

“Even one story of reaching Europe illegally cannot be an example [for others to follow].”
STATE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS SHAHRIAR ALAM ON ILLEGAL MIGRATION. (PAGE 3)

“A large portion of the younger population seems to have low confidence. So, the government should invest to motivate them.”
BGMEA PRESIDENT RUBANA HUQ AT A DISCUSSION IN THE CAPITAL. (PAGE B1)

“Don't let rumours and exit polls discourage you. This is being spread to break your determination.”
CONGRESS GENERAL SECRETARY PRIYANKA GANDHI TO PARTY WORKERS. (PAGE 8)

BB patronises big defaulters

Harasses small ones, observes HC halting loan rescheduling facility for defaulters till June 23

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday observed that the country's banking sector is no longer business-friendly, rather banks have become organisations of usurers.

“Another Tk 100,000 crore may be laundered from the country if the big loan defaulters are given further opportunity to get bank loans in line with Bangladesh Bank's May 16 circular,” the court said at a hearing on a writ petition.

The HC halted the loan defaulters' privilege to secure further loans by rescheduling their defaulted loans upon a down payment of just 2 percent of the total loan amount.

It issued a status quo till June 23 on the BB circular allowing defaulters to reschedule their loans with a repayment period of up to 10 years and get further loans.

Referring to the BB notice, the HC said, “The central bank on the one hand is patronising the big loan defaulters by giving them various facilities. And on the other hand, it is harassing small loan defaulters by filing cases related to

“Bangladesh Bank is an independent entity, but how could it work in favour of the loan defaulters?”

Asks the High Court

loans and bank cheques.”

It is like punishing the good and favouring the bad.”

The HC bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamrul Kader passed the order following a petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) seeking a stay on the BB circular.

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Mahadi Hasan holds up his mobile phone which shows a photograph of his cousin Monjurul Alam, 26, far right, at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital. Mahadi saw on television that Monjurul was among the 15 survivors of the tragic boat capsizing off the Tunisian coast. He waited at the airport for around 11 hours to meet his cousin but had to leave without doing so. Inset, a relative of another victim.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN



MEDITERRANEAN SHIPWRECK 15 survivors return, kept at airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Monowara Khatun had received a phone call from her son Rashed Mia early Monday. He said he was coming home from Tunisia.

This piece of information made her relieved.

“I just cried,” the mother from Habiganj told this correspondent over phone. She was eagerly waiting for her son at home.

Rashed had left a year ago. “I have been praying to the Almighty for his safe return,” Monowara said.

Rashed and 14 other Bangladeshis landed at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 5:30am yesterday. They are the 15 Bangladeshi survivors of the tragic shipwreck in the Mediterranean off the Tunisian coast on May 11. The boat was trying to get them to mainland Europe.

Even though they landed in Dhaka, their ordeal was not over. Immigration police were not letting them leave the airport as of filing of this report at 1:00am today.

Immigration police officials requesting not to be named said they were conducting preliminary investigation into how they were trafficked to Libya and attempted to cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe.

Police at the airport were also verifying the survivors' identities with the help of police stations of their localities. Most of them are from Sylhet, Habiganj, Sunamganj, and Kishoreganj.

Mahadi Hasan Fahe was waiting for his cousin Monjurul Alam Himal outside the airport yesterday evening. He said he learnt in the morning from TV footage that

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Rice prices hit 3-year low

Good harvest, healthy stocks main reasons

SOHEL PARVEZ

Rice prices have fallen to a nearly three-year low impacted by downturn in paddy prices at the farmers' level in the wake of good harvest as well as higher private and public stocks of the grain.

The average retail price of coarse rice, consumed mainly by the low-income group, was Tk 33 per kg in city markets yesterday, down 24 percent from a year ago, according to the Department of Agricultural Marketing (DAM).

It is the lowest since August 2016 when the average retail price of the same quality grain was Tk 33.58 per kilogram, show data from the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

The FAO data showed that the prices gradually declined after they soared to Tk 47.78 in September 2017. Just more than a year later in November 2018, the prices fell below the Tk 40 mark.

Since then, the market prices have gradually been declining because of good crop harvest, a situation that hurts farmers but benefits consumers.

Bangladesh bagged 3.62 crore tonnes of rice in fiscal 2017-18 and the total production is expected to hit a new high during the current fiscal year, according to the Department of Agricultural Extension

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REMITTANCE THRU' FORMAL CHANNELS

Govt plans 3pc cash incentive

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government may give migrant workers a three percent cash incentive to encourage them to send remittance through official channels.

The initiative would result in the migrant workers collecting more money than they send. For instance, if they send Tk 100, they would be able to collect Tk 103.

On Monday, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave directives in this regard to Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal during a meeting on the upcoming budget, a finance ministry official said yesterday.

Some three thousand crore taka might be allocated in the 2019-20 budget for this purpose, according to the official.

Ministry officials said the government was actively considering the proposal to make sending remittance cheaper.

Migrant workers still need to pay a high charge when they send remittance through the international system.

According to the World Bank, the global average cost of sending US\$200 is 7-8 percent, whereas the Sustainable Development Goal target is to reduce the rate to 3 percent.

For the last three years, the government has been discussing the issue of increasing remittance inflow through official channels as most of the remittance was being sent illegally.

To overcome this situation, the government formed a five-member committee in 2017.

Based on several visits to Middle-Eastern countries, the committee found that migrant workers prefer hundi for sending remittance as it is cheaper than the official channel.

In 2015-16, remittance -- one of the main contributors to the country's foreign currency reserve -- increased by only 2.52 percent.

Later in 2017-18, remittance inflow increased by 17.32 percent but slowed down in the current fiscal, showing around 10 percent growth in the first ten months.

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SC believes in freedom of press

Clarifies its notice for the media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court administration yesterday said making and publishing reports, for which the court's image and dignity become tarnished and the trial proceedings are influenced, is not expected.

It said this in a notice issued to clarify its May 16 notification that had requested print and electronic media to refrain from reporting on ongoing cases at the court.

Yesterday's notice said, “The Bangladesh Supreme Court always believes in the freedom of the press.”

The notice signed by SC Registrar General Md Zakir Hossain yesterday said, “In this situation, the notification issued on May 16 has been clarified and all concerned have been conveyed.”

On May 16, Md Golam Rabbani, registrar of the SC's High Court Division, issued a notice saying,

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GENERAL ELECTION IN INDIA

Opposition parties allege vote fraud

AFP, New Delhi

India's main opposition parties yesterday alleged voting fraud in the country's general election, days after exit polls predicted a comfortable win for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling right-wing party.

Members of as many as 22 parties called on the poll watchdog and demanded that electronic machines used to record votes be guarded more stringently, and that counting be done in a fair and transparent manner.

India's marathon election wound up on Sunday after almost six weeks of voting, with results expected on Thursday.

Several polls have suggested Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies would secure enough seats to secure a second five-year term.

Opposition leaders -- including from the main Congress party -- yesterday said the Election Commission must ensure voting machines were not manipulated in any way. Their concern stemmed from video clips on social media purportedly showing attempts to replace the machines in strongrooms ahead of counting in some places.

“We are asking the Election Commission to respect the mandate of people. It cannot be manipulated,” said N Chandrababu Naidu, of the regional Telugu Desam Party.

Satish Chandra Mishra, a member of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), alleged “large-scale bungling” of the voting machines in Uttar Pradesh state, the biggest by number of lawmakers.

The Election Commission moved swiftly to deny the reports, saying voting machines were “absolutely safe in strongrooms”, and those shown in video clips were reserves.

“The Election Commission of India would like to

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Tigers settled before WC charge

SAKEB SUBHAN from Leicester

The selectors' announcement in Dhaka yesterday confirmed what those who have followed the Bangladesh team since the start of the series in Ireland had already suspected -- that the 15 selected for the ICC World Cup starting from May 30 would meet requirements for the Tigers' tilt at a first ever World Cup semifinal, and beyond.

Before the Ireland tri-series -- which Bangladesh ended by winning their first multi-team ODI silverware, that too undefeated -- there was much speculation over whether Taskin Ahmed would be included in the

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জাপানে রবীন্দ্রনাথের পথে

নতুন যাত্রী তাহসান

অনন্য জাপানীজ কোয়ালিটির খাঁজে

দেখুন আজ রাতে

পরিবেশনায় JETRO Dhaka

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