

House session
prorogued due
to Covid-19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The budget and eighth session of 11th parliament was prorogued yesterday due to the pandemic. With only nine working days, this was the shortest parliament session in recent history.

The shortest ever budget session was prorogued around 1:30pm, in presence of Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury.

Of the nine sittings, only two days were allotted for holding discussions on the new budget. Discussions on supplementary budget for 2019-20 fiscal were held only for one day.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal placed the Tk 5,68,000 crore national budget on June 11, while the budget session began on June 10.

According to the parliament secretariat, 16 MPs -- 10 from Awami League, three from Jatiya Party and one each from BNP, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal and Workers Party -- took part in the budget discussions.

A total of 5.18 hours of discussions were had on the new budget. In recent years, 50-55 hours

SEE PAGE 4



Motorbikes stand crowded at a red light in the capital's Bijoy Sarani intersection, with little care for social distancing. Although two-wheeled ridesharing services have remained suspended since the Covid-19 outbreak due to health concerns, most riders are seen carrying a pillion passenger. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

CREDIT CARD FRAUD

Four members of
'int'l gang' held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cyber police teams of Criminal Investigation Department (CID) have arrested 22 alleged frauds including 16 Nigerian nationals, in connection with two fraudulent activities.

Four of the arrestees are members of an international gang who have been using international credit cards of foreigners to purchase different items in Bangladesh from various online shopping sites, officials said.

"This is for the first time we have got hold of such a fraud gang in Bangladesh that has members in different countries," CID's Deputy Inspector General Shah Alam told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Our investigation reveals that the arrested gang members have so far used over 100 international credit cards of different foreign countries like Brazil and Germany. In some cases they were not successful," CID's Additional Special Superintendent Kamrul Ahsan said.

He said through their members abroad, the frauds received PIN and other necessary information of the cards and used many of those for online shopping in Bangladesh.

"We are still investigating how they managed the PIN and other confidential information of those international credit cards," he said.

As the card holders received message that their cards were used in purchasing items from a Bangladeshi online grocery and food products provider, they informed the shopping site, which lodged a complaint with police, he added.

DiG Shah Alam said they started an investigation receiving a complaint from the well-known product delivery service, and arrested the four fraudsters from Mirpur and Mohammadpur on July 6.

They are: Mizanur Rahman (22), Rehanur Hasan Rashed (20), Anwar Parvez (22), and Al-Amin (22).

SEE PAGE 4

LURING JOB SEEKERS TO VIETNAM

Rab identifies 6 recruiting agencies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All 11 recent Vietnam returnees to Bangladesh, who were trafficked by some unscrupulous recruiting agencies with a promise of attractive jobs, had permit cards from the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training (BMET) which showed them as entrepreneurs.

Once taken to Vietnam on DN (Doanh Nghiep -- Business) visa, Bangladeshi brokers there seized their passports. Instead of any permanent job contract, they were offered menial jobs for short periods. Some didn't even get any.

Frustration gripped the job seekers as they soon found out that all their invested money was gone.

A job seeker died there and as buried without any help from the recruiting agency.

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) came up with this information after arresting three directors of two recruiting agencies from the capital's Paltan area on Wednesday. The arrestees are -- Jamal Uddin alias Sohag (34), Kamal Hossain (39) and Jamal Hossain (37).

Rab also seized 254 passports from these two agencies, Lt Col Rakibul Hasan, commanding officer (CO) of Rab-3, told a press briefing yesterday, held at Rab media centre in Karwan Bazar.

Rab identified six such recruiting agencies in Dhaka, who were involved in illegally sending people to Vietnam.

Those are -- Mash Career Service, JK Overseas Limited, Advent Overseas Limited, Sandhani Overseas Limited, and Al Noman

Human Resource Limited.

After interrogation, Rab got names of eight Bangladeshi brokers in Vietnam, who are involved in such illegal activities. They are -- Abdul Jabbar, Mostafa, Golam Azam Sumon, Kalpana, Azmeer, Milon, Shovon and Atik.

Eleven Bangladeshi job seekers returned from Vietnam on July 3. Meanwhile, 27 more are still passing days in uncertainty, Rab said.

In primary interrogation, the arrestees told Rab that the Bangladeshi brokers informed them there is opportunity to work in Vietnam as entrepreneurs.

They charged Tk 4-5 lakh from a job seeker and promised jobs with monthly salary of Tk 40,000-50,000 working in different companies,

especially in mobile phone sector. Once agreed, they managed "offer letters" from Bangladeshi brokers in Vietnam.

DN visa is issued to foreigners who come to work with companies in Vietnam. The duration of DN visa is no longer than 12 months. Rab said the job seekers need to have USD 2,000 on them to enter Vietnam with such visa.

"Nine out of 11 Vietnam returnees managed the BMET smart cards as entrepreneurs. There was no information about two other cards in BMET registration," the Rab CO said, adding that they are looking into the matter.

The Rab official said Bangladeshi brokers seized the job seekers' passports at the airport in Vietnam.

SEE PAGE 4

CORRUPTION IN MASK, PPE PROCUREMENT

Motazzerul Mithu skips ACC quizzing on health grounds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Central International Medical College and Hospital Chairman Motazzerul Islam Mithu, who allegedly committed corruption in mask and PPE procurement, yesterday skipped interrogation by Anti-Corruption Commission on health ground.

Moreover, Motazzerul, also owner of Lexicon Merchandize and Technocrat, sent a letter through his lawyer to the anti-graft watchdog where he claimed himself innocent, said ACC Public Relations Officer Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya.

The commission, however, did not accept his claim, confirmed the PRO.

Meanwhile, ACC Director Mir Md Zainul Abedin Shebly quizzed Meditech Imaging Director Humayun Kabir over the allegations of supplying poor quality masks, PPE and other medical equipment,

needed to fight against deadly coronavirus, said Pranab.

On Wednesday, ACC quizzed JMI Hospital Requisite Manufacturing Ltd Chairman Abdur Razzak and coordinator (medical team) of Toma Construction Ltd Motiur Rahman over the same allegations.

On July 1, ACC summoned Razzak, Motiur, Motazzerul, Humayun and chairman of Elan Corporation Aminul Islam Amin for interrogation.

Aminul, already accused in a case filed by Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) for importing "substandard" KN-95 masks, did not appear before ACC on the ground of ailment.

Earlier, ACC sources said they were cross-checking the alleged persons' statements and documents.

SEE PAGE 4



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Passers-by gather around the streetside stalls at Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital yesterday, looking for a bargain. The hawkers recently reopened their stalls occupying a part of the road, after a long closure.

VIRTUAL COURT FUNCTIONS

Training for lawyers
to start on July 12

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The public prosecutors, government pleaders and individual lawyers across the country will be provided training about the technical and information technology in order to increase their competence in moving cases before the courts through virtual system.

The law ministry has arranged the training programme to start from July 12 to August 24 through video conferencing in association with German Development Organisation.

Local and foreign experts will conduct the training programme, law ministry Public Relations Officer Md Rezaul Karim told The Daily Star.

Law Minister Anisul Huq will inaugurate the programme on July 12 when lawyers including the public prosecutors and government pleaders from Brahmanbaria and Narsingdi will receive the training.

Then the lawyers from other districts of the country will gradually be given training on the same issue, a law ministry press release said yesterday.

Bangladeshi workers not
being paid in Maldives

Envoy in discussion with their govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Many Bangladeshi migrant workers in Maldives have not been paid their due wages and allowances by their companies and employers, Bangladesh High Commissioner in Maldives M Nazmul Hassan said yesterday.

"We came to know many companies or employers have kept you [migrant workers] unpaid. We have been discussing the matter with the Maldivian government regularly, and they are sincerely trying to resolve it," he said.

In a video message, the high commissioner urged Bangladeshi workers in the archipelago to not turn violent and get involved in vandalism but resolve the problem in a peaceful manner through discussion with their employers.

The message was posted on the high commission's social media page. An economic recession resulting from the coronavirus pandemic has been prevailing across the globe and Maldives is not an exception, he said.

The economy of Maldives largely depends on the tourism sector. That is why coronavirus' impact on its economy has created an even bigger crisis, he said, adding that Bangladeshi migrant workers have remained unpaid amid this.

Hassan said the Maldivian government has been arranging two chartered flights each week to repatriate undocumented Bangladeshi workers.

However, besides undocumented workers, many of the regular or documented Bangladeshi workers have also applied via the high commission's social media page for repatriation, he said.

SEE PAGE 4

Road crashes kill 2

STAR REPORT

Two people were killed in road accidents in two districts during the last two days.

A doctor was killed in a collision between a motorcycle he was riding and a battery-run auto-rickshaw on Lalmonirhat-Burimari highway at Burirbazar in Aditmari upazila yesterday, our Lalmonirhat correspondent reports.

The deceased was identified as Dr AFM Holam Ambiya Adil, said police.

He was on his way home in Khatapara village from Rangpur on a motorcycle around 3:30pm. The auto-rickshaw was coming from the opposite direction, said Aditmari Police Station OC Saiful Islam.

Adil was declared dead at Aditmari Upazila Health Complex, said a duty doctor.

Dr Adil, who was working at Aditmari Upazila Health Complex as a medical officer, was transferred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital one and a half years ago, said his family and Dr Nurul Amin.

A labourer of a tractor died when the vehicle ran him over after he fell off it at Madhabbati village in Birol upazila on Wednesday night, said police.

The deceased was identified as Faruk Hossain (14), son of Aynal Hossain from Chandamari village in Birol, reports our Dinajpur correspondent.

US embassy provides
PPE to police

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US embassy has provided essential personal protective equipment (PPE) to Bangladesh Police as part of continued US support for Bangladesh's Covid-19 response efforts. Ambassador Earl Miller and embassy representatives of the US Military's Indo-Pacific Command handed over the equipment to Bangladesh's Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed on Wednesday.

The donated PPE includes 4,000 KN95 surgical masks, 3,200 bottles (200-milliliter) of hand sanitiser, 4,000 pairs of surgical gloves, 550 pounds of powdered bleach, 22 disinfectant backpack sprayers, 700 face shields, and 25 infrared thermometers, says a US embassy statement yesterday.

All the equipment were purchased locally from Bangladeshi companies. The statement said police efforts have played a key role in Bangladesh's Covid-19 response, supporting the public and health ministry initiatives throughout the country.

To date, the US, through the Department of State and USAID alone, has provided over \$43.4 million in aid to combat Covid-19 in Bangladesh.

The US embassy in Dhaka is providing assistance to organisations throughout Bangladesh, building on more than \$1 billion in health assistance provided to Bangladesh over the past 20 years.

"This funding emphasises the long-term US commitment to helping ensure access for all people in Bangladesh to quality, lifesaving healthcare," the embassy statement said.

Bangladesh's police, and other first responders, together with healthcare workers, customs officials, people who work in grocery stores and pharmacies, journalists, and volunteer organisations perform remarkable acts of service every day, it said, adding, "They are genuine heroes."



Rickshaws are not supposed to be on the Postogola bridge, but there's little regard for these rules as tens of rickshaws remain parked in a row on the bridge. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN