DHAKA WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 16, 2020

'HUGE SETBACK'
Gates Foundation says Covid-19 pushed back global health progress 20yrs
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BANGLADESH UPDATE
1,724 New cases in 24hrs | 3,41,056 Total cases | 4,802 Deaths | 2,45,594 Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE
934,230 Deaths | 29,528,057 Total cases

Onion makes consumers cry

Prices double within hours amid panic buying, manipulation as India suspends export

HELEMUL ALAM

Onion prices have shot up dramatically in the country due to panic buying by consumers and price gouging by wholesalers in the immediate aftermath of India's decision on Monday to suspend onion exports.

News had broken of India's decision on Monday evening and many consumers in the capital, with the skyrocketing price of onions last year fresh in their minds, rushed to buy onions and stockpile on Monday night.

Since news of India's decision spread, onions have dominated discussions in social media, tea stalls, kitchen markets, and households over the past 24 hours.

India's decision had come on the day that Bangladesh exported hilsa to West Bengal for the first time.

From social media to tea stall, kitchen market to households, onion was the centre of all discussions in last 24 hours as the price of onion started to soaring as soon as the news of Indian government suspending onion exports spread on Monday evening.

The panic persisted even as Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission (BTTC) officials said the country still has a surplus of onions in stock to meet local demand.

Meanwhile, UNB reported yesterday that Bangladesh requested the Indian government to withdraw the suspension as soon as possible. State Minister for Foreign Affairs M Shahriar Alam said Bangladesh raised the issue with the Indian Ministry of External Affairs through the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi, immediately after being informed of the suspension.

The price of onions leapt nearly twofold by yesterday morning in kitchen markets across the country to Tk 100 per kg from Tk 55 of on

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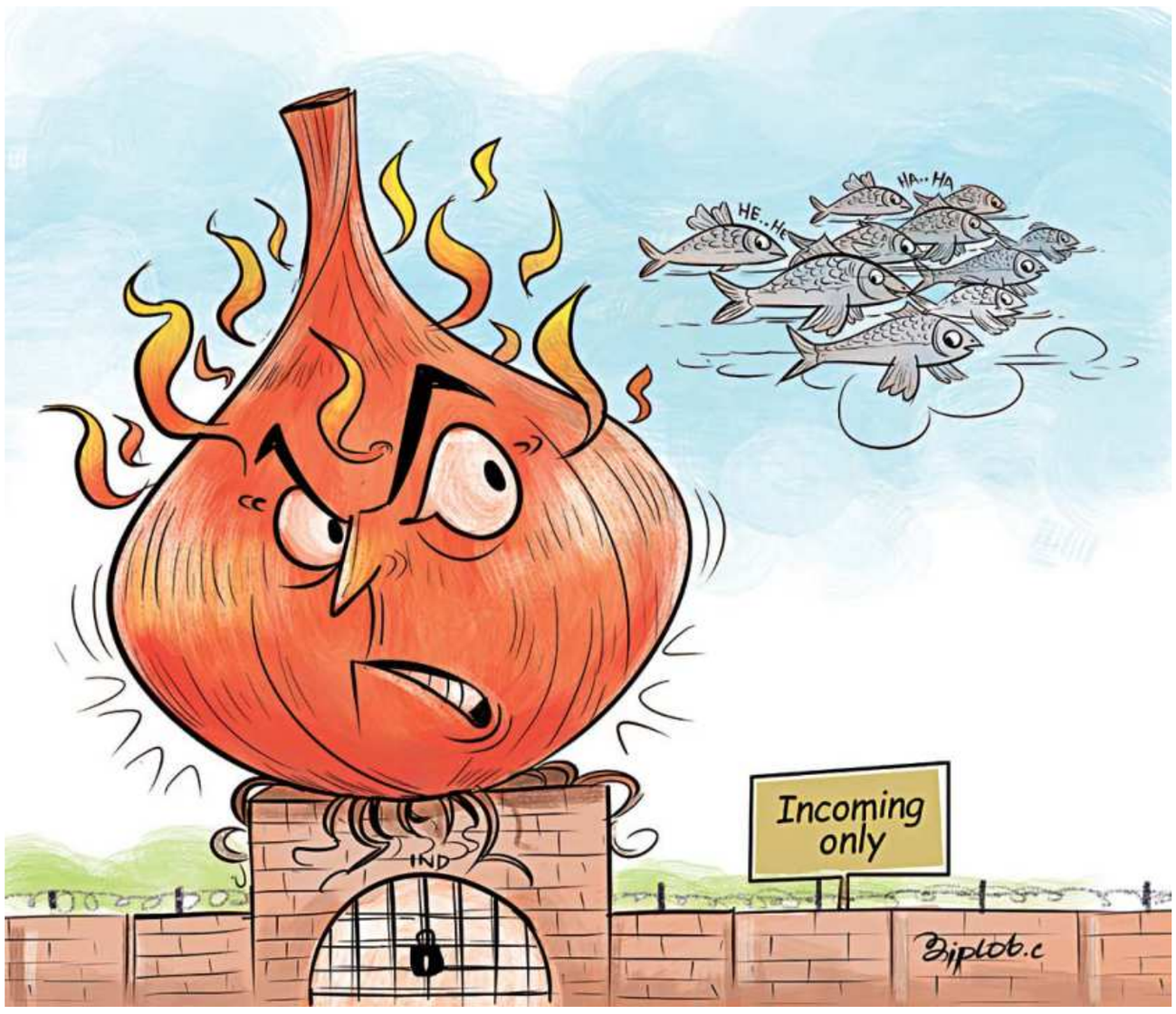

Khaleda's sentence suspension extended

She can now stay out for 6 more months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has extended for six months its earlier order that suspended the jail sentence of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and released her from jail.

The home ministry issued a gazette notification in this regard yesterday.

The notification said Khaleda will receive treatment at her home and she cannot go abroad during this period.

The government has suspended Khaleda's jail sentence as per Section 401(1) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) following legal opinions from the law ministry, added the notification.

The decision was made following the application of the family members of the BNP chief seeking an

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BUSINESS

ADB

Bangladesh economy starts to bounce back, says ADB

The Asian Development Bank yesterday said Bangladesh's economy would see a gradual recovery in the first two quarters of the current fiscal year.

"With the cautious reopening of the economy since May and subdued global economic conditions, recovery is expected to be gradual in the first two quarters," according to the Asian Development Outlook 2020 Update.

The Manila-based lender, however, revised down the country's growth prospects for FY2021 to 6.8 percent.

STORY ON B1

BJMC GOLDEN HANDSHAKE

Workers skeptical, feel harassed

Allege hassles in completing paperwork for due wages, benefits; cheque disbursement starts

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

There was a lavish ceremony inside Karim Jute Mills Corporation on the outskirts of Dhaka yesterday to mark the disbursement of due wages and other benefits of the laid-off and retired workers of 25 shuttered state-run jute mills.

Jute Secretary Mohammad Lokman Hossain termed it a "historic occasion" during the ceremony also attended by Jute Minister Golam Dastagir Gazi.

The authorities handed over cheques to 30 laid-off workers during the ceremony. Those 30 are the first workers to receive their dues through bank cheques since the government decided to close down the 25 state-owned mills on July 1.

But around a hundred workers and their family members, who were not allowed inside the factory, were more concerned about getting their dues after being subjected to different kind of hassles to complete the paper works.

There are 1,759 laid off, 612 retired and 2,625 substitute workers in Karim Jute Mills scheduled to get their long-pending dues.

Talking to The Daily Star, most of the workers said they were still suspicious of the payment procedure and alleged that they were being harassed by the officials of Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporations (BJMC) every day in the name of processing their payments.

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ARAB-ISRAEL RECOGNITION

Trump presides over historic deals

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump yesterday presided over the signing ceremony of historic diplomatic deals between Israel and two Gulf Arab nations that could herald a dramatic shift in Middle East power dynamics and give him a boost ahead of the November election.

In a White House ceremony aimed at showcasing presidential statesmanship, Trump hosted more than 700 guests on the South Lawn to witness the sealing of the agreements between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was to sign agreements with Emirati Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan and Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif Al Zayani.

The deals would make them the third and fourth Arab states to take such steps to normalise ties since Israel signed peace treaties with Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994.

The agreements, which have drawn bitter condemnation from the Palestinians, mark an improbable diplomatic victory for Trump.

Feeling increasingly abandoned,

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ABRAR FAHAD MURDER CASE

All 25 accused to face trial

22, now in jail, plead not guilty

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A tribunal in Dhaka yesterday framed charges against all 25 accused Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology students in the Abrar Fahad murder case.

Twenty-two of the accused, now in jail, pleaded not guilty and demanded justice after Judge Abu Zafar Md Kamruzzaman of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 of Dhaka read out the charges to them.

They are Mehedi Hasan Russel, Muhtasim Fuad, Anik Sarkar Apu, Mehedi Hasan Robein, Ifti Mosharraf Shokal, Moniruzzaman Monir, Meftahul Islam Zion, Majedur Rahman alias Majed, Mujahidur Rahman, Khandaker Tabakkarul Islam Tanvir, Hossain Mohammad Toha, Akash Hossain, Shamim Billah, ASM Nazmus Sadat, Moaz Abu Hurayra, Muntasir Al Jemi, Amit Saha, Ishtiaq Ahmed Munna, Mizanur Rahman alias Mizan, SM Mahmud alias Setu, Shamsul Arefin Rafat and Morshed Amartya Islam.

Before that, the tribunal dismissed all the petitions submitted by lawyers to discharge them from the case.

The court set September 20 to start the trial of the case with the recording of the complainant's testimony.

The court also issued arrest warrants for the three other accused -- Mustaba Rafid, Muhammad Morshed-Uz-Zaman Mondol alias Jishan and Ehtashamul Rabbi Tanim -- who are on the run.

Abrar, a second-year student of electrical and electronic engineering department of Buet, died after he was brutally beaten allegedly by some Chhatra League men at Sher-e-Bangla hall of the university in the early hours of October 7, 2019.

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30-plus too can apply for govt jobs

Considering pandemic, govt to relax rules for job seekers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The public administration ministry is going to issue a gazette notification within a day or two to allow those who turned 30 on March 25 or later to apply for government jobs.

"Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has already approved a summary sent by the ministry in this regard. So, we are hoping to issue a gazette notification on this very soon," State Minister for Public Administration Farhad Hossain told The Daily Star yesterday.

The state minister said the prime minister had done many things for different professionals who suffered due to the pandemic.

"That's why when we raised the issue that many youths, who have crossed 30 years of age, did not get the opportunity to apply

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PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Transport workers pass time playing with their fellow workers as trucks wait in a long queue on Dhaka-Aricha highway to board ferries at Paturia Ferry Terminal in Manikganj around 11:00am yesterday. Truckers said they had to wait for over six hours for their turn as the number of vehicles taking Paturia-Daulatdia ferry route increased significantly since Monday after the suspension of ferry services on Shimulia-Kathalbari route. However, buses and other passenger vehicles did not have to wait for long as the authorities gave preference to them.

NID CARD FORGERY

EC officials compromising server security

Sources say some data entry employees sell criminals passwords

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR AND MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Many field level polls officials share passwords of a software with data entry officers for corrections to national identity cards, which ultimately gives criminals the scope for forging the cards.

A section of the data entry officers, in exchange for money, help members of a gang commit the forgery, said EC sources.

Talking on the issue, top officials of the Election Commission's NID wing said they would soon start a combing operation at the field level election offices to oversee NID services-related activities.

Officials at upazila election offices and the wing said field level officers get passwords to access a software called Card Management System, which is linked to the EC's main server.

"This create scope for data entry officers to engage in various malpractices," said an NID wing official.

Upazila election officials also have the passwords as they need it for voter registration and correcting people's NID cards. The EC is trying to use a one-time password to stop the malpractices, said NID wing Director General Brig Gen Mohammad Sidul Islam.

"If anyone enters the system, it will automatically take a photo of the person. We will also keep track of how much time a person will be spending on the system," he said yesterday.

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