

MV ABDULLAH Hope to free the crew soon

Says foreign minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Ctg

Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud yesterday expressed hope that the crew of the hijacked Bangladeshi vessel MV Abdullah will be released soon as talks with their captors have progressed significantly.

The minister said this while addressing a press briefing in Chattogram city.

When asked about the progress of negotiation with the pirates, the minister said an all-out effort is underway to release the crew members.

"As negotiations have progressed a long way, we are hopeful that the crew members will be released soon," he stated.

He, however, said it is not possible to set a date for their release.

"Foreign vessels are present around the hijacked ship. So, apart

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A weaver finishing up a Jamdani sari in Patrail of Tangail's Delduar upazila yesterday. Every year, the district's sari makers try to introduce new designs and patterns, aiming to offer something new to buyers during Eid.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

We're turning into 'battle corridor' for neighbours

Says Rizvi

UNB, Dhaka

BNP senior joint secretary general Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said yesterday Bangladesh is becoming a "battle corridor" for neighbouring countries due to the ruling Awami League's "knee-jerk foreign policy".

"The government has left the borders unprotected while deploying hundreds of thousands of law enforcement members in the capital to quell opposition movements," he said at a press conference held at BNP's Nayapaltan central office.

"The home minister and his intelligence agencies were unaware of the secessionist terrorists who attacked our sovereignty, yet they actively strategise on how to ensnare opposition activists," he alleged.

Bank robbery, abduction, attack on law enforcement agency and looting of their arms by so-called Kuki-Chin National Front (KNF) in Bandarban is a clear sign of the failure of Sheikh Hasina's "dummy government", the BNP leader said.

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Tarique is enough to destroy BNP

Says Hasan Mahmud

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Ctg

Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud yesterday said BNP's acting chairman Tarique Rahman is enough to destroy the party.

"No one else is needed," he said, adding that as long as Tarique remains their leader, BNP has no chance.

The foreign minister was addressing an exchange of views with the journalists at the YNT Center at Dewanji Pukur Par in Chattogram.

He also said that BNP called for a boycott of Indian goods as part of a plan to destabilise the market. But no one in the country responded to their call, not even the leaders and activists of BNP, he said.

"We have been able to control the market. The prices of many products have also come down."

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BANGABANDHU WAGE EARNERS' CENTRE Low-cost facility for expats going unnoticed

MD ABBAS

Mohammad Belal Hossain, 50, came to Dhaka from Khulna to see off his son Mizanur Rahman, who flew to Saudi Arabia on February 18.

The duo had to stay at a hotel near Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA), spending over Tk 3,000.

Asked why they did not stay at the Bangabandhu Wage Earners' Centre, which has been set up for expatriate workers to stay at a cost of only Tk 200, Belal said they did not know about it.

Like them, many workers who come from different parts of the country to go abroad are unaware that they can avail temporary accommodation at low cost at the Bangabandhu Wage Earners' Centre.

The centre was built on 140 kathas of land in Barua Lanjanipara area of Khilkhet. It is around 6.5 kilometres from Dhaka airport. Built at a cost of Tk 30 crore, the centre was launched on March 18, 2022, on Bangabandhu's birth anniversary.

It has arrangements to accommodate 49 people, with 40 beds designated for male expatriate workers and nine for women. It also offers counselling, first aid, hospitalisation, and free internet facilities.

Expatriates can stay there for a maximum of two nights before departure, or after arrival, spending only Tk 200 per night,

by submitting copies of passport, air ticket, exit permits, and related documents.

In addition, they can avail transport facilities to and from the airport by applying online with a fee of Tk 100 via its website.

However, even after two years, the centre receives little response, primarily due to a lack of proper publicity.

During a visit to the centre recently, this correspondent

He added that the 6.5km distance from the airport, coupled with bad roads, could be why expatriates might not consider this option, specially with their heavy luggage making transportation challenging.

Md Nazmul Haque, assistant director (administration, service, and board meeting) at Wage Earners Welfare Board, said they are now getting more visitors than previously.

INFORMATION	DETAILS
Purpose	Temporary accommodation for expatriates
Location	Barua Lanjanipara area of Khilkhet, 6.5 kilometers from Dhaka airport
Facilities	Accommodation for 49 people, counseling, first aid, free internet
Cost	Tk 200 per night

During a recent visit, this correspondent found that 10 out of the centre's 11 rooms were locked. Each room is equipped to accommodate four guests.

found that 10 out of the centre's 11 rooms were locked. Each room is equipped to accommodate four guests.

The other had only one guest, Meer Farhad, who was seen leaving for the airport to catch his flight to Libya. Farhad expressed satisfaction with the arrangements at the centre.

"The facilities here are excellent. Unfortunately, people are largely unaware of this initiative. The centre is not getting the publicity it deserves," he said.

"Last month, we had more than 400 visitors. We have advertised on television and in newspapers, and made a documentary as part of efforts to let more people know about this service," he claimed.

Termining it a praiseworthy initiative, Shariful Hasan, associate director at Brac Migration Programme and Brac Youth Platform, said this government service needs to be publicised widely.

"More advertisements on radio

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Provide services in remote areas Health minister urges medical professionals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Minister Samanta Lal Sen yesterday urged doctors, nurses and health workers to extend medical services to remote areas of the country.

He said this at a discussion meeting at Bangamata Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Mujib Convention Hall in the capital's Shahbagh.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) organised the meeting on the occasion of World Health Day on April 7.

The health minister said the government is committed to providing healthcare services to all citizens by 2030. Efforts will be focused on extending treatment to marginalised areas of the country, he added.

Addressing the doctors and health workers, the health minister stated, "We will ensure all necessary facilities are provided for you. Serve me, and I will ensure you have everything you need."

Samanta Lal Sen emphasised that a nation's progress hinges on its public health development. In line with this, the current government has taken significant measures to enhance healthcare quality and bolster health management.

DHAKA AIRPORT Handing over Terminal-3 to Caab gets delayed

RASHIDUL HASAN

The much-anticipated handover of third terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka to the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh could not take place yesterday.

Aviation Dhaka Consortium (ADC), contractor of the terminal, failed to complete the works within the contract deadline, which ended yesterday, said a top official of the project.

Amid this situation, Caab Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman yesterday held meeting with the contractor and others related to the project to evaluate the situation at the Caab headquarters in the capital's Kurmitola.

"The contractor company requested us to extend the deadline by another six months," Mafidur Rahman said yesterday.

The Caab chairman also said they have placed two proposals to the contractor company – handover the building now and complete the remaining works by September, or have the contract extended by six months without any additional fund.

The contractor company is scheduled to sit with Caab on April 22 to decide on the proposals.

Around 95 percent of the works of HSIA Terminal-3 has been completed. The remaining works include testing, calibration and setting up of some equipment, he also said.

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HEALTH BUDGET 'Increase allocation to combat NCDs'

UNB, Dhaka

Public health experts yesterday called for increased allocation in health sector in the upcoming FY 2024-25 national budget as budgetary allocation to combat non-communicable diseases (NCDs) remains inadequate.

They made the call at a webinar titled "Budgetary Allocation to Combat NCDs: Bangladesh Perspective" held on the occasion of World Health Day.

The webinar was organised by the research and advocacy organisation PROGGA (Knowledge for Progress) with support from the Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHA).

This year the day will be observed under the theme "My Health, My Right".

Speakers said that NCDs, such as hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, stroke, cancer, kidney

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Brazil's foreign minister due today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Mauro Vieira, foreign minister of Brazil, will arrive in Dhaka today on a two-day visit to bolster trade and investment relations between the two countries.

Following the Russia-Ukraine war, the two countries are exploring new avenues of trade and investments in recent times.

During Vieira's visit, Bangladesh and Brazil may sign a technical cooperation agreement and three memorandums of understanding (MoUs) on agriculture, sports and defence, foreign ministry officials said.

Today, Minister Vieira will hold meeting with his Bangladesh counterpart Hasan Mahmud. Tomorrow, he will call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Vieira will be accompanied by a big business

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CAMPUS THERAPISTS... Taking a moment off from Pahela Baishakh preparations, two students play with this kitten at Dhaka University's Faculty of Fine Arts yesterday morning.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN