

SRI LANKA TOUR POSTPONED

Tigers to stay put as cricket boards disagree over quarantine protocols
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"Rivers should have such custodians that should anything happen to rivers, the custodians can be held accountable."
BELA CHIEF EXECUTIVE SYEDA RIZWANA HASAN



"It is a sign of President Trump's disdain for America's working families."
US SPEAKER NANCY PELOSI ON TRUMP AVOIDING TAXES FOR YEARS



"They have decided to betray this commitment [to form a government]."
FRENCH PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON ATTACKS LEBANON LEADERS PAGE 6

COVID-19 STIMULUS PACKAGE

Disparity in disbursement

Quick for big industries, slow for SMEs; one fourth of funds used in 4 months

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and WASIM BIN HABIB

Implementation of government's stimulus package, announced to absorb the economic shock from the coronavirus pandemic, saw a mixed progress as around 26 percent of the massive Tk 111,141-crore scheme was disbursed in four months till July.

For sectors like export-oriented and large industries, the disbursement of the funds was quick. But the needy small and medium enterprises and farm sectors are yet to avail much of the support, making it difficult for them to pull through the losses incurred by the pandemic.

The government rolled out 20 stimulus packages after it reported the maiden cases of coronavirus infections on March 8. The combined support now accounted for 3.7 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

The packages have been provided in the form of low-cost loans to micro, small, medium and large industries and services, food security, social protection and special allowances as the pandemic-induced shutdown paralysed the economy, destroyed millions of jobs and created new poor.

Four months after its launch, around Tk 29,200 crore was doled out to the fund recipients as of July, according to the latest progress report of the stimulus packages, supervised by the Prime Minister's Office.

The government's economic rescue scheme, channelled and executed using the banking networks, will be implemented by both government and private banks as per the direction of Bangladesh Bank.

"We will review the stimulus package after the end of the first quarter of the current fiscal year. Then we will take measures as per our review," said Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal.

"If we find any problem or delay in any of the packages, we will solve it," he told The Daily Star.

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GOOD PROGRESS

- Export-oriented sector, especially RMG (Tk 5,000cr for 1,992 beneficiaries) **99%** disbursed
- Large industries and services (Tk 30,000cr for 1,002 beneficiaries) **77%** disbursed
- Free distribution of food materials (Tk 2,503cr for 2.54cr beneficiaries) Fully disbursed
- Export Development Fund (EDF) (Tk 12,750cr for 1361 beneficiaries) Tk 9,328cr disbursed
- Cash distribution to special groups (Tk 1,258cr for 50 lakh families) Disbursement 35 lakh families

SLOW PROGRESS

- Cottage, micro, small and medium enterprise sector Tk 1,491cr out of Tk 20,000cr disbursed
- Free housing for the homeless Tk 33.34cr out of Tk 2,310cr disbursed
- Special refinancing scheme for agriculture Tk 1,095cr out of Tk 5,000cr disbursed
- Refinance loans for farmers & small traders Tk 286cr out of Tk 3,000cr disbursed
- Compensation to health workers, officials Tk 2cr out of Tk 850cr disbursed

DISBURSEMENT YET TO START

- Employment generation scheme
- Subsidy for exempting partial interest of loans of commercial banks
- Credit risk sharing scheme for SME sector
- Special honorarium for health workers (if get affected or die)



Place detailed report on returnees

PM asks Momen

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen to place a comprehensive report over sending back the stranded expatriates to their workplaces abroad.

She gave the instruction while presiding over the weekly cabinet meeting held virtually. Some 141,000 Bangladeshi expatriates returned home this year amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

The PM joined the meeting from the Gono Bhaban, while her cabinet colleagues got connected from the Bangladesh Secretariat.

Briefing reporters after
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HASINA, MODI TO MEET IN DECEMBER -- PAGE 2

Shahed gets life term in arms case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Regent Group Chairman Mohammad Shahed has been sentenced to life imprisonment in an arms case.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Special Tribunal-1 in Dhaka delivered the verdict in presence of Shahed at the courtroom.

Shahed was also given seven years' imprisonment for possessing bullets but that punishment will be run concurrently, the judge said.

Before pronouncing the judgement, Shahed, an accused in over 76 cases, was produced before the court amid tight security.

According to the judgement, the accused was given the highest punishment as the prosecution proved charges brought against Shahed.

In his observation, the judge said Shahed was a great fraud in disguise of gentleness. "So, the accused does not

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'Neo JMB' rising again?

Declares new chief, Majlis-e-Sura members

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Militant outfit "Neo JMB" has declared its new chief and brought changes in the top leadership as the IS-inspired terror group is trying to get back on its feet by reorganising its structure.

The organisational name of the new chief is Abul Abbas Al-Bangali Hafizullah, who is of Bangladeshi origin and now staying abroad, according to highly placed sources.

The declaration, made in encrypted channels in the first week of this month, however, has caused the outfit to split. Members of one faction, who were the followers of previous chief Abu Mohammad, have stopped showing activities in their secret channels, the sources said.

Counterterrorism officials who are following the outfit's activities said they were not getting any trace of Abu Mohammad's followers since the declaration of the new chief.

"We are suspecting that the faction led by Abu Mohammad might have created a separate wing," a high official of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of DMP told The Daily Star recently.

The ultra-radical offshoot of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh -- "Neo JMB" as called by law enforcement officials -- also brought changes in Majlis-e-Sura, the central governing body.

According to sources, the new Sura members are Abu Amer Al Bangali, Abu Ruham Al Bengali, Abu Adnan Al Bangali, Abu Dujana Al Bangali and Abu Ahsan Al Bangali.

Like the new chief, most of them are staying out of the country.

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TIB demands review of Digital Security Act

Says 'repressive' provisions must be dropped to ensure press freedom, free flow of info

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) yesterday demanded that the Digital Security Act 2018 be reviewed with its "repressive" provisions dropped to ensure the free flow of information and press freedom.

Journalists and academics while attending a virtual discussion organised by TIB also said that the government's limiting of information was a big hurdle for universal access to information.

They also said that journalists should increase their skills and capacity for making investigative reports to make the authorities concerned accountable. Media houses should also encourage and help journalists to do more investigative reports.

Currently, the country's media is experiencing a suffocating situation, said

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Another 32 migrants land in jail

They too were detained under section 54

ZYMA ISLAM and CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER

Another 32 migrants, who have returned to the country recently, were thrown into jail yesterday after completion of their quarantine period.

This batch of the migrants landed in Dhaka on September 13. According to their families, the returnees are victims of international traffickers, who engage in cross-border human smuggling.

There are two women in this group of returnees.

They were arrested under Section 54 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, said Officer-in-charge of Turag Police Station Nurul Mottakin. Magistrate Debdash Chandra Adhikari accepted the police's application and sent them to prison.

"They were arrested because they were incarcerated in Syria, and as a result, they have committed the crime of ruining the image of our country," said Mottakin.

However, when asked why they were detained in Syria, OC Mottakin could not say the reason. "We are investigating the matter and will know it soon."

In spite of not knowing particulars of the "crimes" committed in Syria or Lebanon, the forwarding letter composed by the Turag police states, "If these people are allowed to walk free after quarantine, there is a possibility that they will spill all over the country and engage in crimes like robbery, terrorism, murder and anarchy. Since they were in detention abroad, and ruined the image of our country, lawful action must be taken against them for public safety."

"This group consists of people deported from Syria. They were all trying to reach Italy and got detained in Syria at different times between

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Trump paid no income taxes for yrs

NYT reports

AFP, Washington

US President Donald Trump on Sunday faced allegations that he paid little or no federal income tax for years before he came to power, as his cloudy financial past stoked controversy ahead of the first election debate.

The New York Times alleged the billionaire president paid just \$750 federal income taxes in 2016 -- the year he won the White House -- and 2017, and no federal income taxes at all in 10 of the previous 15 years because he reported losing more money than he made.

Trump, who immediately dismissed the accusations as "totally fake news," is readying to come face to face with his Democratic opponent Joe Biden at a pivotal live debate on Tuesday.

The Republican leader has broken with
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Migrants seeking to go to Saudi Arabia block Sonargaon intersection on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue near the office of Saudia yesterday, demanding air tickets. The protesters, who desperately want to join work in the KSA, demonstrated on the street for hours after 2:00pm.

PHOTO:
AMRAN HOSSAIN

RIVER GRABBING Protector became perpetrator

Say speakers about govt during virtual discussion marking World Rivers Day 2020

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government, alongside the private actors, itself encroaches on rivers it is supposed to protect, speakers at a discussion said yesterday.

The virtual discussion was organised jointly by BELA, Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD), and The Daily Star, marking the World Rivers Day 2020.

Addressing the roundtable titled "Protection of River to Save Agricultural Economy, Life-livelihood and Environment: Role of State and Citizens", the speakers said while the government claims to have good intentions of saving rivers, it is also destroying rivers by its lack of action.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA), said, "You [government] have the power to fine and close factories, but the Savar tannery estate still continues to ruin the Dhaleshwari."

She observed that rivers should have such custodians who can be held accountable if anything happen to rivers.

Sharmeen Murshid, executive director of Brotee, a non-government organisation, and also a member of National River Conservation Commission (NRCC), said, "A large section of occupiers consists of government institutions. The administration should have identified and evicted them long ago."

Tuhin Wadud, director of Riverine People, and also a teacher of Begum Rokeya University, said, "How is it that criminals can occupy river land to do farming and nobody

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