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UK's Johnson faces revolt over plan to break Brexit treaty
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REOPENING STATE-RUN JUTE MILLS Industrialists not interested

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

Reopening of the country's 25 state-run jute mills still remains uncertain as the government proposals for reopening the mills are given a cold shoulder by most of the jute industrialists.

The government is more interested in leasing out the mills to the private sector for the short term, said officials at the Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) and textile and jute ministry.

But the investors are interested in taking the lease for longer periods, like 99 years, and loans to launch the business.

Meanwhile, the promises, made by the government in July when the mills were closed, of modernising and reopening the mills remain far from being kept.

According to proposals presented in recent meetings of the technical committee formed to modernise and reopen the jute mills, only the mills and its machineries should be leased out to the investors who have the working capital to start the modernisation process without government funds and can start production at the soonest time possible.

The land and other infrastructure of the mills should remain under government control, officials said.

"Most of the machineries at these factories are very old. We assume that the investors will install newer ones. So, the duration of the lease may depend on the time needed to start production and make profit," said Abdur Rouf, chairman of the BJMC, which regulates the jute mills.

"However, we have not decided anything about it yet," he told The Daily Star.

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Laid-off jute workers start getting paid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) will begin making payments to the laid off workers of 25 shuttered state-run jute mills of the country.

Today, 1,759 workers of Karim Jute Mills Ltd will receive their dues through bank cheques at a programme. Textiles and Jute Minister Golam Dastagir Gazi will hand over the cheques to the workers at the capital's Demra.

They will be the first workers to receive their dues since the closure of the state run jute mills on July 1.

Officials of BJMC, the regulating body of the country's jute mills, said that workers of other jute mills will also gradually receive their dues according to the labour law and recommendations of the national wage and productivity commission 2015.

"We are trying our best to disburse all sorts of dues to the workers on time.

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Vehicles ply on Asian Highway in Gazipur's Jajar area that has suffered serious rutting -- grooves created on the surface by overloaded vehicles. The highway is in such a poor shape at different points that it causes frequent tailbacks. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

DUMPING IN BURIGANGA Wasa MD not complying intentionally

Says HC over its 2011 directives

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday observed that the managing director of Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) is intentionally not implementing a 2011 directive asking it to seal off drains and sewerage lines linked to the Buriganga.

The court said the Wasa MD has been violating his commitment and is delaying compliance with the directives by submitting different affidavits and seeking time from the court.

Issuing a caution to Wasa MD Taqsem A Khan, the HC directed him to properly implement its directives and to submit a compliance report within a month.

The HC bench of Justice Gobinda Chandra Tagore and Justice Mohammad Ullah had passed the order while hearing a writ petition filed by rights

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Biman may stay caged

Cabinet in principle approves draft law keeping provision for control of nat'l flag carrier by civil aviation ministry

RASHIDUL HASAN and REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The cabinet yesterday approved a draft law allowing the aviation ministry to keep its control over Biman, even though the national flag carrier was turned into a public limited company in 2007 to make it profitable.

The cabinet at a meeting in principle approved the draft of Bangladesh Biman Corporation (Repeal) Bill, 2020 as the existing Bangladesh Biman Corporation Ordinance 1977 is no longer required since Biman was turned into a public limited company (PLC).

The meeting was chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The prime minister joined the virtual meeting through a videoconference from her official residence the Gono Bhaban while other cabinet members joined from the secretariat.

On July 23, 2007, during the regime of the military-backed caretaker government, Bangladesh Biman was turned into a PLC, starting anew its journey with the name Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd.

Under the Companies Act of 1994, Biman was supposed to run independently and take its own decisions.

After the elected government assumed power, there were allegations that the respective ministry was interfering in Biman's activities for financial gains and to get undue benefits.

There are also widespread allegations of corruption and irregularities against Biman and that the national flag carrier is suffering from a lack of accountability and transparency.

Several Biman officials said that Senior Secretary of Civil Aviation Ministry Mohibul Haque has been trying to turn the tide as he has taken various measures to eliminate corruption and ensure accountability.

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Bangladesh passes China with virus deaths

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has surpassed China in terms of the total number of deaths due to Covid-19 with the health directorate reporting 26 deaths in the past 24 hours till 8:30am yesterday.

The total number of Covid-19 related deaths yesterday rose to 4,759 which is 1.40 percent of all cases detected so far.

Since the virus first erupted in China, this country of the second-largest economy witnessed 4,734 deaths so far, according to John Hopkins University.

Bangladesh has now become the country with 29th highest death toll -- one step behind Asian-African country Egypt.

Among other South Asian nations, Pakistan is in 25th position with 6,383 deaths while India is in third position with 79,722 deaths.

In terms of the total number cases, India is in

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AFTER 30 YEARS OF AUTOCRACY'S DEMISE Democracy still remains a distant dream

MAHFUZ ANAM

To the question, "how democracy is faring in Bangladesh", a ruling party's answer has always been "we are a global example" and that of the opposition "we are the pits". Since we have had the same ruling party in power for the last 12 years at a stretch, the narrative of democracy's success has been unrelenting, and whatever little voice the real opposition has been allowed, "we are the pits" story continues.

But what say "WE, the PEOPLE"? Well, to the extent we are allowed to or safely can.

One method of gauging democracy's health would be to look at the institutions that embody it in a country like Bangladesh: the judiciary, the legislative and the executive branches of the state.

As for the judiciary, its battle for independence from the executive is best exemplified by the Greek mythology of Sisyphus who is forever condemned to roll a stone up a slope which, near the top, slips from his hand, and rolls down compelling him to start all over again.

Such has been the travail of our judiciary,

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DEMOCRACY
TODAY

taking steps forward through its judgements and suffering severe setbacks through executive chicanery and contrived entanglements. Appointment of judges and control over its budget remain the door through which the executive branch enters the world of judiciary and is able to exert substantial and, according to some, decisive influence.

A landmark event of 1999, popularly called the Masdar Hossain judgement passed by the Appellate Division gave a clear directive to the government to take all steps to ensure the judiciary's independence from the executive. As can be expected, this gave birth to an epic tussle between the two, with bureaucratic notes thickening the files and drafts of laws climbing up and down the stairs of the various ministries and going back and forth from the secretariat and the Supreme Court offices, literally ridding the mileage recorded by a famous Bangladeshi traveller, a former foreign minister.

All these activities, to paraphrase an expression of Shakespeare, was full of sound and fury signifying nothing, practically.

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BANGLADESH
UPDATE

1,812
New cases in 24hrs

3,39,332
Total cases

4,759
Deaths

2,43,155
Recoveries

GLOBAL
UPDATE

929,775
Deaths

29,272,460
Total cases

Threats send prisons on high alert nationwide

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The prison authority has beefed up security across the country following a threats from some unidentified miscreants over phone and letters of "snatching away militant inmates" from jails.

Following the threat, Inspector General (IG) of Prisons Brig Gen AKM Mustafa Kamal Pasha in a letter on Sunday instructed all prisons in the country to remain on high alert.

The prison chief also gave directions to form a special task force and keep a close watch on the movement of all inmates, specially militants, IS, top criminals and others accused of sensitive cases like those of the Border Guard Bangladesh.

Confirming the development, Colonel Md Abrar Hossain, additional inspector general of prisons, told The Daily Star yesterday that some miscreants have sent a letter and called over phone in Lalmonirhat district and threatened to snatch away militant inmates from jail.

"As the prison is a sensitive place, we have already beefed up security measures soon after we received the threat. We have also asked to form a special tasks force in every prison to deal such emergency situations," he said.

The tasks forces will brief the prisons inmates regarding the necessary steps, he added.

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With baskets full of laitta fish, fishermen wait for customers at Chattogram's Fishery Ghat area yesterday. A huge amount of the fish is being caught in the sea every day. Each kg was being sold for Tk 30-60. Laitta dry fish (shutki) is popular among many.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

India bans onions export

Move likely to send prices spiraling in Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

India yesterday banned export of onions with immediate effect, a move more than likely to create a crisis in the markets of Bangladesh.

The Indian Directorate General of Foreign Trade yesterday uploaded a notice on its website stating, "Exports of all variety of onions are prohibited with immediate effect."

India has been the main source of onion imports for Bangladesh.

India banned onion exports last year following a scarcity in its local market.

It caused a sharp rise in prices in Bangladesh, forcing the government to fly in onions even from Europe.

Bangladeshi domestic production can meet demand for 7-8 months and 7-8 lakh tonnes of onions are needed to be imported every year. Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission (BTTC) prepared a market report on the production and stock of onions.

The report says the country has a stock of 5.25 lakh tonnes of locally grown onions and it will require six lakh tonnes more to meet the domestic needs until the next main harvesting season, typically March-April.

It predicted that the neighbouring nation might impose export restrictions which could increase the price of onions in the local market, the BTTC reasoned.

The report said Indian onions accounts for 95 percent of what was annually

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