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## ECONOMY IN 2018

Food inflation, sluggish export and remittance remain key challenges

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## A RECORD SIXTH

Khulna Division win record-breaking sixth National Cricket League title

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Sessions orders review of Obama era effort to 'derail' investigation

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## 2ND PADMA BRIDGE, 17 OTHER PROJECTS

# Govt seeking Japanese fund

Under a new gov-to-gov initiative, multi-billion dollar support sought for big infrastructure projects

REJAUL KARIM BYRON with WASIM BIN HABIB

Estimated cost of 11 of the proposed projects \$10b

Projects also include a 2nd metro rail from Ashulia to Kamalapur

Under a government-to-government initiative, Bangladesh is seeking multi-billion dollar support from Japan for implementing 18 infrastructure projects, including a second Padma bridge and a second metro rail line.

The 6.1km bridge would link Paturia and Goalondo thus better connecting Dhaka with the western and south-western districts while the metro rail would run from Ashulia to Kamalapur via Savar.

The estimated cost of 11 of the 18 projects is \$10 billion. The cost evaluation for the other projects is going on.

Under the new initiative, the Public Private Partnership Authority of Bangladesh has submitted project proposals to its Japanese counterpart at

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## FOOTPATH CAR PARK?

Cars parked on a pavement on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in Karwan Bazar obstructing pedestrians in one of the busiest thoroughfares of the capital. The photo was taken around 3:00pm yesterday. Parking of vehicles like that on the street is a regular phenomenon. Police fine and tow vehicles but the situation does not change.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

# A canal on deathbed

Developers filling up Dumni canal on Dhaka's eastern fringe; appeals for saving the canal fall on deaf ears

TAWFIQUE ALI

The natural Dumni canal that nourished local agriculture and ecology for decades on the city's eastern outskirts is now being filled up to make way for real estate development.

"The tragedy is that a private land claimant is filling up this canal with truckloads of soil from an excavation site for an artificial canal along the Purbachal 300-foot road," said Md Emdadul Hoque, general secretary of Pink City Home Owners Multi Purpose Cooperative Society.

The canal is being completely filled up, he said, adding that they had been pleading with different government authorities, including the Department of Environment and police, to save the canal since 2010 but to no avail.

What was supposed to be a 120 feet wide canal now stands at only 10 feet wide.

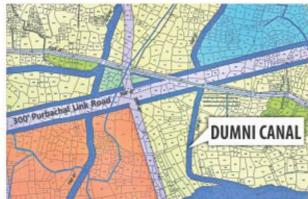
Repeated public outcry and a case with the environmental court have not resulted in any changes. Government pledges and the highest courts' directives for conservation of all city canals like Dumni apparently fell on deaf ears of powerful land developers.

Half a dozen land claimants--three real estate developers, two private land claimants and a govern-

ment organisation-- have so far either blocked and filled up parts of the canal or narrowed it down to one-twelfth of its official width since 2009, said locals.

The canal played a vital role not only for local agriculture-based livelihood but also in draining out storm water from Dhaka city, they said.

"Around 300 families of Pink City that have depended on the canal as the primary drainage system for the



last decade won't be able to live without it," said Rizwan Farouq, another resident of the housing.

With the canal being filled up, several hundred residents of the nearby housing scheme suffered recurrent inundation of their houses with rain water this year and the previous year, Rizwan said.

"It is not understandable how a canal identified in official records and earmarked in Dhaka's detailed area plan (DAP) could be registered

as private land," said Farouq, also vice-president of Pink City Home Owners Multi Purpose Cooperative Society.

Two private land claimants have even built a concrete boundary wall on the canal near Dumni bridge.

Rajdhani Unnyan Kartipakkha (Rajuk), custodian of the capital city's planned and environment-friendly development, further narrowed the canal's width to merely 10 feet with a box culvert over it for Purbachal highway.

The DAP of Dhaka city, drawn up by Rajuk itself, earmarks Dumni as a 120-foot wide canal in the light of a 2006 study by British Halcrow Group on flood management in the city's eastern fringe area.

The Halcrow study recommended widening and conserving of the existing canals along with storm water retention ponds and areas as flood management measures.

Md Anwar Hossain, a former project director of Purbachal New Town scheme and the current chief engineer of Rajuk, said the culvert on Dumni canal was built on the basis of a consultant's feasibility study.

Pointed out that with the culvert, the canal has reduced drastically to one-twelfth of the 120 feet width proposed in the DAP, he said, "It's not a

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## COUNTRY OF THE YEAR Bangladesh was seriously considered

### The Economist

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh came close to winning the Economist's "country of the year" title this year.

Three other countries -- Argentina, South Korea and France -- were also in contention for the accolade.

The London-based weekly news magazine put Bangladesh on its list, citing the country's giving shelter to the persecuted Rohingyas.

It also mentioned Bangladesh's rapid economic growth and a sharp fall in poverty rates.

"We make mistakes. In 2015 we picked Myanmar, for moving from 'larcenous dictatorship' to 'something resembling democracy'. We acknowledged that its treatment of the Rohingya minority was disgraceful, but failed to predict how much worse it would soon get. This year, after more

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# Don't burden schoolchildren with politics

Quader asks BCL as its move to have school committees draws flak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday opposed the formation of Bangladesh Chhatra League committees in schools, saying there is no need to put the "burden of politics" on children.

"The concept of school committee [of BCL] is wrong. There is no need to have any school committee.... There is no need to invite criticism for no reason," he said, while speaking at a programme organised to mark the Martyred Intellectuals Day and the Victory Day at Bangla Academy.

"Schoolchildren are already burdened with textbooks and studies. There is no need to put the burden of politics on their shoulders," said Quader, also road transport and bridges minister.

His comments came just a month after the announcement on forming BCL committees at secondary schools.

Following a decision at an emergency meeting on November 21, the BCL central executive committee asked all its organisational units to set up committees at schools in their areas.

The main objective behind the move was to "spread the ideologies of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman among the students and strengthen the organisation further," said the pro-Awami League student body.

The move triggered sharp criticism in social media. Educationists expressed concerns that it would adversely affect the tender minds of children and lead to violence on school campuses as seen in public colleges and universities.

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## Political uncertainty looms in 2018: study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Political uncertainty centring the national elections, its effect on investment, rising food prices, sluggish exports and remittance, and a lack of corporate governance in banks are the key challenges Bangladesh will face in 2018, said a think-tank yesterday.

The Dhaka-based South Asian Network on Economic Modelling (Sanem) mentioned the challenges and reflected on the performance of Bangladesh's economy until the end of 2017 in its quarterly review.

It said the business-as-usual scenario would not help when it comes to generating productive employment, making growth inclusive, accelerating poverty alleviation rate, developing human capital, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The government should prioritise education, health and social sector investment, speedy implementation of infrastructure projects within justified cost.

SEE DETAILS IN STAR BUSINESS



The Dumni canal being filled up by real estate developers and land claimants reducing the canal to one-twelfth of its official width. Inset, structures being built on the canal. The photos were taken near the Purbachal 300 Foot Road on Friday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## No room for a quick fix

Says Canadian envoy on Rohingya crisis

UNB, Dhaka

Canada's special envoy on the Rohingya crisis Bob Rae has said it would be "unconscionable" for the UN member states to sanction a repatriation that was forced, or that did not include basic protections of human security and human rights.

"This is not a short term problem with a quick fix. The fact that an agreement has been signed between the governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar is a first step in a possible process of repatriation," he said in a report.

There are several additional assurances and guarantees that have to be provided before such an agreement could be implemented, he added.

The envoy said words were inadequate to express

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# 'Missing' Kalyan Party leader now on remand

Police show him arrested in an explosives case; he was without trace for 4 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Kalyan Party Secretary General MM Aminur Rahman, who went missing around four months ago, is now shown arrested in an explosives case filed in 2015.

A Dhaka court yesterday placed him on a four-day remand in connection with the case.

Aminur had gone traceless after he came out of the office of Kalyan Party in Paltan to go to his home in Savar around 10:00pm on August 27, said his relatives and leaders of the party, an ally of BNP.

Aminur's family members filed a general diary with Paltan Police Station on August 30. Police had been looking for him since then, they said.

Shaikh Nazmul Alam, additional deputy inspector general of Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, claimed that a DB team found Aminur after tracking down



Aminur Rahman

his cell phone in Shahjadpur area around 11:40pm on Friday. The phone was switched on after a long time, he further claimed.

Immediately after Aminur was found, he was arrested in connection with the case, Shajahan Shaju, an additional deputy commissioner of DB, said.

The case was filed with Gulshan Police Station over a crude bomb attack on a rally of Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan outside BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's office in Gulshan on February 16, 2015.

At least 14 people, including Khaleda, were accused in the case. Aminur was not among them.

Shaju claimed that during investigation they have found Aminur's involvement in the incident.

Aminur's arrest came hours after Mubashar Hasan, a teacher of North South University who went missing on November

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