

Say 'no' to war, seek solution through talks

PM urges at UNESCAP session, calls for raising voice against aggression, atrocities

UNB, Bangkok

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday urged all to speak out against all forms of aggression and atrocities and to say "no" to wars.

She was addressing the 80th session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) at the ESCAP Hall in Bangkok.

Hasina, now in the Thai capital on a six-day official visit, said Bangladesh supports the UN secretary-general's "A New Agenda for Peace".

She said the pre-condition for sustainable development is lasting peace and security.

"We must settle regional disputes and tension through dialogue. Our mutual respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity must remain paramount."

The premier urged the Asia-Pacific regional countries and forums, especially ASEAN, to increase their efforts to end the Rohingya crisis.



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An adult male Indian paradise flycatcher spotted among the greenery in Salampur of Natore's Lalpur upazila. This magnificent looking bird is native to the Indian subcontinent, central Asia, and Myanmar. It is a migratory bird and prefers spending the colder seasons in tropical Asia. The most fascinating aspect of this bird, evidently, is the long, ribbon-like tail, which it shows off unabashedly. However, only the males are blessed with such a feature. Socially monogamous, both males and females take part in nest-building, incubation, brooding and feeding the young. Due to its wide distribution, it has been listed as a "Least Concern" species in the IUCN Red List since 2004.

PHOTO: MOSABBER HOSSAIN RIBON

HUMAN RIGHTS US report undermines certain state institutions Says Bangladesh's foreign ministry

UNB, Dhaka

The US Human Rights Report 2023 "fails to appreciate, rather undermines" a number of valued state institutions, including the judiciary and certain statutory bodies, Bangladesh's foreign ministry said yesterday.

This is detrimental to the morale and functioning of those institutions, the ministry pointed out.

"Regrettably, many of the improvements and achievements of the government have not been acknowledged in the report. On the other hand, isolated and unfounded allegations continue to be flagged as part of a systematic trend," Seheli Sabrin, spokesperson for the ministry, told reporters at a briefing.

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Citizen group calls for fair probe into Preeti's death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of citizens and rights activists yesterday placed a 10-point demand, including an independent, impartial and transparent investigation into the death of Preeti Urang.

At a press conference at Jatiya Press Club under the banner of Socheton Nagorik Samaj, they also called for bringing those responsible for her death to justice.

Preeti Urang, 15, died after she fell through an opening of former executive editor of The Daily Star Syed Ashfaqul Haque's eighth-floor flat in the capital's Mohammadpur on February 6.

Preeti, from Moulvibazar, was a house help at the residence.

Farah Tanzim Titil, an associate professor of economics at Islamic University in Kushtia read out a written statement at the press conference.

The group's demands also include shifting the case under Women and Children Repression

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Bangladesh won't benefit from global LNG oversupply

Think tank IEEFA says fiscal challenges holding it back

ASIFUR RAHMAN

The global liquefied natural gas supply capacity will increase drastically in future and the prices will stay low, but Bangladesh is not likely to reap the benefit due to fiscal challenges, according to a global report.

"Despite plans to ramp up LNG terminal capacity, fiscal challenges may limit a drastic LNG demand growth in the short-term in Bangladesh," said the report in its Bangladesh chapter.

Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) published the Global LNG Outlook 2024-2028 yesterday, where the think tank said sluggish demand growth of LNG combined with a record increase in global export capacity through 2028 will likely thrust markets into an extended period of oversupply.

IEEFA anticipated that global LNG production capacity will grow by roughly 193 million tonnes per year (MTPA) from 2024 through 2028, rising from approximately 474 MTPA of nameplate capacity at the beginning of this year to 666.5 MTPA by the end of 2028.

"This will be the fastest capacity growth in the global LNG industry's brief history, representing a 40 percent increase in just five years," the report said.

Bangladesh imported 203 billion cubic feet (BCF) of LNG worth about Tk 40,000 crore in 2022-23 fiscal year, up from 116 BCF worth Tk 10,262 crore in FY 2018-19, according to data from Petrobangla.

The country has signed several deals to increase the LNG import from 2026 and to enhance the regasification capacity.

"Until new contracts begin, imports may increase

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Israel pounds Rafah before 'offensive'

Resumes strikes on northern, central areas of Gaza; 43 more Palestinians killed in 24 hours

AGENCIES

Israel stepped up airstrikes on Rafah after saying it would evacuate civilians from the southern Gaza city and launch an all-out assault despite allies' warnings this could cause mass casualties.

- Hamas willing to agree to a truce of 5 years or more with Israel: report
- Internet services cut off in central, southern Gaza
- Death toll in enclave rises to 34,305

Medics in the besieged Palestinian enclave reported five Israeli airstrikes on Rafah early yesterday that hit at least three houses, killing at least six people including a local journalist.

In the seventh month of a devastating air and ground offensive in the Gaza Strip, Israeli forces also resumed bombarding northern and central areas of the enclave, as well as east of Khan Younis in the south.

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Admin, police wary of MPs meddling in upazila polls

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Field-level admin and police officials yesterday said lawmakers and ministers trying to influence upazila polls in their respective localities might pose a serious challenge for the Election Commission.

Speaking at a meeting organised by the EC, several deputy commissioners and superintendents of police said lawmakers are now staying in their constituencies and directly and indirectly working for their favoured candidates, said meeting sources.

The EC arranged the meeting ahead of the four-phase upazila polls starting on May 8.

"The commission is planning to send a letter to the Speaker to inform her of the matter. It'll also urge the lawmakers to refrain from exerting influence at their localities and also to abide by the electoral code of conduct," a top EC official told this newspaper.

Contacted, EC Secretary Jahangir Alam said, "Some speakers at the meeting expressed concern about [lawmakers and ministers trying to meddle in the polls] it. The commission will soon sit to decide on how to address the issue."

Awami League sources said that so far, the party office has received information that relatives of more than 50 ministers and MPs are taking part in the upazila polls.

They are still in the race, defying the party's decision that close relatives will have to withdraw their candidatures.

According to the electoral code of conduct for upazila polls, no MPs and ministers are allowed to join the electioneering on behalf of any candidate.

At the beginning of yesterday's meeting, Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal said the upazila polls should be free and fair. Voters should come to the polling centres, cast their votes and return home without any hindrance.

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Mahathir facing anti-graft probe

The case involves his sons

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

Former Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad is among individuals being investigated in connection with a graft probe involving his sons, the head of Malaysia's Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) said yesterday.

The investigation comes amid a widening crackdown on graft involving prominent political figures, including those seen as close to 98-year-old veteran leader Mahathir, a long-time foe of current Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

Anwar has denied targeting political rivals, saying the investigations are part of the government's efforts to tackle high-level corruption.



Palestinians search the rubble of a building hit in overnight Israeli bombardment in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

French national library quarantines 'poisonous' books



AFP, Paris

France's national library said yesterday it had removed four 19th-century books from its shelves whose emerald green covers were likely laced with highly poisonous arsenic.

The library said handling the books — which were printed in Britain — would probably cause only minor harm, but it was taking them away for further analysis.

"We have put these works in quarantine and an external laboratory will analyse them to evaluate how much arsenic is present in each volume," it said.

The Paris institution identified the offending copies after US researchers discovered publishers in the Victorian era had used the chemical to colour book bindings.

The arsenic-containing green pigments were called Paris Green, Emerald Green or even Scheele's Green after a German-born chemist.