



President Abdul Hamid receives a souvenir of Digital Service Design Specification and Digital Centre from State Minister for ICT Zunaid Ahmed Palak at Bangabhaban yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

# Cabinet approves Maritime Zones Bill 2019

Includes highest punishment for robbery in the sea

UNB, Dhaka

The cabinet yesterday approved in principle the draft of Bangladesh Maritime Zones Bill 2019, determining the maritime zones and incorporating the provision of death penalty in the case of killing during robbery and violence in the sea.

The approval came from the cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her office.

Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam briefed reporters at the secretariat after the meeting.

“The foreign ministry brought the bill for cabinet approval on the maritime zones, in line with international conventions,” said the cabinet secretary.

Once the bill is passed in parliament, Bangladesh’s rights over 200 nautical miles of exclusive economic zone will be established.

Under the 1982 United Nations Convention of

the Law of the Sea, all coastal countries are granted sovereign right to the stretch of sea extending 200 nautical miles beyond their coast, which is known as exclusive economic zone.

Punitive provisions have been kept in the proposed law for committing or abetting crimes, including robbery, theft and violence in sea.

In the case of murder during robbery and violence, the maximum punishment would be death penalty, said the cabinet secretary.

The highest punishment for robbery and other offences would be life sentence, while punishment for abetting such crimes is 14 years of imprisonment, he said.

Besides, the cabinet approved a proposal for the ratification of the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, which aims for the phase-down of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) by cutting their production and consumption.

# ACC sues former Ctg civil surgeon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday filed a case accusing the former civil surgeon of Chattogram and six others on charge of misappropriating Tk 9.15 crore during the purchase of machinery for the 250-bed Chattogram General Hospital.

ACC’s Assistant Director Sirajul Islam filed the case accusing the seven persons, including four physicians, with ACC Integrated District Office Chattogram-1, said Deputy Director (DD) Lutfur Kabir Chandon of ACC.

The accused are Sarfaraj Khan Chowdhury, former civil surgeon; physicians Abdur Rab, Moin Uddin Majumdar, Bijan Kumar Nath; suppliers Md Jaher Uddin, Md Munsir Faruk Hossain, and Aftab Ahmed, said ACC sources.

DD Lutfur Kabir Chandon told The Daily Star “Showing higher price than the

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# ‘We’re not asking for charity’

## Jute mill workers demonstrate for arrears in Khulna, Jashore, Chattogram

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Over thirty thousand workers of nine state-owned jute mills in Khulna-Jashore industrial belt demonstrated yesterday to press home their 11-point demand, including payment of due salary and implementation of a wage commission.

Holding empty plates -- symbolising that they have nothing to eat and are unable to support their families -- hundreds of workers brought out a hunger procession in the morning and blockaded Khulna-Jashore highway at Natun Rasta intersection in Khulna city for 30 minutes till 10am.

Earlier, workers of Daulatpur, Khalishpur, Crescent, Platinum and Star jute mills gathered in front of their workplaces around 9am and demonstrated. Workers of Alim and Eastern jute mills workers held a rally in Atra industrial area of the city.

In Jashore, workers of Jashore Jute Industry and Carpeting Jute Mills Ltd brought out a hunger procession in Rajghat area.

The demonstration was part of their seven-day agitation programme, announced under the banner of “State-owned Jute Mills Collective Bargaining Association (CBA) and Non-CBA Sangram Parishad” on November 17 in Dhaka.

The programmes include hunger processions, hunger strike at different mill gates from 8am to 5pm on November 27, a protest rally on December 2, and strike on December 5.

The workers threatened a tougher movement if their demands are not met immediately.

Their demands include cancellation of public-private ownership, payment of provident fund gratuity for retired workers, regularising weekly wages and implementation of the wage commission, and payment of outstanding bills. They also demanded that the government buy jute products for other sectors.

Amzadul Haq, a permanent worker of

Platinum Jute Mill, told The Daily Star that workers are struggling to make ends meet. “We only get Tk 1,600 per week but the government is not even paying that amount. I have school-going children, I cannot even pay their fees.”

Mizanur Rahman of the same jute mill said, “It’s been almost three months, we still haven’t gotten paid. What will we eat now?”

“We’re not asking for charity, we’re asking for our dues,” he said.

Sahana Sharmin, president of CBA at the jute mill, said workers are facing hardship for years including irregular payment from the government.

She said though the government announced a wage board on June, 2015, it was yet to be implemented.

Murad Hossain, president of CBA at Crescent Jute Mill, said at least 11 weeks’ wages are outstanding.

“Jute workers are in a dire state. Many families are suffering from financial crisis while the wage commission is yet to be implemented,” he said.

He also demanded immediate payment of arrears.

Around 11 weeks’ wages are due of workers at Crescent, Platinum and Star jute mills while 9 weeks of Khalishpur mill workers and 10 weeks of Daulatpur mill, said workers.

The other mill workers are also not being paid regularly and their salary is at least 7-8 weeks due.

## CTG WORKERS DEMAND ARREARS

Workers of Amin Jute Mill in Chattogram also demonstrated in front of the mill in the morning, reports our staff correspondent from Chattogram.

Hundreds of workers brought out a procession around 9am in Bayezid area, demanding due salaries of 11 weeks.

Mohammad Mostafa, general secretary of Samik Karmachari Union, said expressing solidarity with other jute mill workers, they demonstrated over the 11-point demand.

# Constant delay on Sylhet-Dhaka, Ctg train routes

Authorities claim foggy weather, loco masters’ more resting time as causes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Train schedules for Sylhet-Dhaka and Sylhet-Chattogram routes have become irregular, reportedly due to foggy weather and loco masters resting for longer periods.

Almost all inter-city trains are failing to maintain schedule, making passengers suffer.

According to Sylhet Railway Station’s schedule report for yesterday, Dhaka-bound Kalni Express left the station at 7:30am when it was supposed to depart at 6:40am. Jayantika Express left 20 minutes after the scheduled time (8:40am), and Chattogram-bound Paharika Express left at 10:25am, delaying for 10 minutes.

The mentioned trains were late to leave the station on Sunday as well.

Due to the delays, passengers are having to wait at the station for a long time, and

they are late to reach their destinations.

Afsar Uddin, station master of Sylhet Railway Station, said, “After the train collision in Brahmanbaria on November 12, the department is on high alert, and it ordered loco masters to get sufficient rest.”

“All loco masters are now resting for at least eight hours before leaving the station, and that is causing the delay,” he said.

Some other railway officials claimed the railroad that connects Dhaka and Chattogram to Sylhet is vulnerable and many rail-bridges are dangerous to traverse. Loco masters are bound to maintain slow speed at these points, and as a result, they are arriving late.

Denying claims of Sylhet’s railway authorities, Bangladesh Railway Chief Operating Superintendent (East) Md Nazmul Islam said, “It’s the foggy weather

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Workers remove furniture and other products after law enforcers dismantled shops set up alongside the rail track in Karwan Bazar on Sunday afternoon.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

# Army chief honours gallantry award holders

BSS, Dhaka

Army Chief General Aziz Ahmed yesterday accorded reception to the gallantry award holding freedom fighters of Bangladesh Army at an event in Dhaka Cantonment, marking Armed Forces Day.

Freedom fighters, who played a vital role during the Liberation War and their successors were also awarded reception at the programme, said an ISPR press release. A total of 75 freedom fighters and their successors were awarded reception.

In his speech, the army chief paid rich tributes to the gallantry award holders.

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# Man held with cocaine worth Tk 16 crore

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rab in a drive yesterday arrested an alleged drug trader with one kilogramme of cocaine worth Tk 16 crore from port city’s Halishahar Boropole area.

The arrestee is Anwar Hossain (35) of Feni and a resident of Akbarshah area, said Additional Superintendent of Police Sohel Mahmud of Rab-7.

Tipped off, a team of Rab-7 detained Anwar from Boropole area. “After examining the product in our lab, we confirmed that it was cocaine,” the official said. A case was filed.

# Khaleda’s bail in defamation case extended

Still no release from jail due to corruption cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court Division of the Supreme Court yesterday extended for one year its earlier orders that granted bail to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in two separate defamation cases.

The HC bench of Justice Muhammad Abdul Hafiz and Justice Kazi Md Ejarul Haque Akondo passed the orders following two separate petitions filed by Khaleda seeking extension of the earlier orders of bail.

However, Khaleda cannot get released from jail as she is convicted in two corruption cases. Earlier on June 18 this year, the HC bench led by Muhammad Abdul Hafiz granted six months’ bail in the same defamation cases. Barrister Kayser Kamal appeared for Khaleda Zia.

AB Siddique, president of Bangladesh Jananetri Parishad, a pro-AL organisation, filed the cases in 2014 and 2017 against Khaleda Zia on charges of hurting religious sentiments of Muslims and making derogatory comments on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Meanwhile yesterday, the Appellate Division of the SC deferred until November 28 the hearing of an appeal filed by Khaleda Zia, challenging the HC order that rejected her bail petition in Zia Charitable Trust corruption case.

A five-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain said the apex court bench of all seven members will hear the appeal on November 28.

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