No possibility of Hasina's return in next 10 years: Hafiz

UNB, *Bhola*



Speaker Hafiz Uddin Ahmad yesterday said he believes there is no possibility of deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina returning to Bangladesh in the next 10 years.

"From my political experience, I think there is no possibility for Sheikh Hasina to return even in the next 10 years," he said while talking to reporters at the Bhola Circuit House.

The Speaker said the Awami League, which now faces a ban on its activities, created an environment during its tenure where honest, good and impartial people in society could not contest elections.

He said fundamental reforms to the electoral system are necessary to ensure that ordinary people with public support and social acceptance, even without substantial financial resources, can participate in elections. "The Election Commission should devise a system which will create opportunities for ordinary citizens to contest polls."

Hafiz Uddin also said the upcoming local government elections must be free, fair and impartial, noting that elections had not been fair over the past 15 years.



Rescuers work at the site of a shopping centre hit by a Russian missile strike in Kyiv, Ukraine, yesterday. PHOTO: **REUTERS**

Stepfather held over attempted rape of 7-year-old girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Benapole*

Police arrested a 60-year-old man yesterday in a case filed over the alleged attempted rape of his seven-year-old stepdaughter in Jashore's Chaugachha upazila.

The accused, Shahidul Islam, was arrested following a case filed by the child's mother with Chaugachha Police Station, said Mamunur Rashid, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Shahidul will be produced before a Jashore court today, the OC added.

According to the case statement, the child's parents divorced four years ago. Her mother later married Shahidul, and the child had been living with them since then.

The incident took place around 5:30am on Wednesday when the child's mother went outside. Then, Shahidul allegedly attempted to rape the child.

Hearing her screams, her mother rushed back and rescued her.

An argument followed, prompting the mother to leave the house with her daughter and stay at her parents' home.

Shahidul later tried to settle the matter through local arbitration, the case statement added.

The child's mother filed the case yesterday, following which police arrested Shahidul.

Create central database to track road crash deaths

Demand youth organisations



PHOTO: **COURTESY**

UNB, *Dhaka*

Youth representatives from various organisations have urged the government to launch a unified national database to ensure accurate reporting of road crash fatalities and injuries and strengthen preventive measures.

They stressed that discrepancies in data reported by government and non-government organisations make it difficult to determine the actual toll of road crashes and formulate effective, evidence-based policies. The demand was made through a press release issued yesterday to mark Road Safety Day.

The press release said, according to the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), 5,490 people were killed in road crashes in 2025, while Bangladesh Passenger Welfare Association reported 9,111 deaths and 14,812 injuries in 6,729 crashes.

Another set of figures for the same year recorded 7,584 crashes, resulting in 7,359 deaths and 16,476 injuries. Significant discrepancies were also observed in fatality figures for 2024.

According to the youth organisations, a centralised database containing information on the location, time and type of road crashes, vehicles involved, road conditions, and the number of people killed or injured would help identify high-risk roads and the causes of crashes, enabling more effective preventive measures.

It would also facilitate the assessment of road safety initiatives and strengthen accountability.

Denmark buys long-range US, Norwegian missiles

AFP, *Copenhagen*

Denmark said yesterday it had bought long-range missiles from US and Norwegian manufacturers after announcing a year earlier it would acquire such weapons to deter Russia.

"We have bought two different missile systems: Norwegian strike missiles from Kongsberg, which can in particular be launched from our F-35 fighter jets, and Anthem missiles from the American company Covenant, which can be fired from land," Danish Defence Minister Jeppe Bruus told a press conference.

Bruus did not specify the number of missiles or the costs, nor when deliveries would begin.

In September 2025, Copenhagen announced it was planning on acquiring long-range missiles capable of reaching targets inside Russia, stressing that the threat from Russia would weigh on Europe for a long time to come.

Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen at the time called it "a paradigm shift in Danish defence policy".

"We are facing a security situation where no one can predict what will happen tomorrow," Bruus told reporters yesterday.

The minister stressed that this situation required Denmark to possess new military capabilities to strengthen both its own and Nato's collective deterrent force.

Denmark announced it had also signed an agreement with the United States aimed at strengthening maritime cooperation, particularly in the area of shipbuilding.

Africa faces 'complex' Ebola outbreak after spread to Nigeria: WHO

AFP, *Lagos*

The World Health Organization (WHO) warned yesterday that Africa faced a "complex" Ebola outbreak after the virus crossed from east Africa to Nigeria, which has reported the first case in the west of the continent.

Nigeria on Tuesday announced an imported case of the Bundibugyo strain behind a major DR Congo Ebola outbreak, in a woman, a wife of a diplomat who had a history of travel to Uganda.

The continent's most populous nation is the fourth African country affected by the outbreak, which this week came to span the continent, with Kenya in the east reporting nine cases since October 6.

The outbreak began in the Democratic Republic of Congo and has become the deadliest in the country's history, killing more than 4,000 people out of more than 9,000 confirmed cases since mid-May, according to health authorities.

It is caused by the Bundibugyo strain of the virus, for which there is still neither a vaccine nor a specific treatment.

"We are facing a more complex outbreak landscape. Nigeria has confirmed an imported case of Ebola virus disease," Mohamed Janabi, regional director for WHO in Africa, told an online media briefing.

The patient in Nigeria returned to the capital Abuja on October 3 after being in Uganda since September 16, the WHO representative in Nigeria Pavel Ursu said.

She flew to Abuja on an Ethiopian Airlines flight and transited through Addis Ababa, an emergency meeting of the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC) heard on Wednesday.

The continent's most populous nation is the fourth African country affected by the outbreak.

The woman is originally from Uganda but based in Abuja, Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention Director General Jean Kaseya told AFP yesterday.

He also said she did not go to the DRC, as suggested earlier by Ugandan authorities.

Africa CDC's Kaseya has already warned of "an extremely serious threat", with fatality rates fast edging towards 50 percent in the DRC.

The Nigerian case has reignited memories of a widespread outbreak in 2014 that struck several countries in the region and killed more than 11,000 people across west Africa between late 2013 and 2016.

Nigeria successfully contained the Ebola outbreak in 2014, resulting in only 19 infections and seven deaths, raising confidence it can respond effectively to new public health threats.

Ebola, which is transmitted through contact with bodily fluids and can cause severe internal and external bleeding and organ failure, has killed more than 15,000 people in Africa over the last 50 years.

In August, Uganda was declared officially Ebola-free by the WHO after recording 20 cases -- almost all of them in people who had travelled from the DRC.

Uganda has pushed back against suggestions the patient in Nigeria might have contracted the virus in the country.

"It's preposterous to suggest that just because someone was holidaying in Uganda, which by the way has no cases of Ebola, is reason enough to drag us into a conversation about Ebola in Nigeria," Ugandan government spokesman Alan Kasujja told AFP.

Students who failed SSC demand retests by Dec

FROM PAGE 3

Two days later, Dhaka Education Board Chairman Prof Syed Akhtaruzzaman said introducing supplementary exams for the 2026 SSC was impractical, citing the need for new policies covering question preparation, examinations and college admissions. The boards were seeking to introduce the system next year.

On October 13, Education Minister ANM Ehsanul Hoque Milon said the government planned retests within 15 days of SSC results being published for students failing up to two subjects. He did not specify when the system would begin.

Himchhari drowning toll rises to four

FROM PAGE 3

and engineering student at North South University, said Sub-Inspector Mohammad Solaiman, in-charge of Himchhari Police Outpost.

Ramu UNO Md Zillur Rahman said the tourists arrived in Cox's Bazar around 11:30am and checked into a resort near the Himchhari Museum on Pechar Dwip around 1:00pm. They went swimming at a nearby beach around 4:00pm after lunch, but were swept away by a strong current.

407 foreigners in Bangladesh jails

FROM PAGE 3

each from Georgia, the Bahamas, Belarus, Guyana, Congo, Ethiopia and Thailand.

Prison sources said the foreign nationals were detained in connection with offences including drug trafficking, gold smuggling, fraud, counterfeit dollar trading, passport-related offences, illegal VoIP businesses and human trafficking.

"They cannot return because clearance from the respective countries has not arrived," Masud Hasan Jewel, jailer (media and logistics), told The Daily Star.

He said prison authorities were regularly informing the Ministry of Home Affairs about the matter.

According to prison officials, the names, addresses and other details of the prisoners have been sent to the embassies concerned in Dhaka. Letters have also been forwarded through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but responses have been inadequate.

An official of the Consular Wing of the High Commission of India (HCI) in Dhaka, however, said 25 verified Indian nationals who had completed their sentences were awaiting repatriation from Bangladeshi prisons.

The mission has requested the foreign ministry to expedite their return and communicate proposed repatriation dates well in advance to facilitate arrangements with Indian authorities.

The official said Bangladesh's foreign ministry had also shared lists of 121 reportedly Indian prisoners who had completed their sentences.

"However, the personal particulars of the majority of these reportedly Indian prisoners are insufficient to enable verification of their Indian nationality."

The HCI has sought consular access to prisoners whose details are insufficient to verify their nationality.

"The HCI is awaiting a response from the foreign ministry. There are also some cases where sufficient information is available, but the nationality verification process is still ongoing."

The Daily Star contacted the Myanmar Embassy in Bangladesh several times by email but received no response.

Prison officials said prolonged detention of foreign nationals after completion of their sentences was creating logistical difficulties and imposing additional costs on the government.

According to the Prison Department, foreign prisoners are kept in separate cells for security reasons, with CCTV cameras monitoring the areas outside their wards.

The issue drew attention after six Chinese nationals were arrested at a hotel in Cox's Bazar on September 4 in connection with alleged online fraud.

Earlier, in January, the cyber unit of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Detective Branch arrested eight people, including five Chinese nationals, on similar allegations.

Curbs on secretariat visitor

FROM PAGE 3

The official said some passes issued under successive governments for political reasons remained in use.

"Although they are issued in the names of businessmen and contractors, we will not make a decision on this; it must come from the political level."

However, no changes are being considered for retired officials' passes. Secretaries, additional secretaries and joint secretaries retain lifelong access to the secretariat after retirement.

Home ministry sources said at least 27,000 access cards are held by employees working inside and outside the secretariat, while around 2,500 visitors enter daily using one-time passwords (OTPs).

At least 7,000 passes have also been issued, including temporary passes for contractors, businessmen, former officials and people working on projects under the Ministry of Housing and Public Works.

Under existing rules, secretaries can issue five daily passes, additional secretaries three and joint secretaries two. Ministers and state ministers can issue 10 each.

The secretariat is one of the country's key points of interest.

Previous prime ministers generally worked from the Prime Minister's Office, visiting the secretariat for cabinet meetings and other important discussions.

Since taking office, Tarique Rahman has worked from the secretariat almost every day, occasionally holding meetings at the Prime Minister's Office on Saturdays.

However, security arrangements have largely remained unchanged.

The Cabinet Division recently issued a nine-point directive to the home ministry to tighten security and regulate visitor access to the secretariat.

HRSS seeks probe into ministries' roles

FROM PAGE 3

according to family), were executed in Makkah.

HRSS called for an impartial investigation into possible negligence or coordination failures and demanded to know why the authorities were not informed of the executions in time.

It also demanded that the government obtain and publicly disclose the case records from Saudi authorities, including details of the charges, trials, opportunities to present a defence, legal assistance, sentences and executions.

The organisation said the two ministries should publicly explain their roles and any shortcomings in handling the cases. It called for legal action and punishment in accordance with the law if negligence or failure to discharge official duties is established through an independent investigation.

HRSS also urged the government to prepare an updated list of Bangladeshis imprisoned abroad and ensure qualified lawyers, consular access and opportunities for lawful appeals for those facing death sentences or serious criminal charges.

It called for assistance to the families of the deceased and better coordination among ministries, embassies and consulates to ensure timely information about arrests, trials and sentences.

Rising heat takes a toll on maternal, child health

FROM PAGE 3

extreme heat. It also identifies school attendance as a possible indicator of heat's impact on children.

The indicators cover maternal and child health monitoring, public-health surveillance, climate and health monitoring, and heat exposure.

The agencies said combining health records with temperature data could help detect unusual increases in complications during heatwaves, investigate possible links and improve preventive measures and hospital preparedness.

"What health systems do not count, they cannot respond to," said Dr Pascale Allotey, director of the WHO's Department of Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health and Ageing.

In May 2024, the Directorate General of Health Services, with Unicef support, issued national guidelines on heat-related illness, identifying pregnant women as particularly vulnerable.

The guidelines recommend monitoring cases by age, gender and pregnancy status, and managing complications such as preterm labour and pre-eclampsia.

Bangladesh's maternal and perinatal death surveillance system now covers all 64 districts, according to a report published on October 8.

The WHO framework recommends analysing such health data alongside weather observations to identify possible changes in pregnancy and newborn outcomes.

The agencies urged countries to strengthen heat-health action plans and early-warning systems to protect pregnant women, infants and children.