a more active, happier lifestyle.

So, the next time you plan an outdoor activity with your family remember parks are excellent spaces where families and friends can gather to enjoy fresh air and the lakes, arrange a picnic, fly a kite, allow children to hunt for bugs, look for plant parts, you can even hold birthday parties with scavenger hunts.

The reasons for unwinding in the park are limitless!

2 ACC officials suspended for taking bribes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday suspended two officials over corruption allegations namely in the form of bribery.

They are deputy assistant director Sudip Kumar Chowdhury and assistant director Mostafizur Rahman.

Two office orders was issued in this regard signed by ACC Chairman Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah.

Mostafizur demanded a bribe of Tk 20 lakh from Shamsul Haque, proprietor of Haque Textile and later went on to collect Tk 76,000 of that amount.

Multiple private television channels published the video footage of him taking the bribe from Shamsul.

Meanwhile, Sudip demanded a bribe from Alamgir Hossain, a sub-inspector at the Bogura Police Lines, in exchange for clearing him from graft charges.

The ACC received audio recordings of phone calls between Sudip and the accused and found them to be authentic.

8 hurt in AL-BNP clash in Narsingdi

STAR REPORT

A clash between supporters of the ruling Awami League and the opposition BNP left eight people injured in Narsingdi Sadar upazila yesterday.

Witnesses said the clash ensued between the supporters of Haji Hasan Ali, AL's president of a ward unit in Alokali union, and Joyнал Abedin, BNP's senior joint convenor in the same union unit, around 6:00am.

At first, the two parties got into an argument over AL's rally in the district.

At one point, the altercation turned into a clash. Both sides used firearms and other lethal weapons, which left eight people injured.

The injured were admitted to different hospitals in the district.

Police detained two people in this connection and additional law enforcers were deployed to avert further untoward incidents in the area, said Abhijit Chowdhury, sub-inspector (SI) of Narsingdi Sadar Police Station.

"The situation is now under control. Police will take further steps after an investigation."

Testimony wraps up in PK Halder case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday completed recording statements of witnesses in a case filed against the former managing director of NRB Global Bank Proshanta Kumar Halder, known as PK Halder, and 13 others over laundering Tk 80 crore to Canada and amassing about Tk 426 crore illegally.

After the cross-examination of Investigation Officer Md Salahuddin, Judge Mohammad Nazrul Islam of the Special Judge's Court-10 of Dhaka concluded the process of recording statements of witnesses in the case.

The judge then fixed July 26 for recording self-defence statements of four accused, now in jail custody, in the case.

They are PK Halder's lawyer Sukumar Mridha, daughter Anindita Mridha, associate Abantika Baral and cousin Shankha Bepari.

In the case, PK Halder and nine others were shown fugitives and trial was going on in their absence.

Waning appetite

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In the past year, the taka depreciated by about 16 percent to Tk 108.4.

Companies can get short-term, medium-term and long-term foreign loans. Banks mostly arrange the short-term foreign loans and they are liable should the client default on the payments. For medium-term and long-term loans, approval must be taken from the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority; the chairman of the loan approval committee is the BB governor.

He says exporters would not face much trouble in servicing their foreign loans.

"Those who have a revenue source in dollar, they would not face any problem. But those who earn in taka and have to buy dollars to service the debt would take a big hit and face much problems," said Rahman, a former chairman of the Association of Bankers, Bangladesh.

Govt summons

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reaction to an individual candidate in the by-election, which is perceived as an interference.

They added that Yett has been summoned so the government could find out whether international organisations, like the UN, behave the same way in other countries.

Yett was also told the Bangladesh government expects that the UN would refrain from making such unsolicited comments.

Gwyn's tweet, made on Tuesday, said, "The UN in Bangladesh is concerned over the attack on independent MP candidate Ashrafal Alam during the Dhaka-17 by poll. The fundamental human right of everyone to participate in elections without violence should be guaranteed and protected."

The summoning of foreign ambassadors is a normal practice and Bangladesh has summoned diplomats of different countries on various issues before.

However, no UN representative had been summoned for such a purpose in recent history.

Taking on the dengue challenge

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"I'm improving slowly and may have to stay here [in hospital] a few more days."

Col AKM Johirul Hossain Khan, additional director (admin) of the DNCC Dedicated Covid-19 Hospital, said the admission of dengue patients started there a day after it was announced a dedicated dengue hospital.

He added that they had already been treating dengue patients on a limited scale at the hospital since last October.

"Right now, we have dedicated 500 beds, including 49 with ICU facilities, for dengue patients after the announcement. If the number of patients increases, we will be able to extend the facilities to 800 beds. But for this, we have to increase the hospital's manpower, including doctors and nurses."

Johirul further said 365 dengue patients were admitted to the hospital so far, and 219 are currently under treatment.

He added that the condition of most of the patients has improved. However, one patient, who was suffering from multiple complications, died.

Germany, Mali agree 'smooth' pullout of UN-backed troops

AFP, Berlin

Germany and Mali agreed yesterday to pursue a "smooth withdrawal" of German troops from the troubled African nation after the UN decided to end its decade-old peacekeeping mission there, Berlin said.

Mali's defence minister Sadio Camara assured his German counterpart Boris Pistorius in a telephone call of Bamako's "support with the relocation of the troops", the German defence ministry said.

"It was a productive call at the right time," the ministry quoted Pistorius as saying.

"There are 24 patients being treated at the ICU. Of them, three are suffering from dengue shock syndrome and the rest are stable."

Meanwhile, 74 doctors and 69 nurses are providing their services but they need more nurses as they play a vital role in managing patients, he said.

"We have issued a letter to the Directorate General of Nursing and Midwifery in this regard and hope to get more nurses soon," he said.

He said nine lab technicians have been appointed here of which four have already joined and the rest five will join shortly.

The DNCC Dedicated Covid-19 Hospital was turned into a medical facility from a market on a temporary basis during the coronavirus pandemic. It was made with 1,054 beds and a central oxygen line to facilitate Covid patients.

Johirul advised that patients remain under hospital care for at least 72 hours after recovering from the dengue fever as it is a crucial and risky period.

He also suggested that those experiencing symptoms take sufficient amounts of fluid and that

no medicine be taken without doctor consultation.

Meanwhile, Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, director general of DGHS, said the risk of death from dengue is escalating as patients are being admitted to hospitals at the terminal stage of illness.

During an event in Dhaka yesterday, he said the number of cases and deaths has been rising alarmingly.

"However, the situation has not yet reached the point of becoming an emergency or epidemic."

In the meantime, Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) yesterday fineda site engineer Tk 1 lakh after finding Aedes mosquito larvae in the under-construction Rab-3 building in the capital's Shahjahanpur Jheelpar.

DSCC mobile courts also fined 16 others Tk 1.8 lakh after finding larvae in 16 establishments, including houses and under-construction buildings.

Hasina to host

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On Wednesday, she also asked partners of the 14-party alliance to prepare for the polls.

"Sheikh Hasina will formally announce the start of election preparations at the extended meeting. She will give a message to party leaders to unite and start campaigning," AL Joint General Secretary Bahauddin Nasim told The Daily Star when asked about the meeting.

The ruling party is holding the meeting at the end of July since the party does not usually hold large meetings in August, the month of mourning.

But this August, the AL will hold rallies in districts as the polls are just months away.

It is also not interested in calling in grassroots leaders to capital in September and October. The party wants them to campaign in their areas during that time.

BNP not sure

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and that it proved that people can be mobilised through peaceful programmes.

The BNP leader said at the moment, they are not considering programmes like hartals and strikes and that they want to continue with peaceful programmes to give the movement good momentum.

Party's central leaders will distribute leaflets after Juma prayers today to raise awareness about their one-point demand and a rally for the youth will be held in Dhaka tomorrow.

BNP leaders, activists, and the general public spontaneously joined the march programme and walked around 40km in Dhaka, said party leaders.

Two standing committee members in Wednesday's meeting said the march in Dhaka was long and it did not suit the movement for their demand.

"We started the one-point

movement successfully. We have two achievements -- one is getting the people involved and the other is maintaining discipline during the march," said standing committee member Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku.

He said the Awami League came up with counter programmes and attacked BNP men, which exposed the ruling party's attitude toward people at home and abroad.

On the first day of the BNP's march, party men came under attack in a few districts and an activist was killed. There was violence in Chattogram and Dinaajpur on the second day.

According to the party office, more than 3,000 party men were injured in the two days.

BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi told The Daily Star that between May 19 and July 19, a total of 310 cases have been filed against more than 11,000 BNP activists across the country and more than 1,300 were detained.

Ahad's ordeal finally over after 25yrs

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"I don't know how to express my feelings. Finally, I'm relieved," a jubilant Ahad told The Daily Star over phone yesterday.

"This case has taken a heavy toll on my life. It has cost me money, time and energy... I don't even want to recall the ordeal," said the father of two.

On May 10 last year, The Daily Star ran a report, titled "Languishing in a legal web for 24 years", on Ahad Ali's case, shedding light on what happens when a person gets caught in a complex and lengthy judicial process and how a case can linger for so many years.

On March 28, 1998, when Ahad was a small trader just in his 20s, he was arrested from Dhaka's Gabtoli Bus Terminal and charged with heroin possession. Soon after the

arrest, Abdus Salam, a constable at the bus terminal's police outpost, lodged a first information report with Mirpur Police Station in this regard.

In it, he stated he and four other constables searched Ahad's bag after a tip-off and found "100 grams of heroine in a small polythene bag in the presence of two eyewitnesses -- Sheikh Abdul Kashem and Bidhan Kumar Sarkar".

Apart from Kashem and Bidhan, seven policemen and a government-appointed chemical examiner were also made prosecution witnesses.

However, the two "eyewitnesses" had told this newspaper earlier that they do not know Ahad Ali and were not aware of such a case.

After years of what seemed like never-ending hearings in court, Ahad was finally acquitted last month.