

Russia outlaws The Moscow Times news outlet

AFP, Moscow

Russia yesterday named The Moscow Times news outlet an “undesirable organisation”, outlawing its activities inside Russia and leaving anybody who cooperates with them open to criminal prosecution.

Moscow has escalated a campaign against independent media and reporting since it launched its full-scale military offensive on Ukraine in February 2022.

Correction

In our story headlined “Chinese firms to invest in textile, fintech and EVs” on the front page of yesterday’s issue, the word “Chinese” was printed as “Chinse”. We regret the inadvertent typo.



Palestinians mourn over the body of a child following Israeli bombardment in Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip yesterday.

Militant leader who fled N’ganj raid arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti Terrorism Unit (ATU) of police has arrested a leader of banned militant outfit Ansar al Islam who fled before the officials carried out a raid at a militant hideout in Narayanganj’s Rugganj upazila on July 2.

A team of ATU arrested Javed alias Abir alias Enamul from Tongi area around 10:30pm on Tuesday, Mahfuzul Alam Rasel, superintendent (media) of ATU, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He fled from the Narayanganj den just before ATU officials carried out the drive, he said.

Parts of South Sudan ‘on brink of famine’: charity

AFP, Nairobi

Parts of South Sudan are on the “brink of famine” as the nation braces for a “horror scenario” ahead of the worst floods in decades, a British charity warned yesterday. Since it gained independence in 2011, the world’s newest nation has remained plagued by instability and violence, despite rich oil reserves.

South Sudan is expected to “suffer its worst floods in 60 years that will drive parts of the country to the brink of famine,” Save the Children said.

Hasina, Xi pledge to boost strategic ties

FROM PAGE 1

the four types of financial assistance will be given to Bangladesh. A technical committee from China will soon visit Bangladesh, BSS quoted Hasan Mahmud as saying.

Hasina left for China on July 8 following a state visit to India just two weeks before. She returned home from Beijing early today.

Experts say the back-to-back visits are a way of balancing the relationship with the Asian powers that are vying for influence in the Indian Ocean region.

Hasina last visited China in 2019. Back in 2016, Xi visited Dhaka when Bangladesh joined the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and elevated the relationship to “strategic partnership of cooperation”.

Yesterday, the two leaders elevated the relationship to “comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership”.

Xi said, “We, the two countries, are going to celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations next year. Marking the celebration, we want to take the existing strategic relations to the second step.”

Hasina invited the Chinese president, the prime minister and others to visit Bangladesh next year to celebrate the 50 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

“You stood firm against foreign interference. This not only demonstrates your conviction to stand upright against the pressure, but also the courage of the Bangladeshi people as an independent people,” Xi told Hasina according to a pool report made available to this newspaper.

He said China consistently opposes interference in other countries’ internal affairs under any pretext, and firmly supports Bangladesh in its pursuit for a development path that suits it.

Xi expressed his readiness to work with Hasina to improve bilateral relations based on a strategic and long-term perspectives, deepen political trust, and carry forward the traditional friendship.

He called for joining hands to boost Belt and Road cooperation, collaboration in various fields, and establish the “comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership” between the two countries.

Xi also expressed his desire to contribute to the development of South Asia and the Global South, according to the pool report.

Hasina reassured Xi about Taiwan -- Beijing’s most sensitive issue -- saying “Bangladesh firmly adheres to the one-China principle, supports China’s position on the Taiwan issue, and resolutely opposes external forces interfering in China’s internal affairs”, reported South China Morning Post.

Hasina said she faced many problems in holding elections and that there were some quarters who always try to disrupt the polls.

“...I always enjoy the people’s support and with the people’s support, we won the election. This is my fourth consecutive term. So, I feel that I have big responsibility for my people,” she said thanking Xi for always supporting her.

“And after the elections, your message gives us more enthusiasm,” she said.

Hasina thanked the Chinese president for helping Bangladesh build some iconic structures, including the Padma Bridge and Bangabandhu Tunnel.

Xi assured Bangladesh of providing assistance in the development of its southern part as Hasina sought support towards this end.

She raised the issue of trade imbalance between the two countries and called upon China to mitigate the gap. In 2022-23, the bilateral trade was \$24 billion, but Bangladesh exported to China goods worth less than \$700 million.

In response, Xi said China will import more goods, including mangoes, from Bangladesh.

In response to Hasina’s request for Chinese assistance in developing Bangladesh’s agriculture sector, Xi assured her of providing technical support and necessary training.

Xi stressed the need for more cultural exchanges and people-to-people contact.

Noting the deepening relations between the Awami League and the Chinese Communist Party, he said, “Good governance needs good party.”

Earlier in the day, Hasina had a delegation-level meeting with Chinese Premier Li Qiang.

She requested her Chinese counterpart to import leather products, jute products, pharmaceutical goods, and ceramic products from Bangladesh.

Hasina invited more Chinese investments in 100 special economic zones and Bangabandhu Industrial

Park, mentioning that Bangladesh has allotted one export processing zone for Chinese investors.

She stressed the need for Bangladesh’s inclusion in BRICS in any form. In response, Li Qiang assured her of Chinese support.

Hasina also sought Chinese cooperation so that Bangladesh could enjoy the LDC facilities at least for three more years after it graduates to a middle-income country in 2026. The Chinese prime minister gave a positive response.

Both the leaders put emphasis on celebrating the Golden Jubilee of their diplomatic relationship in a befitting manner.

Bangladesh and China also signed 22 instruments and made seven announcements.

The instruments involve the banking sector, trade and investment, digital economy, infrastructure, disaster management, export of agricultural products from Bangladesh, and people-to-people connectivity.

On Tuesday, Hasina attended a trade and investment summit participated by businesses from both countries.

Bangladeshi and Chinese companies signed 16 MoUs to boost collaboration in textiles, electric vehicles, solar power, financial technology, and other technology.

Four of these MoUs will bring in nearly \$500 million in investments.

Hasina also met Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) President Jin Lique and requested him to cut the interest rates on its loans for Bangladesh and finance infrastructure, river dredging, and climate-resilient houses.

According to former ambassador to China Munshi Faiz Ahmad, elevating the relationship to “comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership” means the two countries will now cooperate in all sectors and further deepen their bilateral relationship.

People often think there are military components when the word “strategic” is used, which is not correct.

Bangladesh was seeking a loan of \$5 billion in Yuan amid foreign currency shortage but the terms and conditions were not agreed upon.

Faiz said China has pledged 1 billion Yuan and more will follow as evident in Xi’s words.

INSTRUMENTS

- » MoU on strengthening investment cooperation in digital economy
- » Chinese NFRA and Bangladesh Bank signed an MoU on banking, insurance regulation
- » An MoU on a protocol for exporting Bangladeshi mangoes to China
- » A deal on exchange, cooperation on economic development policy
- » An MoU on trade, investment cooperation
- » A deal on strengthening cooperation on digital economy
- » Signing of minutes on discussions on the feasibility study for China-aid National Emergency Operation Centre in Bangladesh project
- » An MoU on strengthening cooperation in medical care, public health
- » A deal on bolstering infrastructure cooperation
- » An MoU on cooperation on green, low-carbon energy development
- » Renewal of a deal on hydrological information of Yaluzangbu/Brahmaputra river

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- » An MoU between Chinese National Radio and Television Administration and Bangladesh information ministry
- » A deal between China Media Group and Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha
- » Another MoU between China Media Group and BTV
- » A deal between Xinhua News and BSS
- » Another MoU between Xinhua and BTV
- » Renewal of an MoU between the two education ministries
- » An MoU signed for public-private partnership in sustainable infrastructure development
- » The two nations exchanged letters on the renovation of sixth Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge
- » Another set of letters exchanged for the 9th Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge Project
- » Dhaka, Beijing exchanged letters on a feasibility study for building Nateshwar archaeological site park

The malady runs

FROM PAGE 1

31 named people, including a former assistant director of PSC, and 50 to 60 others unnamed.

The five arrested officials and employees were suspended by the PSC on Tuesday.

“At least 50 people were involved in the question leak of the recruitment test of the railway. Among them are several current and former PSC officials,” a high official of the CID told The Daily Star yesterday requesting anonymity.

According to investigators, many people have passed PSC exams after having leaked questions, and they are now working as BCS cadre civil servants.

Those who passed the PSC exams after paying for leaked questions are now in fear of actions against them, sources said.

CID officials said the syndicate leaked questions to at least 10 candidates of the 33rd BCS exam and three of them are currently serving in different cadres of the civil service. Besides, the names of several other cadre officials, including those selected in the 28th and 35th BCS exams, came up during the investigation.

Of the 17 arrestees, six made confessional statements before a Dhaka court on Tuesday.

In his statement, PSC dispatch rider Khalilur Rahman said that he leaked questions to 10 candidates of the 33rd BCS examination. Six of them passed the written test, but three could not pass the viva voce exam, said court sources.

Khalilur also said that he used to introduce the jobseekers to a former top PSC official.

If he was given the go-ahead by that official, the final decision regarding how much the jobseeker would have to pay for getting selected for government jobs.

Khalilur also played a role in the recruitments of some assistant upazila education officers and railway employees, said investigators.

During the 33rd BCS exam in 2012, a case was filed against Khalilur with Shahabgh Police Station over question leak. A departmental case was also filed against him.

At that time, the Rab arrested him. He got out on bail. He was also suspended from the job.

In March 2022, the charges brought against him were withdrawn due to lack of evidence. Since then, Khalilur has been working as a dispatch rider of the PSC.

Investigators said Khalilur was able to get involved in leaking questions due to the backing from the PSC top official.

Touhidul Islam, special superintendent of the CID’s cyber investigation and operations, told The Daily Star yesterday, “Legal action will be taken against those found involved in leaking questions.”

Meanwhile, the PSC yesterday wrote to the Anti-Corruption Commission asking it to investigate the five arrested PSC officials and employees in connection with amassing illegal wealth.

The five are deputy directors Abu Zafar and Jahangir Alam, assistant director Alamgir Kabir, dispatch rider Khalilur, and office assistant Sajedul Islam.

The PSC also asked the ACC to inform it about their wealth.

Meanwhile, sacked PSC driver Syed Abed Ali and several other accused told investigators during interrogation that jobseekers were brought to the “reading booth” two nights before the July 5 recruitment test.

The jobseekers were kept in a rented house in Savar and a warehouse in the capital’s Paltan so that they could memorise the answers to the leaked questions.

Abed rented the house for Tk 40,000 a month in Radio Colony of Savar. He took the leaked questions and answers from Sajedul.

Around 50 jobseekers memorised the answers in the house. Abed took Tk 7 to 8 lakh from each of them, said CID sources.

Before another recruitment test held several months ago, Abed rented another house in the capital’s Mirpur and took 44 jobseekers there. The syndicate collected Tk 4 lakh from each of the candidates.

According to investigation sources, Sajedul in his confessional statement before a court said that he got the question papers for the railway recruitment test from a chest of a PSC member. He said he sold the question paper to Abed and Khalilur for Tk 75 lakh.

Protesters won’t back down despite SC status quo

FROM PAGE 1

Justice Kashefa Hussain.

The apex court asked the petitioners to file separate leave-to-appeal petitions and fixed August 7 for a hearing on those.

The chief justice asked the agitators to go back to class and focus on studies.

He expressed hope that all vice-chancellors and heads of the educational institutions will take their students back.

“They [protesting students] took to the streets and raised slogans ... What they’ve done can’t be appreciated but I think they’ve done it out of a misunderstanding. They’re our children. On the first day, I said a judgement can’t be made based on slogans,” he said while passing the order.

“Considering what has happened so far, enough is enough. ... We’ll evaluate the High Court judgment properly if it’s placed before us.

“Only the Appellate Division has the right to examine whether the High Court verdict is correct or not. Why isn’t anyone explaining this to the children? University teachers, who are in prominent positions, [you] tell them [the students] – ‘this is not the way, you must go to the court. If you go to court, the court will see to it ... But we can’t do anything until the [HC]

verdict is placed before us.”

He thanked the DU students’ lawyer Shah Monjurul Hoque for moving a petition before the Appellate Division against the HC verdict.

Attorney General AM Amin Uddin, after the order was passed, told reporters that the HC verdict, which declared illegal the cancellation of quotas in first and second-class government jobs, will not remain effective.

Writ petitioners’ lawyer Md Munsurul Hoque Chowdhury told The Daily Star that the government now cannot implement a quota system as per the SC order.

Following a writ petition challenging the legality of quota cancellation, the HC on June 5 declared illegal the 2018 government circular that scrapped the 30 percent quota for the freedom fighters’ children and grandchildren in government jobs.

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader also requested protesters to go back to their respective institutions following the status quo and to not cause public sufferings.

BLOCKADE CONTINUED

Several hundred Dhaka University students and jobseekers blocked the

Shahabgh intersection around 11:50am. They came to the intersection in a procession from in front of the DU central library and barricaded all nearby roads.

Another group of DU students blocked the Chankharpu intersection around the same time.

Around 11:35, several hundred students of Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University blocked the Agargaon intersection and were seen taking position near metro rail station there.

All vehicular movement from Farmgate to Mirpur and Agargaon to Mohakhali remained halted for hours.

The capital’s Science Lab area remained blocked for at least seven hours by students of Dhaka College and nearby institutions. They started their march from the college campus and took position at the intersection around 10:30am.

They were seen barring buses, private cars and rickshaws from moving on the road and allowed only ambulances to pass through.

Most of the blockades were lifted around 7:00-7:30pm.

Outside the capital, the Dhaka-Aricha Highway was blocked for nearly six hours

by a group of Jahangirnagar University students, while Comilla University students blocked the Dhaka-Chattogram Highway for four hours in Cumilla’s Kotbari area.

A group of Patuakhali Science and Technology University students blocked the Dhaka-Kuakata Highway at the Payra Bridge point for three hours.

RAIL LINES

Schedules of trains to different destinations from Dhaka were hampered as rail operations remained suspended for five hours due to a blockade at the Karwan Bazar level crossing.

Ferdous Ahmed Biswas, officer-in-charge of Dhaka Railway Police Station, said rail services were snapped after some students blocked the crossing at 12:00pm. They left around 5:05pm.

The line that goes through Karwan Bazar connects Dhaka with the east, west and even southern parts of the country.

In Chattogram, CU students kept the Dhaka-Chattogram rail line in the Dewanhat area blocked from 11:30am, resulting in at least five trains being stuck at different stations for almost eight hours, the Railways Control Office confirmed.

The Parjatak Express and Cox’s Bazar Express, which left for Dhaka from Cox’s Bazar, were stranded at the Sholoshohor Station, while the Shonar Bangla Express, Mohanagar Probhati Express and a container-loaded freight train could not commence their journey from the Chattogram Station. CU’s shuttle train service was also closed.

The blockades were lifted around 7:00pm.

The protesters later blocked a road in the Tigerpass area, the main thoroughfare of the port city, around 1:00pm.

Meanwhile, students of Dhaka University of Engineering and Technology (Duet) staged a sit-in and blocked the Dhaka-Mymensingh rail tracks in Gazipur’s Joydebpur.

The protest began in front of the Duet Central Shaheed Minar and later moved to the Joydebpur Junction Railway Station.

PRO QUOTA

Meanwhile, leaders and activists of the Mukti Joddha Sangsad Santan Command staged a brief sit-in around 9:30am in front of the National Museum in the capital’s Shahbagh, demanding the reinstatement of the quota system.