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Tk 6,200cr metro plan okayed

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The advisory committee on economic affairs yesterday approved a proposal for construction of a subway in Dhaka by a private sector firm with an estimated cost of Tk 6,200 crore.

The underground rail system will be constructed on Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) basis under the supervision of Bangladesh Railway, meeting sources said.

"We have approved the proposal to include in the PICOM (Private Infrastructure Committee) list and now the remaining processes will be done to implement the project," Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam, who chaired the meeting, said.

The government will now float fresh international tender inviting proposals and at the same time the Planning Commission will prepare a detailed study on the project, sources said.

Once built, the subway will save Tk 5,319 crore a year through saving human working hours and stopping wastage of imported fuel due to traffic congestions, says the proposal made by the Board of Investment (BoI).

While the experts say that it requires for any mega city to have roads covering at least 25-30 percent of its area for easy traffic movement, the

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DGFI CAR TORCHING 9 convicted RU students surrender

RU CORRESPONDENT

Nine Rajshahi University (RU) students convicted of torching the vehicle of assistant director of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), during the August 2007 violence, surrendered before a Rajshahi court yesterday.

Rajshahi Metropolitan Magistrate Ruhul Amin ordered them to be sent to jail around 10:45am after they surrendered before the court. A Rajshahi Speedy Trial Court convicted them of the crime on December 12.

The court had sentenced 10 RU students and the driver of a former RU vice-chancellor Prof Faisal Islam Faruque to three years' rigorous imprisonment each. Ataur Rahman, the driver, is now serving his term in Rajshahi Central Jail.

Abu Sayem, the other convicted student of Bhasha o Sanskriti (Language and Culture) department and the general secretary of Udichi RU unit, was sent to jail Sunday after he surrendered before the same court.

Tight security measures were taken in and around the court yesterday. Law enforcers allowed none except journalists, lawyers and family members of the convicted students inside the court.

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Robbers tunnel to bank locker

Rented hotel room above Brac Bank for one month to perform heist

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Robbers made off with gold ornaments and other valuables, primarily estimated at several crores of taka, breaking open 75 safe deposit lockers in the Dhanmondi branch of BRAC Bank Ltd in the capital during the last weekend.

Police said the robbers entered the locker room cutting through its ceiling, as they found a large hole cut through the floor of a hotel room right above the locker room.

The branch of Brac Bank is situated on the first floor of a building which houses Hotel Nidmahal Residential right above the bank.

Police suspect the robbers rented six rooms of the hotel and entered the bank's locker room through the hole on the floor of the room right above it. They also suspect the robbers stayed in the hotel for more than a month to plan the heist.

Bank officials said 75 lockers out of a total of 132 were found broken, 15 of which were not in use at the time of the heist. But they could not immediately determine the exact value of the heist.

Even many locker renters could not immediately say the value of the gold they had deposited in their

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A policeman looks at the hole in the floor above Brac Bank Dhanmondi branch through which the robbers entered and swept clean 75 lockers of the bank.

PHOTO: STAR

TORCHING ARMY CAR DU students among 25 charge-sheeted

DU CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday pressed charges against 25 people, including Dhaka University (DU) students and some outsiders, in a case of torching an army car at Shahbagh intersection during August violence last year.

Sub-Inspector Asgar Ali Khan of Shahbagh Police Station, also the investigation officer of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka, yesterday afternoon.

Of the chargesheeted accused, seven DU students—Kazi Muhammad Zahidul Islam Biplob, Deen Islam Angel, Rafiqul Islam Sujon, Liton Mahmud, Manobendra Dev, Deen Islam and Hasanuzzaman—are now in jail.

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BDR gets nod to import more rice

Prices spiral down further

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday decided to exempt Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) from public procurement rules in importing 1 more lakh metric tons of rice to improve supply in the local markets.

Meanwhile, the price of rice at the retailers' yesterday went down by Tk 1 a kg while that of edible oil in both wholesale and retail markets remained unchanged after rising steeply over the last two weeks.

At a meeting chaired by Finance Adviser AB Mirza Azizul Islam, the Advisers' Committee on Economic Affairs yesterday also decided that

the paramilitary force would be given retrospective exemption from the Public Procurement Regulations (PPR) in case of the previously approved import of 90,000 tonnes of rice, 71,000 tonnes of which have already been imported.

Asked why BDR was chosen over government agencies like Trading Corporation of Bangladesh in the import, Mirza Azizul Islam said the border force has already shown success in this particular case.

The committee also relaxed PPR for Rural Electrification Board in buying 5,000 electric transformers

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Sedition case against Jamaat leaders dismissed

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday dismissed the sedition case against Jamaat leaders Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed and Abdul Quader Molla and former Islami Bank chairman Shah Md Abdul Hannan as the police did not take government approval for recording the case.

However, police passed the blame on the complainant saying that he should have taken government approval before filing the case.

The legal experts said it is the duty of police not the complainant to take government approval before moving the sedition case.

The court in its order said the case was dismissed as police did not take approval from the government for recording the case.

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VOTER LIST Remaining 75pc work to be done in next 6 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) has completed 25 percent of the field level task of preparing voter list with photographs in the last five months while it plans to complete the job in the next five to six months.

Till Saturday, 2.23 crore voters were enrolled with photographs, and registering around six crore more voters will be completed by June, sources in the EC Secretariat said.

The field level task that began in August last year gained momentum in December with around 50 percent of the voters enrolled so far listed last month.

In August, the EC registered 6.58 lakh voters, in September 12.59 lakh, in October 18.30 lakh, in November 66.41 lakh and in December 1.02 crore, says a report on month-wise voter registration progress.

The report says that on an average, four lakh voters are being listed every day in 85 areas where the process is going on. Around 10,000 laptops and the same number of other accessories are being used for this. Over one crore voters are supposed to be registered each month.

Satisfied with the progress of the field level task, the EC hopes that if everything goes smoothly, it will be completed even before June since the number of voters will be more

or less eight crore.

Talking to reporters yesterday, Election Commissioner Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakawat Hussain said the EC is determined to finalise the voter list within October as per its roadmap.

In Dhaka City Corporation areas, 20 lakh voters were registered with photographs so far, and the number might total more than 40 lakh, he said.

The EC is yet to decide whether it would now publish draft voter list of the areas where the field level tasks have been completed, or publish the draft lists at a time.

It however plans to publish the draft voter list of four city corporation

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Dream of having pre-1/11 anarchic politics won't come true

Observes Mainul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law and Information Adviser Mainul Hossain yesterday launched an oblique attack on politicians saying it would be futile to dream about returning to pre-1/11 politics of "looting and anarchy".

"The dream of bringing back the tradition of plundering will not come true...the nation doesn't want to go back to pre-1/11 days of hartal, anarchy and vandalism," Mainul said.

The adviser was speaking at a seminar titled "Freedom of Mass Media and People's Right to Information" at Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB).

He said without naming anyone

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ISN'T ANYONE LISTENING?... Smog still hangs over the playground of Bakchar Government Primary School at Shyampur in the capital yesterday. The Daily Star ran two stories on pollution around the school on November 12 and December 7.

PHOTO: STAR

OPTICAL FIBRE CABLE-SNAP BTTB group found active for illegal VoIP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) officials were allegedly involved in the frequent snapping of the country's lone fibre-optic cable connection to the information super highway.

Sources in the intelligence agencies said the suspects arrested in this connection had admitted to the interrogators that they had links with BTTB officials. Intelligence agencies had been conducting a thorough investigation into the cable-snapping incidents.

Sources said the BTTB officials encouraged the illegal activity

following drives against the use of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP). Law enforcers allegedly detected the involvement of BTTB officials with VoIP businesses earlier.

The country's Internet and overseas telecom services had the last such disruption on November 13 for around 15 hours. The optical-fibre cable near Cox's Bazar and Feni was snapped. Since its installation in 2006, there have been 39 cases of disruption. BTTB had claimed the disruptions were "an act of sabotage".

Talking to The Daily Star Lt Col Zia Ur Rashid Safdar, general manager (security and surveillance) of BTTB, said, "As far as I know, the

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JOURNOS, STAFF Irregular salary worries editors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Media Steering Committee comprising editors of the print and electronic media yesterday expressed deep concern over the irregular payment of salaries to journalists, employees and workers of different print and electronic media.

The committee in a meeting at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday also expressed concern at rise in the prices of newsprint, ink and other costs.

Chaired by the committee's convener and editor of the Independent Mahbubul Alam, the meeting discussed press freedom and the prevailing financial constraints of the media companies.

The committee decided to immediately sit with the relevant authorities to discuss the overall situation in the media.

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