

Over 1 lakh left to rust away IT skills

Data entry operators in voter list project yet to see job hopes

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Over one lakh skilled data entry operators, who were trained by the Election Commission (EC) at a cost of around Tk 11 crore, remain unutilised since the voter list with photographs was readied last year.

Neither the immediate past caretaker government nor the EC could think of any initiative for utilising the trained man-

power for other purposes, officials involved in the voter listing project said.

Now the Awami League (AL)-led grand alliance government that promised in its electoral manifesto to build a digital Bangladesh, has plans to use the pool of skilled manpower, said State Minister for Science and ICT Yeafesh Osman.

"I already discussed it with the prime minister and she agreed with the idea," the state minister told The Daily Star

Sunday.

He said he also talked to Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda and sought particulars of the trained individuals for locating them.

He said the government plans to provide the offices of upazila chairmen with computers in efforts to build the promised digital Bangladesh.

"Priority will be given to appointing

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HC vacates stay on extortion case against Hasina

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday vacated its stay order on proceedings of the Tk 3 crore extortion case filed against Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina by businessman Azam J Chowdhury.

An HC bench comprised of Justice ABM Khairul Haque and Justice Md Mamtazuddin Ahmed gave the ruling upon a prayer by Hasina's counsel barrister Rafique-Ul-Huq.

Earlier on September 16 last year, the court stayed

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PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP BUDGET

30 projects picked for maiden venture

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government is going to implement around 30 projects for the first time under a 'public-private partnership budget' in the next fiscal year.

Finance and planning ministry sources say a list of projects in power, roads and communications and agriculture sectors has primarily been prepared and the ministries concerned have been asked to send more project proposals.

The government will formulate the new concept of public-private partnership budget along with the existing Annual Development Programme or development budget.

A final decision in this regard may come at the National Economic Council meeting to be held at the end of this month.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday urged the leaders of Bangladesh Association of Banks to take part in the budget when a delegation of the association met him at his Secretariat office.

Talking to reporters after another meeting of the purchase committee at the Cabinet Division, the finance minister said there will be three separate budgets -- revenue, development and public-private partnership -- in next fiscal year.

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BLEAK FUTURE... 10-year-old Rakib became mentally and physically challenged as a result of some "bad fever" at infancy. His mother sells rice to rickshaw pullers on Dhaka University campus for a living. Having none to baby-sit for her, she ties Rakib to a wheel so that he does not get lost or run over by a vehicle while she is not around. As students on campus get degrees and move on with their lives, Rakib remains in this sorry state.

PHOTO: SHAKHAT JAMIL

Khaleda's petition finally accepted

5th HC bench to hear house allotment plea May 18

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The second High Court (HC) bench assigned by the chief justice yesterday accepted for hearing BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's writ petition against the government decision to cancel the allotment of her cantonment house.

Comprised of Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed and Justice Moyeenul Islam Chowdhury, it set May 18 as hearing date after the former prime minister's principal counsel TH Khan sought time for filing a supplementary petition to challenge the government's recent show-cause notice.

Additional Attorney General M Enayetur Rahim told The Daily Star that the government will not take any action until the HC rules on Khaleda's writ petition.

He also said because of the government's May 7 show-cause notice, the previous notice asking her to vacate the house has lost its 'cause of action' and rendered the writ petition ineffective.

So far, three HC benches have felt embarrassed and another, assigned by Chief Justice MM Ruhul Amin, declined to hear the

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49 die as Lankan hospital shelled

Troops take more rebel territory

AP, AFP, Colombo

A mortar shell struck the only functioning medical facility in Sri Lanka's northern war zone last morning, killing 49 patients and bystanders and wounding more than 50 others, a government health official said. It was the second time this month that the facility was hit.

The attack came after a weekend of heavy shelling that killed hundreds of civilians trapped in the war zone. The military has denied accusations that it was still shelling the tiny coastal strip under rebel control, which is packed with an estimated 50,000 civilians.

Dr Thurairaja Varatharajah, the top government health official in the war zone, said a single mortar shell hit the admissions ward in the makeshift hospital Tuesday morning. In addition to the 49 killed, scores of others were wounded, and he expected the death toll to rise, he said.

Shells were still hitting the area hours later, including one that landed about 150 yards (meters) from the hospital, Varatharajah said.

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Purchase of 420 jeeps for UZ chairmen okayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet committee on purchase yesterday approved the purchase of 420 jeeps for upazila chairmen at a cost of Tk 32.5 lakh for each car.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, Finance Minister AMA Muhith said the jeeps are necessary to strengthen the activities of the local government.

"Only jeeps are appropriate

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BODIES OF 904 WORKERS ARRIVED IN 5 MONTHS

44pc of them died of cardiac arrest

PORIMOL PALMA

Around 44 percent of the Bangladeshi migrant workers who returned home in coffins between January 1 and May 9 this year, had died of cardiac arrests in Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian countries, raising serious questions about the living standards of migrant workers in those countries.

Cardiologists said acute tension caused by uncertainties of income and unhealthy food habits may lead to deaths by heart attacks, while

labour rights activists are emphatic that mental tension caused by low income, debts, and lack of medical care abroad lead to such deaths.

A total of 904 bodies of migrant workers returned home from different countries between January and May, 391 of whom died of cardiac arrests, 268 in workplace accidents, 62 in road accidents, 115 of other sicknesses, and the remaining died due to various other reasons, according to official sources at Zia International Airport (ZIA).

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Celebrating 50 Glorious Years 1958-2009

Education Savings Scheme

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OnlinePoll

Do you think large billboards in Dhaka city are posing threat to public and should be dismantled?

Yes (82.55%) No (15.46%)
No Comments (1.99%)

Total votes: 705

TODAY'S POLL

Do you support the government decision of importing 420 vehicles for the newly elected upzila chairmen?

Please cast your vote at www.thedailystar.net

We Deeply Mourn

We are deeply shocked at the sad demise of

Dr. M.A. Wazed Miah

an eminent nuclear scientist, former Chairman of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission and husband of Sheikh Hasina, Hon'ble Prime Minister of Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. May Allah the Almighty bless his departed soul with eternal peace.

We also extend our heartfelt sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

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NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY
12 Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Banani, Dhaka-1213

North South University administration comments on the incidents of 10 May 2009

North South University is the first private university in Bangladesh, and it is an institution that is committed to providing the best quality education for its students. We have recently seen an alarming trend in student protests organized by a group of misguided students and certain outsiders to NSU, that have unfortunately resulted in unwanted violence and vandalism. The University is deeply concerned about the events that took place on 10th May.

On Feb 10, 2009, for the first time in seven years, North South University raised its tuition from Tk 4000 to Tk 5500 per credit hour for new students. At the same time, the campus development fee of Tk 3500 was discontinued. Over the last few months, the university administration engaged in careful deliberation regarding this situation. With the significant increase in operating expenses that will result from moving to our permanent campus of 12.5 lac sq. feet, an increase in tuition seemed essential. On the other hand, charging different students ("existing" and "new") different fees (Tk 4000 and Tk 5500) for the same courses seemed unethical. Therefore, the administration decided on a mild increase in tuition that would apply toward all existing students bringing down the tuition from Tk 5500 to Tk 4500 per credit hour.

The current increase in tuition for existing students is a meager 7.23 % or Tk 500 per credit. The average expense for a student taking 3 courses, including all fees, has increased from Tk. 41,500 to approx. Tk. 44,000.

On the morning of May 10 2009, the first day of advising for the summer semester, a group of students organized a protest outside of the administration building in Banani. Initially, the advising process progressed smoothly. Unfortunately, some protesters attempted to prevent fellow students from entering the building and began disrupting the advising process. They assaulted 4 faculty members and NSU security guards when they tried to help the general student body that was not part of the protest. The protesters eventually blocked Kemal Ataturk Avenue and the entire road was blocked and the police arrived to clear the road. The Vice Chancellor, Dr. Hafiz G. A. Siddiqi, along with senior faculty members bid the students for time to discuss the matter with the board members and requested the students to disperse and leave but they demanded a reduction of the fees on the spot and that was beyond the VC's authority. The police found it in their primary responsibility to clear the road, and students forcefully entered the main administration building.

NSU authorities attempted to reason with them, and they were asked several times to allow other students to continue their advising. Unfortunately, the protesters were adamant and they proceeded to break the furniture, computers, and doors of the waiting area and NSU security office. Reports started coming in of protesters assaulting students in the school of Business and locking faculty members in their advising rooms. The VC, faculty members and staff in the administration building were forced to move to the VC office on the 13th floor. In their absence, protesters set fire to the 3rd and 4th floors. They continued their march of destruction, literally everything that could be broken until they had reached the VC office. Faculty members, at great risk to their personal safety tried to reason with the protesters but it proved futile. The siege outside of the VC office lasted for approximately 5 hours and protesters did not allow anybody to enter or leave the office. Requests for food and even water for senior faculty members, some of whom were diabetic were violently denied and faculty members were insulted when they tried to exit the office. The elevators were blocked and the NSU PABX lines cut. The protesters demanded that advising be cancelled. NSU authority agreed to their demand in writing and postponed advising. At that point professors changed their demands and called for all advising that had been done that day to be cancelled, and for a new, reduced tuition fee that was even lower than Tk. 4000 that they had been paying for the past 7 years. They proceeded to break all the offices on the 13th floor and stopped outside the VC's doors. The VC, faculty members, and staff who had taken refuge inside the VC office were threatened with physical violence and protesters proceeded to break the doors. Teachers' lives were in danger, and reports were still coming in from other academic buildings of peaceful students being assaulted, faculty members locked in their offices, and their cars that were parked outside destroyed. The fires had escalated and the first set of doors to the VC office were breached. Amid the violence and terror inflicted by the protesters, it was decided that police intervention was necessary. The police arrived in time as the doors to the VC office were broken and protesters rushed towards the faculty members and VC. The protest was broken up, and several police officers, including the Additional Commissioner of Police Mr. Arif suffered serious injuries. The peaceful building that was full of life and activity was left in pieces. Labs were burnt, classrooms and offices destroyed, and students who came for advising were found hiding in corners, traumatized and in tears.

North South University is not only a center of excellence in higher education, it was also a safe and secure institution where students are guaranteed their safety, security, and overall wellbeing. The general student body has suffered greatly from the activities of a few misguided students and NSU authority extends their sincere regret to the students and their families who were victimized by these events. NSU will NOT compromise the safety of its students and faculty members in any way. We will return to advising, and start the next semester at our permanent campus with our heads held high. Lastly, any rumors or allegations published in different media that the tuition has increased from Tk. 41,500 to over Tk. 60,000 is completely incorrect. Students and parents are encouraged to visit the NSU website for further details regarding the change in the tuition structure.