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DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Implement fast, keep up work quality

PM asks officials at Ecneec meet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed the authorities concerned to implement various projects at a faster pace maintaining the quality and standard of work.

She was speaking at the first Ecneec meeting after forming the government for a third consecutive term on January 8.

Hasina's directives came amid complaints from different quarters about project selection, pace of implementation and quality of work.

A top planning ministry official said the PM asked the implementing agencies to emphasise on project selection and implementation.

The meeting, chaired by the PM, at the planning ministry's NEC auditorium approved eight projects involving Tk 1,893cr from the government's own fund.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, Planning Minister MA Mannan said his main aim was to expedite implementation of projects.

He said the country's GDP growth rate would be 7.8 percent this fiscal year and this could be increased to 8 to 9 percent in future if the pace of project implementation picked up.

Talking to The Daily Star, a senior planning ministry official said the PM asked them to show far-sightedness in

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Demonstrators under the banner of Muktijoddhar Santan o Projonmo block the city's Shahbagh intersection yesterday demanding reinstatement of the 30 percent quota for freedom fighters' children and grandchildren in government jobs.

PHOTO:
AMRAN HOSSAIN

Demo for
FF quota
resumes

DU CORRESPONDENT

Descendants of freedom fighters yesterday took to the streets once again, demanding the reinstatement of 30 percent quota for children and grandchildren of freedom fighters for classes I and II government jobs.

Around 200 demonstrators, under the banner of "Muktijoddhar Santan o Projonmo", yesterday staged an hour-long protest by blocking the capital's Shahbagh intersection.

After initially forming a human chain in front of the National Museum around 3:30pm, they blocked the roundabout by barricading all the roads that lead to the area.

The demonstrator began the protest a day after the Cabinet Secretary Mohammad Shaiful Alam informed journalists that the status of the quota for the disabled in government jobs would remain unchanged.

The agitators withdrew

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Observers
now regret
Dec 30
polls watch

Cast doubt on
credibility

REUTERS, Dhaka

A top official at an observer group that monitored Bangladesh's election, as well as one of its foreign volunteers, has said they regret participating in the process, casting doubt on the credibility of a vote won overwhelmingly by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ruling alliance.

The president of the Saarc Human Rights Foundation told Reuters he now believed there should be a fresh vote after hearing accounts from voters and officials presiding over polling booths that activists from Awami League stuffed ballot boxes the night before the poll and intimidated voters.

"Now I have come to

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STRANDED IN NO-MAN'S LAND India takes back 31 Rohingyas

Details 30 more in Tripura

STAR REPORTS

After a five-day impasse, the Indian Border Security Force yesterday took back 31 stranded Rohingyas from the no-man's land near the Kaziranga border along Brahmanbaria's Kasba upazila and Tripura's Sipahijala district.

They were handed over to Tripura police, said BSF Deputy Inspector General Brijesh Kumar.

Lt Col Gulam Kabir, commanding officer of the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) 25 Battalion, said, "The BSF opened the pocket gate of the barbed wire fencing around 10:30am and took them inside their border without informing us."

Being pushed by the BSF, the 31 refugees, including women and children, were stuck in the no man's land since Friday in the face of strong resistance from the BGB, sparking a tension in the bordering areas, he added.

Meanwhile, three flag meetings between the BSF and BGB were held in this regard but ended with no conclusion.

The refugees had been living in inhumane conditions under the open sky until Monday when the BSF men installed two separate tents to minimise their sufferings.

The BSF also supplied food and drinking water to the refugees during the period.

Meanwhile, Indian External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said, "Government is aware of the presence of the 31 people originally from Rakhine state in Myanmar."

"While their documentation and claims are being examined, necessary

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PROTEIN FOR FOWLS Poultry industry wants ban lifted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Poultry industry people want the government to lift the ban on import and sale of meat and bone meal (MBM), a protein concentrate for chicken.

They said the ban would adversely affect the Tk 25,000-crore industry because the alternative feed, called fish meal, would increase their production cost by about 10 percent.

Citing health concerns, the government banned the MBM early this month.

The feed comes in the form of powder, and is made from bones of animals, including cow and goat and the small amount of meat attached to the bones.

It can cause anthrax, antibiotic resistance, and even cancer, officials at the Department of Livestock Services (DSL) told The Daily Star earlier this week.

Yesterday, industry insiders said they welcomed the government move to ensure safe food, but banning the import of MBM was not the solution.

A tonne of MBM costs \$500 to \$600 whereas its alternative, fish meal (made of dried sea fish) costs \$1,200 to \$1,350 per tonne, they added.

The Import Policy 2015-2018 had

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Scientists make gene-edited chicks



REUTERS, London

British scientists are developing gene-edited chickens designed to be totally resistant to flu in a new approach to trying to stop the next deadly human pandemic.

The first of the transgenic chicks will be hatched later this year at the Roslin Institute at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, said Wendy Barclay, a professor of virology at Imperial College London who is co-leading the project.

The birds' DNA has been altered using a new gene editing technology known as CRISPR. In this case the "edits" are to remove parts of a protein on which the flu virus normally depends, making the chickens totally flu-resistant.

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Bangladeshi
shot dead by
BSF troops

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Thakurgaon

A Bangladeshi cattle trader was shot dead by Indian Border Security Force members along Thakurgaon's Minapur border yesterday.

The dead is Jenarul, 30, of Taldangi village in the district's Haripur upazila.

BSF members opened fire on a group of Bangladeshi cattle traders around 5:00am inside their territory when the traders were returning with cattle, said Lt

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PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 23

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5-30 12-45 4-15 5-43 7-15

JAMAT 6-05 1-15 4-30 5-47 7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Councillor
arrested on
rape charges

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A Pabna court yesterday sent a ward councillor to jail over allegation of raping a teenage girl on Monday.

The arrestee is Abdur Razzak, 45, councillor of ward-3 in Bera municipality.

Quoting the victim's family members, Shaikh Mahamud, officer-in-charge of Bera Police Station, said the 13-year-old girl, hailing from Bonobram village of the municipality, went to the councillor for a blanket on Monday morning.

Promising her a blanket, the councillor then took her to an abandoned house and raped her, the OC said.

The victim's mother filed a case with Bera Police Station on Monday night.

Police arrested the accused from a tea stall in Bera municipality area the same night. He was later sent to jail through a Pabna judicial court, the OC said.



Damaged bus and truck sit beside Khulna-Mawa highway in Bagerhat's Fakirhat upazila after they collided on the road yesterday. The accident left four people dead and at least 30 others injured.

BENGALI REFUGEES

All of them to get Indian citizenship

Says BJP chief

PTI, Malda

Kick-starting the BJP's campaign in West Bengal, party chief Amit Shah yesterday said all Bengali refugees will be granted citizenship with the passage of the Citizenship Bill.

Speaking at a rally in Malda, Amit Shah took on the ruling Trinamool Congress and said the upcoming Lok Sabha elections will be for restoring democracy in the state.

"I want to assure that all the Bengali refugees will be given citizenship under the Citizenship Bill. The TMC government has done nothing for the refugees but we will give them citizenship," he said.

Taking a jibe at the rally of opposition parties in Kolkata, he said the anti-BJP parties did not utter 'Bharat Mata ki jai' or 'Vande Mataram' even once during the public meeting but kept chanting 'Modi Modi'.

He alleged that the 'mahagathbandhan' of opposition parties was meant for "gaining power and serving personal interests".

"Mahagathbandhan is all about greed and lust. They want to remove Modi, while we want to remove poverty and corruption," he said.

Describing the Trinamool Congress dispensation as a "government that facilitates murders", he said the party will be ousted in the general elections.

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