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Your Right to Know

RABIUL AWAL 28, 1441 HIJRI

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"We didn't backtrack on implementing the law ... We have taken a soft stance on several issues [of the act] taking public interest and reality into consideration."
ROAD TRANSPORT AND BRIDGES MINISTER OBAIDUL QUADER ON ROAD TRANSPORT ACT-2018 (PAGE 3)



"Together, we can eliminate rape, and sexual and gender-based violence and make Bangladesh safe for women and girls."
UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR MIA SEPPO AT A NATIONAL DIALOGUE (PAGE 3)



"We're in a mess."
EX-UK PM TONY BLAIR SAYS NEITHER LABOUR PARTY NOR CONSERVATIVES DESERVES TO WIN DEC 12 POLLS (PAGE 8)



BANGLADESH BIMAN PILOTS

ACC finds scam in recruitment

Exams, rules manipulated to appoint 28 pilots; ACC files case against three high-ups, another ex-official of the national carrier

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN and RASHIDUL HASAN

Twenty-eight out of 32 pilot cadets had failed the tests but Biman recruited them anyway.

Biman officials gave them "grace marks" and then manipulated viva exams to give them the jobs, according to a first information report the Anti-Corruption Commission filed against four incumbent and former Biman officials.

Even before the tests, the then Biman authorities relaxed the minimum educational qualification and age limits to allow less qualified candidates to apply, it said, adding that one of the recruits is the nephew of Biman's former managing director Abul Munim Mosaddique Ahmed who was forced to quit.

SM Helal, former president of Bangladesh Airlines Pilots Association (BAPA), said, "In aviation, ensuring quality of prospective candidates is a must ... the then administration compromised the quality which is tantamount to compromising passenger safety."

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"Due to compromise in quality, an aircraft and its passengers might be put at risk," Helal added.

Some of the recruits have already completed training and some were being trained, a top Biman official said.

Yesterday, ACC Assistant Director Saiful Islam filed the case with the ACC integrated district office against Mosaddique, former acting managing director Capt Farhat Hasan Jamil, incumbent principal of Bangladesh Airlines Training Centre Partha Kumar Pandit, and Manager (recruitment) Fakhrul Hossain Chowdhury.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the FIR.

Saiful, who is also the enquiry officer of the case, found that the written and multiple-choice question (MCQ) tests, each of 100 marks, had 10 and 20 "grace marks".

A candidate needed 60 and 50 to pass. Of the 103 that sat for the exams on December 22, last year, 72 "passed" and Biman recruited 32 of them through viva exams.

EC SECRETARIAT

Commissioner, secretary launch tirades against each other

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Election Commissioner Mahbub Talukder locked horns with commission Secretary Md Alamgir yesterday over running the EC secretariat and alleged irregularities in the appointment of employees.

Speaking at a press briefing, Mahbub alleged that a kind of "arbitrariness" was going on in running the secretariat which is not supported by the constitution, Representation of the People Order-1972, Election Commission Secretariat Act-2009 and the related rules.

He said the secretariat did not inform the four commissioners about the recent employee recruitment tests and the expenditures for those.

The commissioner said he wrote to the secretariat asking it why any action was not taken against 135 jobseekers who were

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It's an issue of discomfort

Says Quader about trespass by people from India

STAR REPORT

Trespassing of people into Bangladesh from India might be an issue of discomfort for Bangladesh, said Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday amid concerns over India's National Register of Citizenship (NRC).

"It may be a reason for a little bit discomfort for the time being ... we will solve the problem through discussion as we did in the past," Quader, also road transport and bridges minister, told a press briefing at his secretariat office.

He said there was no tension between India and Bangladesh over the issue as Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and

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GULSHAN CAFÉ ATTACK INVESTIGATION

Tracking new terror network

SHARIFUL ISLAM

The Gulshan café attack investigation helped law enforcers get crucial leads on a new web of radicals and subsequently launch a series of successful operations ripping apart the network of militancy in Bangladesh.

The preemptive drives caused a huge dent in the strength of IS-inspired "Neo JMB", which had perpetrated the July 1, 2016 attack at the Holey Artisan Bakery in Gulshan.

A major success came 26 days after the incident, as law enforcers launched operation "Storm 26" at a den in the city's Kalyanpur in which nine militants of the group were killed and one was arrested.

Documents seized from the den and information gathered subsequently helped law enforcers prevent three attacks planned by "Neo JMB", which was little known to law enforcers, say DMP's Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit



officials.

"It was the operation through which we fought back against militancy, and it was a turning point for us," CTTC unit chief Monirul Islam had said earlier about the Kalyanpur raid.

Then came another big success as the mastermind of the café attack, Bangladesh-born Canadian citizen Tamim Ahmed Chowdhury, along with his two close accomplices were killed in a drive at a den in Narayanganj on August 27, 2016.

"When we started investigating the

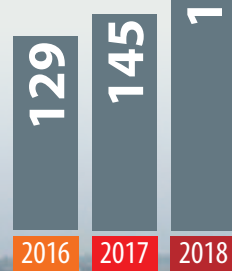
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LIVING IN TOXIC AIR

» Highest air pollution related deaths occur in Bangladesh

» Pollution related diseases reduce GDP in low to middle-income countries by up to 2%

NUMBER OF UNHEALTHY DAYS IN BANGLADESH



MAJOR REASONS FOR AIR POLLUTION

1 BRICK KILNS

2 VEHICULAR EMISSION

3 CONSTRUCTION SITES

NUMBER OF VEHICLES IN DHAKA

2010

5,93,077

2018

13,70,500

WHAT TO BE DONE TO CUT AIR POLLUTION

» Phasing out use of burnt bricks

» Making the use of block bricks mandatory in phases

» Covering construction sites to reduce dust in the air

» Phasing out unfit vehicles

» Importing diesel with less sulfur contents



Up to 7% of health spending in heavily polluted, rapidly developing middle income countries goes to care for people made sick by pollution

BRICK KILNS IN COUNTRY

2013 4,985

2018 7,900

2,087 BRICK KILNS IN DHAKA IN 2018

Dhaka gasping for fresh air

Govt takes urgent measures to fight air pollution as the city's air quality worst in the world

REZAUL KARIM BYRON and PINAKI ROY

The hazy skies of Dhaka city in the beginning of winter may seem like harbingers of the cold season. But what appears to be only mist or fog, is actually smog and dust.

The capital had the worst air quality in the world yesterday, according to Air Visual, an air quality measuring application.

The alarming situation prompted the government to chalk out immediate measures to give city-dwellers some relief.

At an emergency inter-ministerial meeting, it was decided that steps would be taken to stop burning garbage at waste dump sites and shut down all illegal brick kilns around the capital. It also directed the Dhaka north and south city corporations to sprinkle water on the city roads to reduce dust in the air.

"The level of air pollution is alarming. Just a few days ago, air quality of Dhaka was the third or fourth worst in the world. But now it tops the ranking," said Md Shahab

Uddin, minister for environment, forest and climate change, who presided over the meeting held at the conference room of the ministry.

The meeting also decided that directives would be issued to cover all construction materials. From now on, the government would mention this instruction in all their construction-related tenders, the minister said.

The government is also going to issue a gazette notification to ensure 100 percent use of ecofriendly green bricks -- an eco-friendly alternative -- for all government construction projects.

The smog from brick kilns, smoke from unfit vehicles and dust generated from public and private constructions sites, including those of the mega projects taken by the government, were the main sources of air pollution, the minister said.

Brick kilns were identified as the single largest source of air pollution in Dhaka

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CLIMATE CRISIS Greenhouse gas levels hit new high in 2018: UN

AFP, Geneva

Greenhouse gas levels in the atmosphere, the main driver of climate change, hit a record high last year, the UN said yesterday, calling for action to safeguard "the future welfare of mankind".

"There is no sign of a slowdown, let alone a decline, in greenhouse gas concentration in the atmosphere despite all the commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change," the head of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Petteri Taalas said in a statement.

The WMO's main annual Greenhouse Gas Bulletin listed the atmospheric concentration of CO₂ in 2018 at 407.8

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Pedestrians go through a gap in the railings of a median strip near the ramp of Moghbazar-Mouchak flyover in the capital's Shantinagar area yesterday. Every day, hundreds of people cross this road this way, putting their lives at risk. Locals said some grilles of the railings were stolen more than six months ago but the authorities were yet to seal the gap.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. S A K Ekramuzzaman renowned businessman and Managing Director of RAK Ceramics (Bangladesh) Limited has been conferred as CIP Industry 2017 by the Government of Bangladesh in recognition of his outstanding contribution for industrialization and in the economy of Bangladesh.

Heartiest congratulations to Mr. S A K Ekramuzzaman for his remarkable achievement.

We are proud to be part of the tremendous economic development of Bangladesh led by the Honorable Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina.

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