



The newly-built 2nd Kanchpur Bridge over the Shitalakhyia in Narayanangj is ready to be opened to traffic by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina tomorrow. It is built to ease built 2nd Kanchpur on the Dhaka-Chittagong and Dhaka-Sylhet highways. The photo was taken by Pratik Mitra.

BCL leader stabbed to death in 'N'ganj

A Local leader of Bangladesh Chhatra League was allegedly stabbed to death by a group of miscreants over a previous enmity in Narayanangj (Rupganj) upazila on Wednesday.

The dead, Sohel Mia, 27, was the publicity secretary of BCL Bholabo union committee, said police.

The miscreants waylaid Sohel when he was returning home around 9:00pm and stabbed him indiscriminately, said Radsha Mia, sub-inspector (SI) of Rupganj Station.

He was declared dead after being taken to a local hospital, the SI said.

Police sent the body to Narayanangj General Hospital for an autopsy.

Four people were detained for interrogation and a case will be filed in this connection, he added.

2 found dead

The deceased are Imran Hossain, 27, of Uthli village in Chaudhanga's Jibonnagar upazila, and Lipu Hossain, 32, of Rajumadi village in Alamdanga upazila.

As Russel, assistant superintendent of Chaudhanga police, said, locals informed Jibonagar police after finding the body of Imran on Dinglekhali field. Police rushed to the spot and recovered the body about 10:30am.

The ASP said Imran stood accused in 14 cases, including rape, drugs and robbery. His rivals might have killed him, the police official added.

Police recovered the body of Lipu from Kanaidighat field, said Rashedul Alam, officer-in-charge of Moheshpur Police Station.

Lipu was accused in 11 cases, including rape and robbery.

ASP Russel said both Imran and Lipu were members of the same gang which robs people.

The Daily Star could not contact the victims' families.

In another incident, a suspected drug trader was killed in a "shoot-out" with BGB members in Deil village of Cox's Bazar's Teknaf upazila early yesterday, reports our district correspondent.

The victim is Nurul Islam, 28, of Teknaf municipality.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of BGB-2 conducted a drive in Deil village around 4:00am, said Shariful Islam Chakrabarti, acting commanding officer of BGB-2.

Sensing the presence of BGB members, the criminals opened fire. The BGB members returned fire, triggering the "gunfight". Nurul was killed during the "gun battle", he said.

The BGB members claimed to have recovered 7,000 yaba pills and two sharp weapons from the spot.

Laudable job

DNCRP Khulna office in October.

Around a week later, a phone call informed Mamtaz that her cheque of Tk 17,300 was ready to be collected.

"I couldn't have realised the money without their [DNCRP] intervention," said a grateful Mamtaz.

Popular Life Insurance Managing Director and CEO BM Yousuf Ali could not be bothered for comment on the issue.

Mamtaz's story is one of thousands that the DNCRP generates on a regular basis. The directorate is also fast bringing back consumer confidence in a country widely lacking it.

The DNCRP – which is under the commerce ministry – began its journey in 2009 against the backdrop of widespread allegations of disregard for consumer rights.

Since its inception, it has resolved 18,809 cases out of 21,524 complaints it received until the first week of February.

Sultana Afroze, another consumer who was wronged, happened upon the DNCRP's functions during a news broadcast on TV.

At the time, she was looking for a way to file a complaint against a spectacles seller at the capital's New Market who had sold her broken frames.

She discovered the defect after returning home. When she informed the seller, he refused to change it or give her a refund.

But after filing the complaint, the DNCRP looked into the matter and then found the fault was at the seller's end. They ensured that he compensated Sultana.

"I am happy that we have a consumer rights office that was urgently needed in our country where business ethics is almost absent," said Sultana.

She urged the government to ensure more publicity about the Consumer Rights Protection Act and the directorate, saying it would make "businessmen conscious on how to deal with customers and refrain from cheating."

Like Sultana, consumers who have gotten redress from the directorate have said more awareness of its existence was required.

As more people become aware of the DNCRP's activities, the number of complaints has started to grow, from 6,140 complaints the previous year to 9,019 in 2017-18.

The DNCRP, however, is yet to be fully equipped.

Currently, the body has some limitations – for instance, its mandate excludes real estate. And the DNCRP has 191 people against a requirement of 240.

The agency has offices in every district but not by any name as many of those do not have any staffers, said officials.

The DNCRP has officers in 48 districts of which 16 districts are covered by giving additional responsibilities to different officers, instead of them working exclusively for the directorate.

The directorate has 79 officers in total, including the DG, to protect rights of consumer up to the grass root level.

Despite the limitations, it continues to do good work.

Yahya in town

People in Bangladesh's call for peaceful non-cooperation movement of Bangladesh said he had taken action under the administration of East Pakistan except Dhaka, Cumilla (then Comilla), and Jashore (then Jessore).

He made an announcement with 35 directives including continuation of the non-cooperation movement and a fresh action programme as the struggle entered its third phase.

[Sources: Liberation War Museum]

But not enough people know about the directorate's functions. The complaints mostly come from capital city dwellers. The number is lower in district level and even fewer in upazila and union levels.

This is something that is being worked upon.

Meanwhile, the prospect of redress and the provision for getting a part of the fine slapped on the sellers have encouraged consumers to file complaints, according to officials.

Anyone can file a complaint against anti-consumer activities, such as selling goods and services at prices higher than the maximum retail prices mentioned; for adulteration, and failure to supply goods and services as promised.

A consumer has to file a complaint in writing to the DNCRP and drop it off or send it via fax, email.

The complainant has to provide the officer with his or her detailed address and mention profession. No fee is required, according to the DNCRP.

The complainant gets a portion of the fine slapped on the seller or service provider as compensation for the trouble.

Amir M Saleheen filed a complaint with the DNCRP in December 2017 against Novoir for not allowing his paralysed father board a ticket even though they had bought the ticket mentioning that he needed a wheelchair to move.

DNCRP fined the airlines Tk 50,000 after investigation, said ASF. He was refunded and received 25 percent of the fine as per the Consumer Rights Protection Act.

When reached out for comments, Novoir said they regretted not being able to carry the passenger. The AIR Tk 72,500 aircraft was not equipped to safely carry a passenger completely paralysed, said Mesbahul Islam, head of sales and marketing of Novoir.

Cases of consumer deception have been found in different sectors, including food, medicine, and medical services, according to DNCRP officials.

Consumers Association of Bangladesh President Gulam Rahman said the DNCRP should be properly equipped.

"They [DNCRP] are doing a commendable job despite the small manpower and resources," he added.

Beware of sleep

The article reads, "Although several known risk factors for chronic disease have already been identified, snoring during sleep may be regarded as a 'next-generation' global health problem in Bangladesh and elsewhere."

The authors said, "Snoring is considered a form of sleep-disordered breathing that leads to an inability to initiate or maintain good quality sleep, especially when associated with nocturnal oxygen desaturation or upper airway obstruction."

The study also showed that shorter sleep duration affects human memory and the immune system, and in particular, inadequate sleep duration (less than 6 hours) is significantly associated with a higher risk of chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, coronary heart disease (CHD), ischemic heart disease, and mental health disorders.

Furthermore, the article read, a long sleep duration (more than 8 hours) is associated with obesity, hypertension, CHD, and impaired physical and psychological well-being.

Saudi women activists on trial after a year in detention

Ten Saudi women appeared in court Wednesday for the first time since being detained last year in a sweeping crackdown on activists, ratcheting up scrutiny of the kingdom's human rights record.

The trial of the women, who have been held for nearly a year without charge, comes as Saudi Arabia seeks to placate international criticism over last year's brutal murder of insider-turned-critic Jamal Khashoggi.

Prominent activists Loujain al-Hathloul, Hatoun al-Fassi, Aziza al-Yousuf and Eman al-Nafjan were among those who attended Riyadh's criminal court, where they heard the charges against them, court president Ibrahim al-Sayari said.

Govt plans

Kamal said, adding that the government would install a total of 500,000 EFDs in shops across the country in phases.

Hinting at reducing the corporate tax rate in the next national budget, the minister said he thought the rate was too high in Bangladesh compared to other countries.

Currently, listed financial sector companies in Bangladesh pay corporate tax at 25 percent and non-listed ones at 40 percent.

About bringing educational institutions under the Monthly Payment Order (MPO) system, Kamal said the government has taken measures to bring all eligible educational institutions under the system in phases in the next three years.

The institutions would be brought under the MPO system in the next fiscal year, but the money would be paid in phases in three years, he added.

The minister said the education ministry had been conducting a study on the MPO and the government would bring educational institutions under the system based on recommendations of a report.

Earlier, Education Minister Dipu

BUDGET PLANS
Fresh institutions under MPO
Crop and health insurance
Company for recovering default loan

Moni had informed parliament that her ministry took measures to bring 2,000 eligible educational institutions under the MPO.

She said 9,000 educational institutions have so far applied online for inclusion under the MPO. Of them, the ministry has identified 2,000 as eligible.

Kamal yesterday said the next national budget would be prepared based on the AL's electoral pledges. The government has plans to introduce crop and health insurance in the next fiscal year.

The state-owned Sadharan Bima Corporation will introduce health insurance for all citizens.

Besides, the government will set up an asset management company, aiming at recovering default loans from the new fiscal year.

The government was also mulling over restructuring cash incentives on exports, the minister added.

Don't panic

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The technical committee that evaluated the proposals said there was no need to raise the transmission and distribution charges in the current fiscal year, said Kamruzzaman, deputy director of the BEREC.

Considering the supply of 320 million cubic feet per day (mmcf/d) of gas to Dhaka, the transmission and distribution fee will have to be increased by 10.46 percent to Tk 7.92 from Tk 7.17 per cubic metre in this fiscal year.

The end price of gas has to be raised to Tk 11.77 if gas supply from LNG sources goes up to 650mmcf/d in May as forecast by the technical committee. The price needs to be set at Tk 12.43 when the supply hits 800mmcf/d at the start of the next fiscal year.

Paschimanchal and Karnaphuli gas distribution companies placed their proposals at yesterday's hearing.

Like their peers Titi, Bakhrabad, Jalalabad and Sundarban, the two proposed increasing gas prices to Tk 12.19 from Tk 8.63 per cubic metre, as the average production cost will be Tk 12.19 after blending LNG with locally produced gas.

They called for raising gas price by 80 percent to Tk 1,350 from Tk 750 for a single-burner stove, and to Tk 1,440 from Tk 800 for a double-burner stove.

At the public hearing, Robin Hossain, Prime Minister's Special Representative of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, said LNG import had been made inevitable by propagating that there is no gas in the country. It was done in the interest of a section of businesspeople and brokers.

"House rent, transport cost, power tariff, fertiliser prices – all will go up if the proposals are implemented. We

can't accept it,"

Mid Mizanur Rahman Rashed, general secretary of the Rajshahi chapter of Bangladesh CSNG Filling Station & Conversion Workshop Owners Association, said if compressed natural gas (CNG) prices are increased, the sector would be in big trouble.

The distributors were slammed for corruption, irregularities, and for giving emphasis on profits rather than improving services and bringing more consumers under their networks.

But Md Harun-Or-Rashid, director (finance) at Petrobangla, the parent company of the transmission and distribution companies, said profit making is not their ultimate motive.

"We are importing LNG for the sake of people, industries and entrepreneurs," he added.

Gas Transmission Company Ltd (GTCL), a state-run transmission firm, seeks to increase the transmission charge to Tk 0.5665 per cubic metre in the current fiscal year from Tk 0.4235.

Imported LNG will cost the country Tk 39.086 per cubic metre. It now buys the same amount of gas for Tk 0.7007 from state-run Bangladesh Gas Fields Company Ltd, for Tk 3.0414 from Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Ltd, for Tk 0.2028 from Sylhet Gas Fields Ltd and for Tk 2.55 from international companies operating in Bangladesh, according to Petrobangla.

Consumers can send their opinions about the proposals to the BEREC by March 20.

BEREC members Rahman Muneed, Md Hossain Hossain, Md Aziz Khan and Md Mizanur Rahman were also present at yesterday's hearing.

Nazi code-breaking

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to go on display at Bletchley Park in England.

The heavily rusted machine, which was found on the Polish-Czech border and is believed to have been buried by retreating Hungarian forces, is only the second known surviving examples of the G31 Enigma.

It has a different configuration to many of the other 400 surviving devices, and was a later model of the Enigma machine, which was first used in 1920s prior to the breakout of the Second World War.

It included the ability to allow the operator to go back if they made a mistake and a counter to show how long a message was – and also had a plug socket in its side which allowed it to be connected to a printer.

The only other machine with this feature was auctioned by the German auction house Hermann Historica in October 2009.

Enigmas, which resembled large typewriters, were used by German air, naval and army forces to safely send messages throughout the Second World War.

Describing how unique the device is, Erica Munroe, Exhibitions Manager at Bletchley Park told Mail Online: "There is no one Enigma machine, and the devices were actually invented in the 1920s and sold around the world."

"They were being developed and

UN honours

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International Women's Day theme, "Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change".

As a member of the UNFPA-supported Nari Nirjatan Protirodh Committee and community activist in Bogura, Pushpa has stopped 13 child marriages, including her own, and provided support to eight victims of domestic violence.

She said, "I saw my friends who fall victim to child marriage and saw how it ruined their dreams and aspirations while affecting their physical and mental wellbeing. I didn't want to be one of them and neither do I want it to happen to others. So here I'm today, doing what I believe in the most non-violent way – by stopping child marriage and no woman should face gender-based violence."

Parvin was forced into early marriage when she was in school.

But with training and seed funding from the UN, she was able to attract financing from a private bank against her business plan.

She has a small textile factory, which employs poor women and caters to Dhaka and UK-based clients.

She has introduced flexible work hours and a child care facility in her factory to ensure a women-friendly workplace, and also provides sexual harassment training for all her workers.

Another awardee, Nasima Akhter, was an overseas worker who returned home and took a vocational course in electronics.

She is currently employed as a quality controller at an international

appliance company.

Her job as a technician is considered a non-traditional career for women, but it provides for her son's education.

Nasima says, "I felt lucky to have received skills training at an 'older' age. My dream is to be a supervisor in the production floor of this factory."

Around 31 million women in Bangladesh are not engaged in education, employment or training according to labour force data.

Addressing this issue, Tuomo Director of ILO Bangladesh Country Poutiainen said, "Women face multiple challenges in attaining quality education and in finding decent employment. The ILO, through skills development programme in Bangladesh, is creating opportunities for women of all ages to access vocational education and training and find job placement."

Shoko Ushikawa, country representative of UN Women Bangladesh, said she has to create an environment where women can thrive as entrepreneurs by removing structural barriers such as gender-bias that banks have towards financing women's businesses and increasing government investment in women-friendly public services such as child care that UNFPA uses up women's time."

Speaking at the event, UNFPA Representative Dr. Torckless said, "Clearly, women's access to reproductive health has been a game changer for women's economic empowerment across the world, and in Bangladesh too."