



Outgoing Australian High Commissioner Julia Niblett paid a farewell call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Gono Bhaban yesterday. Niblett was appointed high commissioner to Bangladesh in July 2016.

PHOTO: PID

MONEY LAUNDERING CASE

No bar to try ex-MP Hafiz Ibrahim: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday cleared the way for a lower court concerned to continue the trial proceedings of a money laundering case against former BNP lawmaker Hafiz Ibrahim.

The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case with Gulshan Police Station on August 16, 2011 against Hafiz and his wife Mafruzat Sultana for laundering USD 175 thousand to Singapore.

According to the case statement, the money was paid allegedly by Siemens Bangladesh Ltd to the duo's account to help the company win a deal of supplying core telecommunications equipment to Bangladesh Telecommunications Company Ltd (BTCL).

The amount was sent to a bank account in Singapore between 2005 and 2006.

Yesterday, the HC summarily rejected a petition filed by Hafiz, challenging the case's trial proceedings and seeking its cancellation.

The bench of Justice Obaidul Hassan and Justice AKM Zahirul Huq came up with the order after hearing arguments from the ACC and petitioner's counsels.

ACC lawyer Advocate Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star that there is no legal bar for the Special Court-3 of Dhaka to continue the trial proceedings against Hafiz and Mafruzat and other accused following the HC order.

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DAMAGE TO SCHOOL

UCEP receives Tk 1 crore in compensation

CITY DESK

Ahyan Hotel & Resort Ltd authorities have given Tk 1 crore to UCEP Bangladesh as compensation for damages caused to a technical school due to construction of the hotel in Khulna, says a press release.

Muhammad Ferdous Bhuiyan, general manager of Ahyan Hotel & Resort Ltd, handed a cheque to Parveen Mahmud, chairperson of UCEP Bangladesh, at the conference room of Vasstakalpa Architects Ltd in Khulna yesterday.

Among others, JI Bhowmik, vice chairperson of UCEP Bangladesh, its executive director Tahsinah Ahmed, AQ Siddiqui and Architect Mobashsher Hossain, were present on the occasion.

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37 bird species spotted in char areas of Padma

BSS, Rajshahi

A research team has spotted 37 bird species in different char (riverbed) areas of Padma river in Rajshahi this week.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) under its Bangladesh Wild Bird Monitoring Programme conducted the survey across a 39-kilometre part of the Padma.

Bangladesh Birds Club, Rajshahi Bird Club and Department of Forests jointly supported the survey.

IUCN bird researcher Simanta Dipu told local journalists that majority of the species were spotted in Char Khanpur, Char Khidirpur, 10 Number

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Upazila Parishad chairman held for 'assaulting' govt staff

OUR CORRESPONDENT, M'singh

Police arrested a union parishad chairman early yesterday for allegedly physically assaulting an office assistant of the upazila Project Implementation Officer (PIO) on Thursday.

The arrestee is Shahidul Islam Antor (41), chairman of Achintapur Union Parishad in Mymensingh's Gouripur upazila.

He is also the secretary of Achintapur union unit of Awami League.

A police team arrested Antor from Mymensingh city's Narun Bazar area around 2am, said Officer-in-Charge Md Borhan Uddin Khan of Gouripur Police Station.

According to the allegations, Antor went to the PIO office on Thursday afternoon and demanded more blankets for distribution to office assistant Abdul Karim when there was no one else in the room, the OC said.

When Karim denied to do so without permission from his superior, the chairman locked into an altercation with him.

At one stage, Antor started slapping him indiscriminately,

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AIR QUALITY INDEX

Dhaka air second worst yet again

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka once again ranked second worst in Air Quality Index (AQI) yesterday morning.

The air quality of the capital was classified as "very unhealthy" as it had an AQI score of 211 at 7:52am.

Mongolia's Ulaanbaatar and Pakistan's Lahore were the worst and third worst cities on the list, with scores of 238 and 182 respectively.

When the AQI value is between 201 and 300, the entire population is likely to be affected. Active children and adults, and people with respiratory diseases are advised to avoid all outdoor exertion in this situation.

AQI tells how clean or polluted the air is, and what associated health effects might be a concern for public. The AQI focuses on health effects that one might experience within a few hours or days after breathing polluted air.

In Bangladesh, the AQI is based on five kinds of pollutants: Particulate Matter (PM10 and PM2.5), NO2, CO, SO2 and Ozone (O3). The Department of Environment has also set national ambient air quality standards for these pollutants.

These standards aim to protect against adverse human health impacts.

Premature harvest of onions behind price hike

Agriculture minister says

UNB, Gazipur

Agriculture Minister Dr Muhammad Abdur Razzaque on Monday said the price of onion is not coming down, as there is shortage of the bulb after farmers harvested them prematurely for more profit.

The minister said this while addressing a seminar in Gazipur.

National Agriculture Training Academy (NATA) organised the meeting.

The minister said farmers could not get expected yield of onions last year due to unusual rain.

This rainfall also led to an onion crisis in the country, he added.

Abdur Razzaque also underscored the need for mechanising and commercialising the agriculture sector so that farmers can be benefitted.

Traders have hiked the price of the bulb, citing a supply crunch following drizzles

in many parts of the country for a few days since Thursday.

The local variety of the essential kitchen item was selling at Tk 180-200 per kilogramme at the retail market on Monday.

At the same time, the imported ones were selling at Tk 100-120 a kilogramme there.

One month ago, the local onion sold at Tk 240-250 per kg while the imported one at Tk 90-210, according to data from the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB). The sudden price hike caused outrage among consumers.

The price came down as low as Tk 100 and Tk 50 for the two varieties respectively after the local bulb and imported one hit the market.

But it started soaring again after light rain hit the country from Thursday and reached Tk 200 a kg.

POLICE WEEK 2020

605 cops get IGP badges

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 605 police members were awarded "IGP's Exemplary Good Service Badge" yesterday, in recognition of their performance in the last one year.

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Mohammad Javed Patwary handed over the award to members of 19 units -- including police, Rab and Detective Branch on the third day of Police Week.

The IGP also handed over certificate and Tk 20,000 to each awardee during the programme, held at Rajarbagh Police Lines grounds in the capital.

On January 5, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the six-day Police Week-2020 at the police lines.

IGP Javed Patwary also provided Tk 10,000 each to 1,000 members of different units of police, who performed parade on

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19.5 lakh people to avail prepaid electricity meters

Says state minister Nasrul

BSS, Dhaka

With an aim to reducing system loss, pilferage and bill arrears, Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) has undertaken an initiative to bring 19,58,325 consumers under smart prepaid metering for electricity in phases.

"We will bring all consumers under smart prepaid meter system," State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid told the news agency yesterday.

He said the BPDB has already installed 11,66,005 smart prepaid meters out of the total 31,24,330 consumers across the country by December 2019, adding, "We are also working to supply uninterrupted electricity to all."

"The government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been working relentlessly to bring all citizens under power coverage and our generation capacity has reached to 22,787 MW," Nasrul added.

The Power Division has taken the initiative through all distribution utilities to implement a prepayment meter system, with a view to reducing non-technical losses, increasing revenue collection and improving customer services.

Talking to the agency, Director (Public Relations) of BPDB Saiful Hasan Chowdhury said BPDB has four distribution zones across the country.

"We will bring all consumers including residential, industrial, commercial and offices under smart prepaid meter system in phases," he added.

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Officials of the Wildlife Crime Control Unit of Forest Department yesterday rescued a wildcat from Panchabati area in Narayanganj's Fatullah. The animal was rescued from the warehouse of a garment factory. Employees of the company on Sunday found the feline hiding in a pile of rubbish. Sensing their presence, it jumped at them, which prompted them to capture it. Upon searching the internet, the staff realised the cat belonged to an endangered species and informed the forest department.

PHOTO: STAR



Smiling graduates were roaming around SUST yesterday, fixing each other's gowns and hats. It's been 12 years since the campus has experienced this celebration, so the pictures better turn out alright.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

SUST'S 3RD CONVOCATION

A 12-year wait ends today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Shahjalal University of Science and Technology's third convocation is today, 12 years after its last convocation.

Marking the auspicious event, the university authority has made grand preparations.

President Abdul Hamid, also chancellor of the university, will preside over the convocation while eminent scholar and writer Dr Syed Manzoorul Islam will address the graduates as convocation speaker.

A total of 6,750 students, who earned their honours, masters, MBBS, nursing, MS, MD and PhD degrees between the academic sessions of 2001-02 and 2010-11 from the university, have signed up for the convocation.

So far there are 4,617 students who earned their honours, 1,127 masters, 878 MBBS, 120 nursing, 6 MS and MD, and 2 PhD.

At the convocation, 20 students will receive President's Gold Medal, while 89 students will receive Vice Chancellor's Award.

The main event will be held at the university's central field. The whole campus is decorated beautifully with lights, banners and festoons.

Shah Md Ashraf Siddiky, a student of sociology from 2000-2001 batch who is about to receive his masters degree, said, "It's another opportunity to rejuvenate old memories of the campus after a very long period of waiting for the convocation."

After starting academic activities in 1991, the university's first convocation was arranged on April 29, 1998. The second convocation was held on December 6, 2007.

For last 12 years, it was a challenge for the university to organise the third convocation. Several attempts failed due to various reasons.

Vice Chancellor Professor Farid Uddin Ahmed said, "It was a great challenge to organise the convocation by overcoming a lot of hurdles and it's a relief to arrange it after 12 years."

"[I] hope the convocation is a huge success. We are now determined to organise convocations regularly, by arranging the 4th convocation within December this year," he said.

Two die in road accidents

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Two people died in separate road accidents across two districts yesterday.

In Lalmonirhat, a bicyclist was killed in an accident on the Lalmonirhat-Burimari Highway at Filling Station area of Aditmari upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Dinesh Chandha Barmon, hailing from Chawratari Joradevi village of the upazila, reports our Lalmonirhat correspondent.

The accident occurred after Dinesh's bicycle was hit by a bus while he was crossing the road to go to a filling station in the area.

Law enforcers have arrested the bus driver and seized the vehicle.

Meanwhile in Mymensingh, a college student died yesterday from injuries sustained in a motorbike accident on Friday morning. The accident occurred at Muktagacha upazila's Rowarchar Bazar area, reports our Mymensingh correspondent.

Deceased Ikramul Hasan Limon (17) was a first-year HSC student, said officer-in-charge of Muktagacha Police Station Mohammad Ali Mahmud.

Limon, hailing from Muktagacha's Laxmikholo Supari Bagan area, was initially taken to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital from where he was referred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) for better treatment.

He died at DMCH yesterday morning.