

More BNP leaders will quit: Hasan

BSS, Dhaka

Information and Broadcasting Minister Hasan Mahmud has said it is only a matter of time before many more BNP leaders quit the party.

“It is not going to be only Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury and Taimur Alam Khandaker. Many other BNP leaders will follow suit. Just wait and see,” he told journalists at his secretariat office yesterday.

Hasan, also the Awami League joint general secretary, said all politicians will not be in a party which doesn't know how to honour the senior leaders, and also bars its leaders from taking part in elections.

He said BNP is out to create confusion among the people. During 2018 national polls, the party had initially declared that it would not participate in the elections, but later it took part, he added.

The minister said changes in the statements of the BNP leaders within a month give an indication that the party is eager to take part in the next general elections.

Hasan said a political party which stays away from polls for a long time would certainly become isolated from the people.

He said BNP wants a guarantee it will win the polls, nut neither the government nor the Election Commission can give the guarantee. “We want all political parties to participate in the elections.”

Criticising a comment of BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, the AL leader said BNP leaders instigated arson attacks and the government has audio records and other proofs. But the BNP leaders are spreading falsehood against the government, he alleged.

About his recent Canada tour, Hasan said he met with Canadian parliament's upper House Human Rights Committee Chair Senator Salma Ataullahjan. She praised Bangladesh's unprecedented development under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the minister added.

Ataullahjan also lauded Hasina for providing shelter to about 13 lakh Rohingyas in Bangladesh, Hasan said.

The information minister also had a meeting with Salma Zahid MP, chairperson of the Canadian Parliamentary Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

The minister urged Salma to reopen Canadian visa office in Dhaka and include Bangladeshi students to Canada's Student Direct Stream (SDS).



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a meeting with Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe at the bilateral meeting room of the UN headquarters in New York on Tuesday.

PHOTO: PTD

PM joins banquet hosted by Biden

Asks world leaders at UN meet to learn from pandemic to prevent another one

UNB, New York

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina joined a banquet hosted by US President Joe Biden in honour of the world leaders attending the ongoing UNGA session in New York.

Biden hosted the banquet at The Metropolitan Museum of Art on Tuesday evening (New York time).

PM's daughter and Thematic Ambassador of the Climate Vulnerable Forum Saima Wazed accompanied the premier.

At the banquet, the PM exchanged pleasantries with the other world leaders.

In another development, Hasina yesterday morning urged the leaders to draw on collective lessons to scale up good practices and avoid past mistakes to face any future pandemic like Covid-19.

“Equity and solidarity must form the core of our efforts,” she told a high-level meeting on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness, and Response at UN Headquarters.

To achieve that target, she flagged five priorities.

These are concessional international financing for health system strengthening in developing countries; mobilising

resources and expertise for pandemic surveillance, prevention, preparedness, and response in a science-based manner; ensuring equitable and unrestricted access for all to quality, affordable, and effective pandemic products, including vaccines; production diversification of pandemic products through access to technology and know-how; and developing an international cooperation framework for access and benefit sharing among concerned parties, with WHO in the lead.

“To that end, we hope to see fair and concrete outcomes from a pandemic treaty and amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005). Bangladesh will remain constructively engaged with both processes,” said Hasina.

She said the pandemic has been a turning point for all.

“We lost many around the world. We realised that nature has its own limits for human intervention. We also experienced unprecedented global solidarity. We admitted that none of us is secure until everyone is.”

Hasina mentioned Bangladesh was no exception to the Covid-19 impacts.

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Strip ‘criminal’ Russia of veto power

Says Zelensky at UNSC

AFP, United Nations

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday confronted Russia directly at the UN Security Council, denouncing the Kremlin's invasion of his country as “criminal” and urging the United Nations to strip Moscow of its veto power.

Clad in his trademark military fatigues, Zelensky for the first time since the February 2022 invasion sat in the same room with a Russian official, who responded by scrolling through his smartphone with a look of conspicuous disinterest.

“Most of the world recognises the truth about this war,” Zelensky said. “It is a criminal and unprovoked aggression by Russia against our nation aimed at seizing Ukraine's territory and resources.”

Zelensky called on the United Nations to vote to end Russia's veto power on the Security Council.

He said the move could be among wide-ranging reforms at the Security Council that would include permanent representation for developing nations – where support for Ukraine has been lukewarm.

Toll collection from Padma Bridge crosses Tk 1,000cr

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

The toll collection from vehicles on Padma Bridge has crossed Tk 1,000 crore as of March since its inauguration on June 25 last year.

More than Tk 1,000.31 crore toll has been collected from over 72.96 lakh vehicles till 2:00pm today, said Padma Bridge Site Office Additional Director Amirul Islam Chowdhury yesterday.

“More vehicles than expected crossed the Padma Bridge since its inauguration. As a result, the toll collection has exceeded expectations,” Amirul told our Munshiganj correspondent this afternoon.

On the other hand, automated toll collection from moving vehicles, known as the Electric Toll Collection System (ETCS), is yet to be implemented, although its successful trial was completed on July 6.

Amirul Islam Chowdhury said automatic toll collection is still in the piloting stage. Once all the software works are completed and registration numbers of vehicles are put in the system, the toll collection will start, he added.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, on June 25 last year, inaugurated the long-cherished bridge, ending the long wait for direct communication between Dhaka and the southwestern districts. The vehicular movement over the bridge started the next day.

Police constable dies after falling off building in Ctg

UNB, Chattogram

A police constable died after falling off the roof of a five-storey building at Dampara police lines hilltop in Chattogram city yesterday afternoon.

Zahidul Islam, son of Abdul Awal of Kautil village in South Keraniganj upazila of Dhaka, was a constable at the Welfare and Force Division of the SAF Branch of Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP).

“CCTV footage shows him standing on the edge of a balcony around 4:20am and brushing his teeth. He died at around 4:22pm after falling from the roof of the building,” said Additional Deputy Commissioner (PR) of Chattogram Metropolitan Police Spina Rani Pramanik.

His body was sent to the Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) for autopsy, she said.

22-day ban on hilsa fishing to begin Oct 12

UNB, Dhaka

A 22-day government ban on catching, selling, hoarding and transporting hilsa will come into effect from October 12 to protect mother hilsa, said Fisheries and Livestock Minister SM Rezaul Karim.

The ban will continue till November 02. The fishing restrictions aim to protect the mother hilsa which lays eggs during the period.

“The government will provide VGF food assistance to the fishermen who will refrain from catching hilsa during the period,” said the minister during a meeting at Matsya Bhaban in the capital yesterday.

“Hilsa is not only our national resource; it is a GI-certified asset that carries our unique identity in the global arena. Due to conservation campaigns, Hilsa production has increased breaking all previous records,” the minister said.

Bangladesh's over 12.0 per cent fish production comes from hilsa, posting the highest contribution to the country's fish output as a single fish species.

Market running out of IV saline

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“They should be available in retail drug stores in Dhaka and elsewhere in a week,” he told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the local companies have reached their limit amid the rising demand. “This is why we have been instructed to import.”

Khairul Bashar, assistant vice-president of Orion Infusion Ltd, one of the six local producers of IV saline, said the firm increased its daily production by up to 1.7 lakh bags.

“But the demand has increased so significantly that we can meet only 90 percent of the demand,” he told The Daily Star yesterday.

“If the government imports

saline, we will increase supply to retail shops. Government hospitals currently procure 60 percent of our total production,” he added.

The five other saline producers are Beximco, Libra, Opsonin, Popular and ACME.

Meanwhile, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs yesterday approved a direct procurement proposal to buy 1.2 million bags of sodium chloride and 800,000 bags of glucose saline.

Among the 11 types of injectable saline, sodium chloride solution is the one most commonly used.

Prof Ahmedul Kabir, additional director general (planning and development) at the Directorate General of Health Services, said civil

surgeons and divisional directors have been instructed to check market manipulations by unscrupulous traders.

The country has seen a huge surge in demand for injectable saline due to the soaring number of dengue patients across the country over the past few months. The mosquito-borne disease has so far claimed at least 867 lives and infected 1,76,810 so far this year, making this the deadliest year since the disease was first reported in Bangladesh in 2000.

(Our district correspondents from Chattogram, Barishal, Rajshahi, Mymensingh, Rangpur, Khulna, Noakhali and Narayanganj contributed to the report.)

PM calls for restructuring int’l financial system

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She said development narratives from countries like Bangladesh demonstrate that “we can do our part”.

“It is time for the international financial system to respond to our expectations.”

Hasina also put forward five proposals to this end as she said in her first proposal that the MDBs, IFIs, and private lending agencies must re-align their priorities and mobilise additional funds for SDG implementation and climate action.

In her second and third proposals, the PM said funds need to be made available for developing countries at low cost, concessional rates, and preferably in higher quantities of grants and all lending instruments should have disaster clauses to allow vulnerable countries to absorb shocks during crises.

“Fourthly, fair and effective debt relief measures need to be given priority based on coordination and transparency among creditors,” she

said.

In the fifth proposal, Hasina said instead of quotas, SDR (special drawing rights) borrowing limits should be based on needs and vulnerability, supported by easy lending processes.

She said Bangladesh has long been credited for its sound macroeconomic management.

“Our economy grew by 8.15 percent just before the pandemic. Due to Covid-19 and Ukraine war, our economy was put under stress.

“Despite that, we are still maintaining 6-7pc GDP growth. We are trying to curb inflation, manage the balance of payments, and maintain our development expenditures,” the PM added.

Hasina thanked the prime minister of Spain and the president of the European Council for convening the meeting.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and Thematic Ambassador of the Climate Vulnerable Forum Saima Wazed were present.

CSA to become a weapon to muzzle press

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The council said it wants punishment for committing crimes through digital or cyber means. But the CSA will become a weapon to repress journalists and muzzle the press since most of the provisions of the DSA have been kept in this new law.

Mahfuz Anam, president of the organisation and the editor and publisher of The Daily Star, and Dewan Hanif Mahmud, its general secretary and editor and publisher of the daily Bonik Barta, signed the statement.

“The Editors’ Council had been saying that nine sections [8, 21, 25, 28, 29, 31, 32, 43 and 53] of the

DSA would cause serious harm to independent journalism and freedom of expression and demanded their amendment.

In the CSA, seven sections of the DSA have been included after changes regarding punishment and bail. “But the definitions of crimes have not been clarified, rather they remain the same.

“The UN Human Rights Office had urged the scrapping of sections 21 and 28 of the Digital Security Act as they were considered, at national and international levels, contradictory to the freedom of expression, misleading, and a tool to harass

political opponents. Keeping the sections by reducing the penalties will leave scope for misuse and arbitrary use of the two sections,” according to the statement of the Editors’ Council.

“Four sections of the law have been made non-bailable. The maximum punishment for cyber-related cases is 14 years imprisonment and a fine of Tk 1 crore under this law,” the statement reads.

“Therefore, the Cyber Security Act cannot be considered anything new other than an oppressive law,” the Editors’ Council leaders said in the statement.