

180 Myanmar troops to return, 170 Bangladeshis to come home

Says foreign minister

BSS, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud said yesterday that measures were being taken to bring home 170 Bangladeshis trapped in Myanmar and send back 180 members of Border Guard Police (BGP) and army personnel of Myanmar who took refuge in Bangladesh.

He said this while exchanging views with journalists at the foreign ministry in the afternoon.

Hasan said a total of 177 members of Myanmar's Border Guard Police (BGP) and later three of their army personnel took shelter in Bangladesh.

"Myanmar government agreed to take them back after discussions with us.

"They proposed the sea route [for sending them back]. We wanted to send them back this week, but as the sea is not favourable, they will be sent next week or as soon as the sea becomes calm," he said.

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SIRAJGANJ ECONOMIC ZONE

Worker killed as girders of under-construction bridge collapse

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A 20-year-old worker was killed and two others were injured when three girders of an under-construction bridge collapsed on them at the Sirajganj Economic Zone yesterday.

The incident occurred around 10:30am in Soyadabad union under Sadar upazila.

The deceased was identified as Jubayer Hossain, son of Mahmud Ali from Sirajganj town's Mirpur area.

Besides, two other workers – Jahurul Islam, 60, and Hafizul Islam, 24, were injured in the same incident. Critically injured, Jahurul was admitted to the district's Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib General Hospital.

Sumon Sarker, inspector of Sadar Police Station, said the body of the victim was sent to the Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib General Hospital for an autopsy.

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PHOTOS: SHADAB SHAHROKH HAI

PANTHAPATH STREET MARKET

A hub for affordable shoes

ASHIF AHMED RUDRO

Eid shopping has already begun in full swing and shoes are one of the indispensable items on your want list.

However, shoe-shopping can take a toll on your wallet, especially if you have your eyes on something fancy. Dhaka, thankfully, always offers alternatives for budget shoppers.



The setup is pretty straightforward – the stalls are lined up on the street opposite Bashundhara City Shopping Mall. As you walk, your eyes will be drawn to the neatly arranged lines of shoes and the retailers constantly dusting or rearranging them, hoping for a good sale.

This shoe market is busier than one would imagine, especially now with Eid only a few days away.

"We are open every day. There's no



holiday, anyone can come whenever they want," said one salesperson, gently putting a pair of loafers on display.

The market opens around 10:00AM and operates until late at night. The crowd thickens as the day progresses. So, if you want to avoid a gathering, the earlier the better.

Chestnut, honey, tan, and black shoes are arranged with different variations on display – all designed to draw you in. There are loafers, sneakers, and boat shoes, along with an array of sandals, decorating the display bed.

Then there are the eye-catching boots. It's hard not to imagine rocking them with a pair of jeans. Whether you like dress boots or something that looks even more radical with a zipper on the side – they have it all!

With scores of people thronging the market, the sellers are always on their toes, and those dealing with customers are even more animated.

You will see them enthusiastically showing off a pair of shoes, describing to their customer the quality of the leather, finishing and sole. It can get overwhelming with so many choices in their vast collection.

With the market always buzzing, haggling can be quite the task as well.

However, it can be a great adventure for those with an open mind. While a pair of average formal shoes might cost you well over Tk 2,000 to 3,000 in a shopping mall, you'll find a similar one for just around Tk 1,000 at the Panthapath shoe market.

Their products can range from Tk 800 to Tk 5,000 – with room for negotiation, of course!

You need to be equipped with the skills of observation and bargaining though, to ensure quality and a fair price – perhaps the only catch when it comes to shopping here.

"I had bought a pair of running shoes from here before, which lasted me over a year, that's why I came back," said a customer who was seen bargaining for his perfect pair of shoes for Eid.

Sellers, however, admit that the quality of every pair may not be up to the mark, which is why the prices can be considerably low.

If you're smart, you'll spot your perfect pair for the perfect price soon enough.

Armed criminals

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and other establishments inside the complex were taken, Ruma Upazila Nirbahi Officer (acting) Didarul Alam told The Daily Star.

Didarul said a large group of suspected armed members of Kuki-Chin National Front (KNF) surrounded the upazila parishad complex during Taraweeh prayers around 8:30pm.

They entered the mosque, assaulted people, took away the mobile phones of all police and Ansar members.

The attackers forced the bank employees, who were inside the mosque, to open the vault of the bank which is inside the upazila parishad complex. They left the area half an hour later with money from the vault, Didarul said.

Sources said the attackers took Nezam with them when they left.

Quoting locals, Upazila Chairman U Hla Ching Marma said scores of KNF members surrounded the area during Taraweeh prayers, took away the mobile phones of the police and Ansar members and abducted Nezam.

Osman Gani, deputy manager of Sonali Bank's Bandarban branch, said the Ruma branch had received a shipment of fresh bank notes yesterday. "We don't know how much money was there in the bank's vault. It can be known after accessing the central server," he said.

Police have stepped up patrols in the upazila.

Don't meddle in upazila election

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the upcoming upazila election would be held in a free, fair and peaceful manner and the administration and law enforcers would perform their duties neutrally.

"There will be no scope for ministers or MPs to interfere," he said.

Quader said the opinions of the people would be reflected in the elections as the voters would exercise their franchise freely.

"Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has pledged to cooperate with the Election Commission in holding the elections in a free, fair, and peaceful manner," he said.

Forced bank mergers could be counterproductive

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A legal framework is needed to manage the stock of distressed loans, it said.

"We have seen major steps towards addressing some of the vulnerabilities in the banking sector," Haven said, adding that full implementation of the roadmap will be critical.

Creating an efficient resolution framework for NPLs is urgently needed to maintain financial stability and revive private sector credit, the WB said.

Alongside NPL management, the recapitalisation of weak banks will be vital. Reforming and enhancing the governance and structure of state-owned banks is essential to ensure financial stability.

The WB also recommended removing the interest rate cap and flexing the foreign currency exchange rate.

Though the Bangladesh Bank took several initiatives in the last one and a half years to increase the foreign currency reserve and revive the vulnerable financial sectors, the initiatives were inadequate as those were taken belatedly, it said.

The WB cited the November 2023 decision of the Bangladesh Foreign Exchange Dealers Association to allow banks to purchase remittance

inflows above the formal cap by providing additional incentive payments to further its point.

The BB also allowed deviations from the remittance exchange rate cap through verbal instructions to individual banks.

"This has resulted in the re-emergence of a de facto multiple exchange rate and the divergence of the interbank and kerb market exchange rates."

By mid-March 2024, the kerb market rate reached Tk 120.5 per dollar compared to the Tk 110 per dollar interbank exchange rate cap.

The exchange rate reforms are urgently needed to rebuild the external buffers.

"Implementing a sustainable exchange rate policy is key to stemming the significant depletion of foreign exchange reserves and restoring market confidence."

The BB's latest monetary policy indicated it is considering adopting a crawling peg system to move towards a more flexible exchange rate.

However, the timeline for implementation and a technical methodology have not been announced, the WB said.

"The crawling peg would need to be a market-clearing exchange rate

mechanism that reduces the gap between the formal and informal exchange rates."

That would help rebuild external buffers by attracting remittances through formal channels, making informal channels less attractive and reducing the financial account deficit by expanding trade credit and other forms of external financing.

Delays in exchange rate reforms can result in the continued depletion of international reserves to critically low levels.

Failure to make timely adjustments could result in the persistence of arbitrage opportunities and reduced foreign currency inflows through official channels, thereby perpetuating import restrictions and input shortages.

"Inadequate supply of natural gas during the peak season and inability to import sufficient LNG due to foreign exchange shortages can disrupt industrial production and investment," the report added.

Faster and bolder fiscal, financial sector and monetary reforms can help Bangladesh maintain macroeconomic stability and accelerate growth, said Abdoulaye Seck, the WB's country director for Bangladesh and Bhutan.

Consider setting up 2nd nuclear power plant

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the initial stage of setting up two new units.

The premier directed the authorities concerned to complete all formalities of taking back spent nuclear fuel from the first and second units of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant to Russia.

The DG of Rosatom, on behalf of the Russian government, assured the PM of taking back spent nuclear fuel to Russia and pledged to complete all the necessary formalities on time as per the instructions of the prime minister.

Dhaka and Moscow have already signed an agreement regarding the return of the spent nuclear fuel from the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant to Russia.

Hasina thanked Russia for helping Bangladesh with energy security, especially the construction of the

Rooppur power plant.

She said it was the dream of Bangabandhu to set up a nuclear power plant in Bangladesh, and the project is being implemented.

She remembered the assistance of Russia during the Liberation War in 1971 and subsequent help in rebuilding the war-ravaged country.

The PM also conveyed her greetings to Russian President Vladimir Putin on his re-election.

The Rosatom DG apprised Hasina of the progress in building the Rooppur power plant. He said 85 percent work of the RNPP has been completed. He said the plant will start production by 2025.

He proposed building two new nuclear power units (Unit-3 and 4) in the Rooppur nuclear power project area.

The DG noted that the construction

of the new units should start as soon as the construction of the first two units is completed.

In this context, he also said the expansion of existing nuclear power projects is more profitable and reasonable from a financial point of view and in light of technical and nuclear safety, which is considered internationally.

He said some 2,500 staffers, including Bangladeshis and Russians, have been working on the project.

Hasina asked the Rosatom DG to utilise Bangladeshi expertise in other nuclear power plant construction projects.

Science and Technology Minister Yeafesh Osman was present at the meeting, among others.

The construction of two units, each with a capacity of 1,200MW, in the Rooppur project area is in the final stage.

HSC exams to start June 30

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

This year's Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and equivalent examinations will start on June 30.

Students will sit for the Bangla first paper on the first day, according to the exam schedule published yesterday in a press release signed by Controller of Examinations, Dhaka Education Board Prof Md Abul Bashar.

The exams will begin at 10:00am and conclude at 1:00pm.

On August 11, the written exams will conclude. Afterwards, the practical exams will begin.

Satkhira medical students asked to vacate halls

UNB, Satkhira

A day after a clash between two groups of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) at Satkhira Medical College, the authorities asked all the students to vacate the residential halls.

The decision was taken at the academic council of the medical college yesterday at noon. The order was issued in a notification signed by Principal Prof Dr Ruhul Kuddus.

According to the decision of the academic council, the students were asked to leave the halls by 2:30pm to avoid any untoward incident.

Prince Saha, vice president of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) of the Medical College unit, was injured in a clash between two factions on Monday over declaring the newly elected BCL president Abdul Muhith and general secretary Tanvir Ahmed, unwanted on the college premises.

On March 27, the college authorities suspended the internship of Chhatra League leader Abdul Muhith for two months over vandalism and showdowns on campus the night before the 12th parliamentary election.

Man gets death penalty for killing girl after rape

UNB, Cumilla

A Cumilla tribunal yesterday sentenced a man to death for killing a schoolgirl after rape in 2019.

The condemned convict is Mohammad Ali Bappi, of Chaudhagram upazila. The court also fined him Tk 50,000.

According to the prosecution, Tawhida Islam Ilma, 9, a class III student at Gazaria Government Primary School went missing on March 15, 2019.

On March 16, 2019, police recovered the body of Ilma, wrapped in a quilt, from the Dakatia River. Later, police arrested Bappi on suspicion. Following interrogation, Bappi admitted to strangling the girl with a scarf after raping her before dumping her body in the river.

A case was filed in this connection.

Police submitted a chargesheet against Bappi and Md Mizan.

Demonstrating Buet students

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removed from the post of director of the Directorate of Students' Welfare for what they said was his failure to keep the campus free from politics, an allegation Prof Mizanur refutes. Demonstrating students have also been demanding expulsion of Buet student and Chhatra League leader Imtiaz Hossain Rahim Rabbi.

Buet revoked Imtiaz's residency at the dormitory amid the unrest.

LETTER TO PM

The students requested Hasina to stand by them as their guardian.

"Honourable prime minister, we earnestly request you to implement the dream that the greatest Bangalee of all time, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, dreamed about Buet; the policy he adopted. Keep Buet out of student politics, even if that needs amending the law."

They requested the premier to visit the campus, saying, "We want to show you that Buet, which is free from student politics, has become an ideal campus for students over the last few years. We promise you that we will leave behind the world's other leading universities in technology very soon. We, your children, are waiting for your help."

They mentioned that the negative aspects of student politics include murders.

They vowed to resist fundamentalism together, saying the Buet campus without student politics is the safest and most

education friendly in the country.

BCL BRIEFING

While reading out the written statement at the press conference, BCL President Saddam said, "Student politics at Buet has been banned for five years. During the period, religious extremism raised its head. Fundamentalism and militancy have found a safe haven..."

"Students have been prevented from remembering the Father of the Nation. Students' constitutional right to move, express opinions, assemble, and organise has been severely curtailed. A discriminatory, violent, and divisive social structure has been introduced... It is not acceptable in any way."

He then termed the Buet administration autocratic for revoking Imtiaz's residency at the dorm.

"Buet students will spontaneously choose their leadership. This leadership will be patriotic. This leadership will create the world's best innovators and entrepreneurs..."

Saddam announced that the BCL would demonstrate on Buet campus for reinstatement of Imtiaz's residency at the dorm, hold discussions with Buet students, organise seminars and cultural festivals to liberate Buet from the "communal-radical-militant groups, and negotiate with the administration for arranging students' union elections.

Three killed as vehicles catch fire after tanker flips

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The two others died at Sheikh Hasina National Burn and Plastic Surgery Institute in the capital.

The injured people admitted to the facility are Abdus Salam, 35, Nironjon, 45, Al-Amin, 35, Sakib, 24, Milon Molla, 22, Muhammad Al Amin, 22, and Mim, 10.

Of them, Sakib sustained 100 percent burn injuries, reports UNB.

Locals said the tanker truck hit a pavement and rolled over and went up in flames around 5:35am. The fire spread to the other vehicles within

moments, police said.

Six firefighting units from Savar and Hemayetpur brought the fire under control, said fire official Alauddin.

One of the injured, Salam, who was driving the car, said there was no passenger in his car, and the whole thing happened really fast.

As traffic movement was disrupted, long tailbacks were created.

The road was cleared after the damaged vehicles were removed around 2:00pm, police said.