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.



A network of electric pumps and suction pipes lies along the bank of the Turag river at Gabtoli in Dhaka yesterday. Traders allegedly use the equipment to draw river water and soak sand, stone and brick chips, artificially increasing their weight before sale. Cargo vessels are seen anchored along the riverbank in the background.

PHOTO: **RASHED SHUMON**

Govt working to amend various laws, including CSA: minister

BSS, *Bhola*



Information and Broadcasting Minister Andaleeve Rahman has said the government is working to amend various laws, including the cybersecurity act, to ensure equal protection for all.

He said discussions were underway with stakeholders, including television channel owners and newspaper editors, to make the process more effective.

Policies were being formulated to ensure equal protection for media personnel, the administration and the public, he said, expressing hope for positive results soon.

The minister made the remarks while talking to reporters on Wednesday night during a visit to puja mandaps in his home constituency of Bhola Sadar.

Referring to the killing of a journalist in Netrokona, Andaleeve said any violation of the law, whether involving a journalist or someone from another profession, would be dealt with under existing laws.

The minister visited puja mandaps at nine temples in Bhola Sadar, accompanied by leaders and activists of Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) and its affiliated organisations.

No Biman flights to Riyadh till Oct 31

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Houthis allegedly carry out daily attacks on the kingdom.

Restrictions at Saudi Arabian airports have affected 135 flights involving Bangladesh and disrupted travel for 20,672 passengers, according to the latest figures from the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB).

Of the affected flights, 62 were direct services between Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia, while 73 involved connections through other countries. The figures represent an increase of one flight and 418 passengers from Wednesday's tally of 134 flights and 20,254 passengers.

Among direct operators, Biman Bangladesh Airlines accounted for 23 affected flights, Saudia 19, and US-Bangla Airlines and Riyadh Air 10 each.

Among connecting carriers, IndiGo recorded 28 affected flights, Emirates 14, Qatar Airways nine, flydubai eight, SalamAir seven, Air India six and EgyptAir one.

Under a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) effective from October 17, airlines must obtain prior permission from Saudi Arabia's General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) before operating flights to or from the airport.

Japan to arrange $6.35b

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it an attractive investment destination, Nikkei said.

With around 170 million people, the world's eighth-largest population, Bangladesh also offers a large consumer market, the report said.

Japan has long supported Bangladesh through official development assistance and is now showing a willingness to expand its role through private-sector investment, Nikkei added.

The Daily Star could not independently verify the report.

Students who failed SSC

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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.

7 Qawmi parties to work together

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belonging to other political alliances will have to leave those alliances. No such decision was taken at today's meeting," he said.

According to meeting sources, a 21-member liaison committee, comprising three representatives from each of the seven parties, has also been formed.

Jalaluddin Ahmed said the next meeting, scheduled for December 5, would discuss future activities in greater detail.

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.

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

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

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.

PM's Mongla visit raises dev hopes for southwest

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Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, state ministers Aninda Islam Amit and Shaikh Faridul Islam, Whip Rakibul Islam and other senior officials were present.

After the meeting, Tarique inspected Mongla Port's jetty facilities and operations before visiting the proposed economic zone site planned by the Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA).

He returned to Dhaka by helicopter around 5:00pm.

BNP leader Hafizur Rahman Tuhin said the port's development, the proposed LNG terminal near Akram Point and the economic zone would boost the regional economy. He also called for improved jetty facilities and dredging.

Md Julfikar Ali, general secretary of the Mongla Port Berth and Ship Operators' Association, said floating storage regasification unit facilities would support energy supplies and industrial growth.

Sheikh Sahed Ali Robi, president of the Bagerhat Chamber of Commerce and Industry, called for regular dredging to maintain the port channel's navigability and modernisation of customs services.

State Minister Faridul said industrialisation and investment centred on Mongla Port would create jobs and improve livelihoods, including for people affected by climate change.

He said coordinated development of the port, economic zone and Sundarbans tourism would help turn the region into a major trade and investment hub.

407 foreigners in Bangladesh jails

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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.

HRSS seeks probe into ministries' roles

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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.

Curbs on secretariat visitor

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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.

Rising heat takes a toll on maternal, child health

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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.