

ARMED FORCES DAY

PM thanks three chiefs of staff for their role during the pandemic

UNB, Dhaka

Chiefs of the three military services yesterday paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on occasion of Armed Forces Day.

Chief of Army Staff General Aziz Ahmed, Chief of Naval Staff Admiral M Shaheen Iqbal and Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Masihuzzaman Serniabat met the PM at Gono Bhaban in the morning.

In the beginning of the meeting, the PM greeted them on occasion of Armed Forces Day, said PM's Deputy Press Secretary Hasan Jahid Tusher at a press briefing.

She mentioned the glorious role of the country's armed forces in checking the coronavirus pandemic and different natural disasters.

Sheikh Hasina extended her thanks to every member of the armed forces for standing beside people during the pandemic.

She particularly thanked the army chief and every member of Bangladesh Army for standing beside people by checking the outbreak and raising public awareness about the pandemic.

The PM also thanked navy and air force chiefs, and each member of Bangladesh Navy and Bangladesh Air Force for their humanitarian work, including emergency evacuation of Covid-19 patients.

She said the Awami League government has taken all steps in the last 12 years to ensure the armed forces can face geopolitical and military challenges

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Amid her hectic day schedule, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is known to make time for fishing in Gono Bhaban's pond sometimes. This photo of her, taken a few days ago, was shared on social media yesterday.

PHOTO COURTESY: AWAMI LEAGUE'S FACEBOOK PAGE

YOUTH INNOVATION CHALLENGE 2020
Youths awarded for their ideas to reshape society

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After a month of submissions and selection, three ideas were awarded yesterday in "Young People Igniting Transformation - Youth Innovation Challenge 2020", an ideation competition jointly organised by ActionAid Bangladesh and The Daily Star.

Sakib Nasir Serniabat, a student of Dhaka University (DU), developed the community-based organisation Circular to positively change people's behaviour and practices regarding waste management and plastic consumption.

Anindita Atoshi and Orobi Bakhtiar, students of DU's Institute of Business Administration, formed the organisation Prarombho to train transgender people in making readymade garments, and provide basic education and healthcare, so they can start small to medium sized businesses of their own.

Md Momin Sarkar, a student of Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, launched e-Krishi Clinic, a digital platform that raises awareness about crop disease and management, and provides all kinds of agricultural services.

The competition was launched in October, and over roughly a month, youths all over the country submitted 170 ideas to reshape society in three broad categories: leadership, policy and practices; public service and Covid-19 response; and skill development and employment.

Yesterday, ActionAid Bangladesh and The Daily Star hosted a webinar on "Bangladeshi youth igniting transformation - today's innovation, tomorrow's revolution", to select the best ideas among the submissions.

In the last month, organisers started selecting top five ideas to be presented before judges through the webinar, where many social leaders, entrepreneurs, academicians and business personalities participated.

They advised the innovators and discussed the importance of youth-led innovation to transform Bangladesh's economy and social fabric.

Through a meticulous judging process, Circular, Prarombho and e-Krishi Clinic were declared champion, runner-up and second runner-up, respectively.

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Global efforts needed to tackle Covid-19

Says foreign minister

BSS, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen yesterday called for collective global efforts in combating the Covid-19 pandemic as the world is facing the threat of a second surge of the deadly virus.

"The world needs collective actions to win this fight. We must not forget that unity is our strength, which will lead us to our ultimate victory," he said.

The foreign minister was speaking at the virtual "Scholarly Conclave" on the occasion of Eid-e-Miladunnabi, marking the day of birth and passing away of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM), organised by FBCCI.

Momen urged the business community to enhance its constructive and result-oriented engagements with the governments in response and recovery phases amid and post Covid-19 pandemic situation.

Mentioning that Bangladesh, under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, has responded swiftly and vigorously to the pandemic, Momen said, "However, we are not complacent about the containment of the virus. Rather, we are taking due measures to tackle the second wave of the pandemic".

Noting that the Prophet taught a great deal on ethical trading, he said, "That is why we should always carry on the mettle that whatever business or trade we do, we must be ethical, honest and trustworthy."

He urged the business community to ensure quality of services, provide best value and optimal benefit to clients, community and eventually to mankind.

The foreign minister said the Prophet was the harbinger in showing tolerance and compassion. "Let us redouble our efforts to banish hatred and conflict, while spreading the message of solidarity, love, peace and tolerance among all," he said.

Padma Bridge likely to open in first half of 2022: officials

38th span of long-cherished project installed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The long-cherished Padma Bridge is likely to be opened for public in the first half of 2022, as the installation of all spans is expected to be completed next month, officials said.

The current deadline of Tk 30,193 crore fast-track project is June 2021.

Once in service, the 6.15km-long bridge will connect the capital with 21 south-western districts. It is expected to boost the country's gross domestic product by 1.2 percent.

The overall progress of the project was 82 percent, Bridge Division said on November 19. The progress of the main bridge and river training was 91 percent and 75 percent, it added.

Meanwhile, the 38th span of the bridge was installed yesterday, making 4.7 kilometre of the structure visible.

The span linked the first and second pillars of the bridge at Mawa end in Munshiganj around 2:30pm, a correspondent reported from

Munshiganj.

The authorities started the process of installing the span seven days ago and removed soil from the middle of the two pillars to make the area useable for a huge crane.

Yesterday, the crane sailed with the span around 9:20am from the construction yard and reached near the pillar within half an hour and completed all works within 2:30pm, project officials said.

"One more span would be

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Five divisions may experience rainfall

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh Meteorological Department yesterday forecast rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind at one or two places over five divisions of the country -- Khulna, Barishal, Rajshahi, Dhaka and Chattogram -- in the next 24 hours, commencing 9am.

A seasonal low lies over South Bay, extending its trough to Northeast Bay, said the Met office. This may cause light to moderate fog at many places over the country between midnight and morning.

Weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country. Night and day temperatures may fall slightly across the country, the bulletin said.

Vengeful politics not good for democracy

Says Obaidul Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said their party never engages in politics of vengeance as it is not good for democracy.

"Awami League is the most tolerant political party of the country. It witnessed the brutality of August 15 massacre, November 3 jail killings and August 21 grenade attacks but did not do politics of vengeance," he said while inaugurating BRTC double-decker bus service on Dhaka-Narayanganj route.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, joined the function through videoconferencing from his official residence on parliament premises.

The minister said democracy is a developing process as it flourishes through participation of all political parties. But the irony is that though

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Educated people indulging in graft 'inhuman': ACC chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Educated people indulging in corruption is inhuman, and such individuals possess barbaric traits, said AFM Aminul Islam, commissioner of Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

"Everyone wants to see their child as a judge, doctor, engineer or top government official. It's good, but raising children as good human beings is also a responsibility of parents," he said.

He said this at a virtual discussion on the 16th anniversary of ACC yesterday, reads a press release.

Giving emphasis on moral education, ACC Chairperson Iqbal Mahmood said proper moral education is needed at family and school levels to build a corruption-free country.

Iqbal said, although the whole world, including Bangladesh, is dealing with the pandemic, a section of people is carrying out corrupt activities.

"That's why scams like providing fake masks and Covid-19 tests, and misappropriating relief have come to the fore," he said, adding ACC took prompt action in this regard.

Underscoring the need to create social movement, he said to root out corruption, people from all strata of life need to work together.

"We vow to bring corruption down together," he added.

He welcomed constructive criticism, saying such criticism shows the right path.

Four arrested with counterfeit revenue stamps in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detectives have arrested four alleged members of a fraud gang, which produced counterfeit revenue and postal stamps and circulated those in markets, in Dhaka.

The arrestees were identified as Ashrafuzzaman alias Akash (45), Morsalin Sordar Sohail (30), Roni Sheikh (25) and Abdul Aziz (23).

They were held in separate drives in Ashulia and Paltan in Dhaka. The stamps worth Tk 18 crore were seized from them, AKM Hafiz Akter, additional commissioner (DB) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told reporters at a press briefing at DMP media centre yesterday.

The official said the gang had been producing various types of counterfeit stamps and other official documents for a long time.

It costs around Tk 15 to produce a page of stamps and the gang used to sell it at Tk 25-30, he said.



Over a hundred battery-powered three-wheelers were seized during an ongoing drive by Khulna City Corporation and the city's traffic department against such unlicensed vehicles. The drive started on November 17, and the seized vehicles are being kept on the city's Public Hall premises.

PHOTO: STAR



Firefighters saw off a heavy branch to recover a couple of cars trapped under it in front the Chattogram Medical College Hospital. Sometime around yesterday noon, the branch suddenly fell on top of the cars resting at a parking spot.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Guard confesses rape, murder of house help

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A security guard of a building in the capital's Dakkhinkhan area has confessed to a magistrate that he had strangled a 15-year-old house help to death after raping her on November 8.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Sarafuzzaman Ansary on November 9 recorded the confessional statements under section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure after Sub-inspector Rezia Khatun produced the accused, Mohan, before his chamber.

On November 8, the girl went to the rooftop of the seven-storey building to water the plants early in the morning. Mohan (20) followed her there and raped her. He then strangled her to death and threw the body in a nearby ditch.

According to police, the incident was recorded on CCTV located at a close-by building. Law enforcers recovered the body the same day. Later, a case was filed with Dakkhinkhan Police Station under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, said SI Rezia Khatun.

Police arrested Mohan in connection with the murder the same day.

DU solar power project stuck at square one

UNB, Dhaka

Even after two years, a government move to generate solar power using the rooftops of Dhaka University buildings has made little headway.

In early 2019, Dhaka Power Distribution Company (DPDC) had approached the Dhaka University authorities with the plan. It sought to use the rooftops of the university's 72 buildings for solar power generation. DPDC had also selected Bengal Solar, a private firm, to execute the project -- at its own cost -- under the independent power producer (IPP) model, with a promise to purchase electricity from the company for 20 years.

Prof Saiful Haque, director of Institute of Energy at Dhaka University, who has been coordinating the scheme on behalf of DU, said the rooftops have a potential to generate about 5 MW of solar power.

But nearly two years on, the project is still stuck in the starting block. Only recently, and that too after a long persuasion, did a tripartite meeting take place between the project's private sponsor, the rooftop provider, and the power purchaser. However, the issue of tariff has remained a bone of contention between the stakeholders, sources inside DPDC and DU said.

Sources said while Bengal Solar offered 11 US cents a unit, DPDC was asking for 7.5 US cents for the same. At one stage -- after the government introduced the net-metering policy to facilitate consumers' sale of unconsumed solar power to distribution companies -- DPDC officials skipped the negotiations and offered DU to sell the electricity under the new policy, which caused another delay in settling the issue.

Due to the excessive delay, DU authorities recently wrote a letter to the Power Secretary to intervene and settle the power tariff issue and expedite the project execution, UNB has learned.

When contacted, DPDC chief engineer Mohiuddin Ahmed said they're

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