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Cancel jobs of dubious contractors

PM asks officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the officials concerned to cancel all contracts with controversial companies and float fresh tenders or award the jobs to sub-contractors.

She also directed that no contractor would be allowed to do more than two construction jobs at a time.

The PM gave the directives at yesterday's meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne).

She approved the time extension proposal of a health ministry project, which was assigned to GK Builders and Company (pvt) Ltd in 2010, says a planning ministry official, who attended the meeting.

The company is owned by Golam Kibria Shamim, popularly known as GK Shamim, who was arrested in the capital last month. He is now in jail in drugs and illegal arms cases.

The Directorate General of Health Services started the project to build National Institute of Laboratory Medicine and Referral Centre in the capital's Sher-E-Bangla Nagar in July 2010, with a deadline of June 2013.



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Although a footbridge is yards away, a woman and two students jaywalk between vehicles stuck in jam on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in the capital's Farmgate, ignoring the risks to their lives. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



CANADA ELECTIONS Trudeau wins second term

Trump congratulates

REUTERS, Montreal

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberals held onto power after a closely fought election on Monday but were reduced to a minority government that will need the support in Parliament of a smaller left-leaning party.

The vote showed a deeply divided country with the defeated Conservatives winning the popular vote, while a resurgent separatist Bloc Quebecois made big strides in the mainly French-speaking province of Quebec.

The Liberals had won or were leading in 156 out of 338 seats in Monday's vote, according to Elections Canada. That put the Liberals far short of the 170 seats needed for a second straight majority government.

"You did it, my friends. Congratulations," Trudeau told supporters in Montreal early yesterday, speaking as his main opponents were giving concession speeches.

Trudeau, who took power in 2015 as a charismatic figure promising "sunny ways," saw his popularity drop over old photos of him in blackface and his handling of a corporate corruption case. He will now have to rely on the New Democratic Party (NDP) to push through key legislation.

Although the NDP had a disappointing night, with the 24 seats it had won or was leading in down sharply from the 2015 election when it won 44,

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PRAYER TIMING OCTOBER 23

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:50 12:45 4:00 5:36 7:15
JAMAAT 5:25 1:15 4:15 5:39 7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

GP-ROBI ADMINISTRATOR FICCI worried at govt move

MUHAMMAD ZAHIDUL ISLAM

The Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has expressed deep concern over the government's move to appoint administrators for Grameenphone and Robi to realise their dues of Tk 13,446 crore.

The chamber has also decided to write to the government policy makers expressing its concern in this regard within a day or two, TIM Nurul Kabir, executive director at the FICCI told The Daily Star yesterday after a meeting of the executive committee.

Several members of the committee said it would set a bad precedent for the future investors in Bangladesh if the government finally stick to its decision to appoint administrator for the two mobile operators, Kabir said.

According to the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission's audits into the two operators' books from their inception until December 2014, Grameenphone has Tk 12,579.95 crore pending and Robi Tk 867.24 crore.

In the meantime, the global association of mobile operators also raised concern about the process the issue was being

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MPs reject Brexit deal timetable

EU chief terms the deal a 'waste of time and energy'

AGENCIES

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday said he would pause efforts to pass his Brexit deal, after MPs gave their preliminary approval for it but rejected his timetable to push it through parliament this week.

"We will pause this legislation," Johnson told lawmakers, adding he would consult with European Union leaders about a further Brexit delay but insisted Britain should still leave the bloc as scheduled on October 31, AFP reports.

The BBC added that earlier the PM had warned he would seek an election if MPs dismissed the plan and the EU granted an extension to 31 October Brexit deadline.

It said Johnson told MPs he was "disappointed" they had "voted for delay", and said the UK "now faced further uncertainty".

Johnson, however, maintains that the Brexit deal would go ahead at the end of the month.

The latest development comes after the EU said yesterday it believed it had done "all in our power" to ensure an orderly Brexit and that a new divorce deal now depended on the approval of British MPs before any European ratification.

Expressing regret that Britain planned to leave the EU on October 31, European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker earlier said dealing with Brexit during his five-year mandate was a "waste of time and energy."

"At least we can look ourselves in the eyes and say that we have done all in our power to make sure that this departure is orderly," he said.

He and European Council President Donald Tusk, addressing the European Parliament in Strasbourg, said developments in the British parliament in Westminster would be decisive on how Brexit proceeds.

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Teenage girl gang-raped in Laxmipur

STAR REPORT

A teenage girl was allegedly gang-raped by a group of five men in Laxmipur's Ramganj upazila on Monday.

On information, police detained three accused -- Imon, 20, Rasel, 19, and Sharif, 22 -- in Bhadugram village of the upazila yesterday morning, said Anwar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Ramganj Police Station.

Quoting the victim, the police official said some Shaon developed a love affair with the victim recently. Luring her with fake promises of marriage, he took the girl to Imon's house where he, along with four of his friends, gang-raped her.

The 15-year-old victim used to live alone in the upazila's Noapara village after her parents' separation, the police official added.

Police were trying to detain Shaon and another unnamed accused, he

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Hover-taxi whizzes over Singapore



AFP, Singapore

A drone-like flying taxi whirled over Singapore's waterfront yesterday, with the firm behind the test hoping the aircraft will revolutionise travel in traffic-choked Asian cities.

The 18 propeller vehicle, developed by German firm Volocopter and with a pilot onboard during the test flight, took off from a promontory and flew for about two minutes and 30 seconds around the Marina Bay district.

Heavy rains in the morning almost delayed the flight, but the skies cleared in time for the battery-operated, two-seater taxi to quietly fly past skyscrapers.

While the hover-taxis -- resembling small helicopters but powered by drone-like technology -- can fly autonomously, there was a pilot aboard during the test for safety reasons.

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No Bengal Classical Music Fest this year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bengal Classical Music Festival (BCMF) has once again been cancelled after organisers were denied permission to use the Army Stadium in Dhaka as the venue.

The Bengal Foundation made the announcement in a press statement yesterday.

In it, the Foundation said that the was set to hold the seventh edition of the five-day long festival from November 28. Like every year, they applied to the Army Sports Control Board for allocation of the Army Stadium as the festival venue.

"But we are very sad to say that we did not get the Bangladesh Army Stadium as the venue for the Bengal Classical Music Festival 2019," the statement reads.

Without permission to use the Army Stadium, which is an appropriate venue to host this large-scale festival with consideration to security,

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Emperor Naruhito, left, and Empress Masako attend the enthronement ceremony where emperor officially proclaims his ascension to the Chrysanthemum Throne at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, Japan, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Japan emperor ascends throne

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's Emperor Naruhito yesterday completed his ascension to the Chrysanthemum throne in a ceremony steeped in the traditions and grandeur of a monarchy that claims 2,000 years of history.

The rituals cemented a transition that began with his father's abdication earlier this year, and drew royalty and political leaders from around the world.

A public parade for the event was postponed after a deadly typhoon, but the government went ahead with the granting of pardons for more than half a million people convicted of minor offences including traffic violations.

The main event took place in the Imperial Palace's Pine Room, where royal attendants drew back purple curtains hanging from two heavily adorned structures housing the imperial thrones, revealing the emperor and empress standing inside.

"I hereby declare my enthronement at home and abroad," Naruhito said, dressed in a voluminous draped robe topped with a copper overcoat.

Empress Masako, a Harvard-educated former diplomat, stood silently before her throne in a similar, smaller structure, wearing a multi-layered kimono and a highly stylised hairpiece.

Naruhito pledged to "pray for the happiness of Japanese people and world peace" and "fulfil my duty as the symbol of Japan and of the unity of the people of Japan."

Standing before him, flanked by royal family members also wearing heavily decorated traditional robes, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe promised the people of Japan would "respect your highness the emperor as the symbol of the state and of the unity of the Japanese people."

He then raised his hands three times, shouting "Banzai!" or "Long live the emperor!"

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