

"Myanmar promised on different occasions that they would take steps to stop yaba trafficking, but they haven't taken any initiative."

HOME MINISTER ASADUZZAMAN KHAN ON YABA TRADE



"The DG of BSF assured me that they would be more careful and cautious to avoid border killings."

BGB DG MAJ GEN MD SHAFEEENUL ISLAM ON KILLINGS BY BSF (PAGE 20)



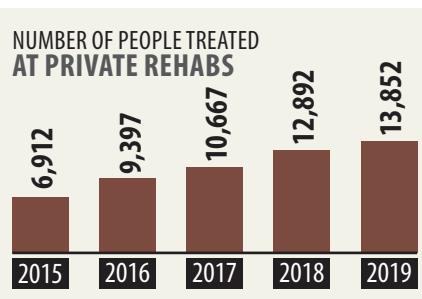
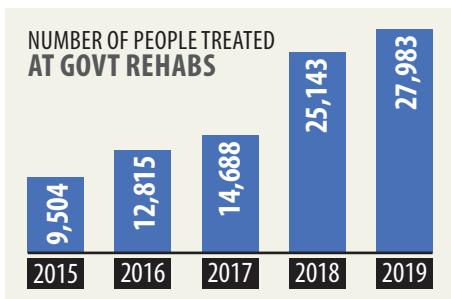
"The provocative behaviour has been out there for months... So do I think they may do something? Yes. And they will likely regret it."

PENTAGON CHIEF MARK ESPER WARNS PRO-IRAN MILITIA AFTER ATTACK ON US EMBASSY IN BAGHDAD (PAGE 9)



Alarming rise in drug abuse

Number of patients with addiction problems went up to 114 a day last year from 69 in 2017; 1.43 lakh treated at rehabs in 5 yrs



MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The number of drug addicts increased in the country with an average of 114 patients taking treatment every day at public and private rehabilitation centres last year, according to the Department of Narcotics Control.

The number was 104 in 2018, and 69 in 2017.

A total of 90,133 people with addiction underwent treatment at the five government rehabilitation centres and 53,720 at the 324 private ones in the last five years.

The number of female addicts increased four times last year, according to DNC data.

Ninety-one females took treatment at the government centres in 2018. The number was 360 from January to November last year.

"Easy availability of narcotics is the number one reason behind the rise in the number of drug addicts," Prof Helal Uddin Ahmed of the National Institute of Mental Health told The Daily Star yesterday.

Social unrest, inability to cope with failures, boredom, loneliness, and changing family structure are among the things that lead people towards drugs, he added.

"The social media also makes people lonely," said Prof Helal, a researcher on addiction.

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Impounded vehicles occupy an entire road parallel to the street near the capital's Airport intersection, blocking traffic movement. Police have been keeping such vehicles there for nearly a year. The photo was taken on Wednesday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Cumilla seal Super Over win

SPORTS REPORTER

After the match between Cumilla Warriors and Sylhet Thunder in the ongoing Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League (BBPL) ended in the tournament's first draw, a brilliant performance from Mujeeb-Ur-Rahman helped the visiting team seal a Super Over win under lights at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium yesterday.

Sylhet, at the bottom of

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'It's not possible to do everything overnight'

Says finance minister; executing is harder than he thought, but Kamal is defiant about his thinking and agenda

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ZINA TASREEN

The man with the plan, is the impression one walks away with after an audience with Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal. Later, one is invariably met with the question: was he being a little too optimistic and naive?

Jovial, conversational and clued in with the facts on the ground, Mustafa Kamal seems to delight in the unconventional when it comes to solving some of the problems troubling the country and the economy.

Take the case of the single-digit interest rates that the government set for banks from April 1, which Kamal brokered.

The move is his boldest yet since taking charge of the finance ministry on January 7 last year and has theoretically broken down the market mechanism for funds: it dictated a uniform interest rate for

loans and savings, instead of letting the interplay of demand and supply determine them.

"This will be a turning point for Bangladesh's manufacturing sector," he told The Daily Star on the eve of the announcement of this significant government move, in what was his first interview with the media since becoming Bangladesh's finance czar.

Not only will entrepreneurs be rushing to banks to materialise their longed-for investment plans, which they put in the back burner for the prohibitively high interest rate, the move will also solve the malaise of default loans, he thinks.

Kamal is of the opinion that the root cause of default loans in Bangladesh is not the lax corporate governance, corruption or the absence of enforcing rules and regulations -- but the high interest rates.

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HC orders probe into waste of resources

Halts ex-director's LPR facilities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to suspend the retirement facilities of National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital (NICRH)'

former director Prof Dr Md Moarraf Hossen for negligence in preserving and protecting the hospital's equipment, including those of the ICU.

Last Saturday, Md Moarraf Hossen went into leave preparatory retirement.

Issuing a suo moto (voluntary) rule, the HC yesterday ordered

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LONE GOVT CANCER HOSPITAL

X-ray machine lies idle for 2 decades

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

In 1998, the authorities of National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital (NICRH) bought an X-ray machine imported from Germany.

But it never reached the hospital's radiology department, where it was supposed to be used.

For nearly two decades, the device has been gathering dust inside a room of the hospital in the capital's Mohakhali, depriving patients of treatment and wasting resources.

Speaking to The Daily Star, radiology department officials at the NICRH, the country's lone specialised public hospital for cancer treatment, said a Bangladeshi agent, Natasa Corporation Limited, sold the machine and it was kept in the hospital's room in 2000.

The firm was supposed to do the machine's test runs there and hand it to the radiology department on getting its clearance, department head Associate Professor Mushtaque Ahmed Jalali said. "But the machine never arrived at the department."

On several occasions in the past, the department wrote to the hospital's director, requesting him to take initiatives for ensuring that the machine is delivered to the department, but to no avail.

He alleged that the Bangladeshi firm took money from the hospital without completing the work.

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DHAKA MAYORAL POLLS

JP aspirant crashes out

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

The Election Commission yesterday cancelled the nomination of Jatiya Party mayor aspirant Kamrul Hasan as his name was not on the voter list of Dhaka North City Corporation.

The decision was made during the scrutiny of the nomination papers by the returning officer of the DNCC polls.

After scrutinising the nomination forms of the mayor and councillor hopefuls of two Dhaka city corporations, the EC yesterday declared the candidatures of 993 candidates valid. Of them, 13 will run for mayor and 98 for councillor.

Of the 13 mayor hopefuls, six will join the battle of ballots in Dhaka North City Corporation and the rest in Dhaka South City Corporation on January 30.

The DNCC returning officer declared valid the nominations of 359 general and 87 reserved ward councillor hopefuls,

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Demonstrating jute mill workers being administered saline in front of Platinum Jute Mills gate in Khulna yesterday, the fifth consecutive day of their hunger strike to press home their 11-point demand, including timely payment of wages. Their leaders called off the strike last night following assurance from the government.

PHOTO: DIPANKAR ROY

JUTE MILLS

Leaders say demo over, workers say not yet

977 fall sick during hunger strike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On assurance from the government that the National Wage Board-2015 would be implemented, leaders of jute mill workers called off their strike last night.

However, workers were continuing their strike as of filing this report at 12:20am today, reports our local correspondent.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Mizanur Rahman, a worker of Platinum Jute Mill in Khulna, said they will not call off the strike until their leaders convey the assurance to them.

Last evening, leaders of Bangladesh Jute Mill Workers' League and State-Owned Jute Mill CBA and Non-CBA Sangram Parishad had talks with Textile and Jute Minister Golam Dastagir Gazi and State Minister for Labour and Employment Monnijan Sufian at the Jute Diversification Promotion Centre to discuss the matter, said a press release.

"On the basis of the discussions, it is to be informed that workers will be given slips of the National Wage Scale-2015," it said.

Therefore, upon the declaration of leaders regarding the calling off of the strike, all the workers are requested to withdraw their movements and join work," it added.

Meanwhile, hundreds of workers from eight state-run jute mills in the Khulna and Jashore industrial belts have fallen sick so far, as they continued their fast-unto-death protest for the fifth consecutive day yesterday.

The protest was held to press home an 11-point demand,

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