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'BREACH OF CONTRACT' Probe lingers, locomotives remain idle

Railway ministry now
recasts probe committee

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The railways ministry has reconstituted a committee investigating a South Korean company for violating some clauses of the contract under which 10 locomotives have been supplied to the Bangladesh Railway.

The changes in the probe committee came more than three months after Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujon ordered the formation of the committee, which was supposed to complete the work within 15 working days.

In the meantime, the locomotives have been lying idle at a railways workshop in Chattogram's Pahartoli for around five months, at a time when the BR is struggling to run its operation with a big number of outdated engines.

Moreover, the locomotives are unlikely to be added to the railway fleets until the probe is complete, officials said.

The reconstituted committee was asked to complete the probe within another 15 working days.

Hyundai Rotem Company (HRC), the company in question, has sent their written reply to the probe committee on January 20. It said it was ready to send officials to clarify its stance, sources said.

At least two members of the previous committee earlier told this correspondent that their probe is being delayed

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



TIGERS RETURN WITH WHITEWASH... Bangladesh players are in jubilant mood as they pose behind the champions' banner following a 120-run victory over the West Indies in the third ODI at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday. Having won all three matches of the series, the Tigers completed a spotless return to international cricket after a gap of more than 10 months.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Ekushey book fair to begin on March 18

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Not virtually, Amar Ekushey Boi Mela-2021 will be held as usual from March 18 after a long delay due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Habibullah Sirajee, director general of Bangla Academy, confirmed the date yesterday.

He said, "The book fair will start on March 18. I can't say more at this moment."

"We will give details on the duration of the book fair. Many people were in confusion, so I am just confirming the date."

"Our designers will make design of locations of the stalls, considering the coronavirus situation," he added.

Usually, the book fair begins on February 1 each year.

The decision of holding the book fair in physical location was made earlier, but the date was not confirmed.

A Bangla Academy official yesterday said Prime

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

2 opposition MPs lambast govt over graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two opposition lawmakers came down heavily on the government yesterday in parliament for its failure to curb corruption.

Bangladesh has set a textbook example of plundering, BNP lawmaker Rumeen Farhana said while taking part in the discussion on thanksgiving motion on the president's speech.

"It has become normal that a pillow is being purchased at Tk 6,000, a vegetable cutter widely known as boti at Tk 10,000, a fork at Tk 1,000... a waste bin costs Tk 2.50 lakh, a medical book Tk 85,000, curtains Tk 37 lakh, and a telephone Tk 15 lakh," she said.

The president in parliament spoke about infrastructural development in details, "but I say this [infrastructure development] is a big source of looting", she told

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Robot 'jellyfish' to protect coral reefs



AFP, London

A robot inspired by the shape and delicate underwater movements of a jellyfish, allowing it to safely explore endangered coral reefs, was unveiled by British scientists.

According to research by teams at the universities of Southampton and Edinburgh and published in the journal Science Robotics, the small robot mimics "nature's most efficient swimmer -- the Aurelia aurita jellyfish", more often referred to as the common jellyfish.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

ATTACK ON COPS More than 50 people sued, 8 arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Around four dozen people were sued over attacking a police team in Pirojpur Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The attack was carried out when the team was returning to Pirojpur Sadar Police Station after arresting an accused in a theft case. It left five members of the police station injured.

Sub-inspector Mahmudul Hasan, who was injured in the incident, filed the case against 16 named and 30-35 unnamed accused, said Nurul Islam Badal, officer-in-charge of the police station.

He said they had already arrested eight accused in the case. They were produced before a court, which sent them to jail.

Mollah Azad Hossain, additional superintendent

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

UNRELENTING COVID THREAT Borders tightened around the world

EU urges AstraZeneca to speed up vaccine deliveries amid 'supply shock'; Australia approves Pfizer vaccine

AGENCIES

Border restrictions were being tightened around the world yesterday in the face of an unrelenting coronavirus threat, after a weekend in which anger at social distancing rules bubbled over into fiery clashes in the Netherlands.

The United States was set to join France, Israel and Sweden in pulling up the drawbridge to certain arrivals, with special concern about new strains of the pathogen that originated in Britain and South Africa.

"It's up to us to show that we are civic-minded," Spaniard Claudio Barraza told AFP upon arrival at Paris's main international airport, after new rules for EU arrivals came into force.

The stipulations came as Mexico's President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador became the latest public figure to test positive for the disease, and New Zealand reported its first community case for more than two months.

In Washington, President Joe Biden was set to reimpose a ban yesterday on most non-US citizens who have been in Britain, Brazil, Ireland and much of Europe, as well as adding South Africa to the list, a senior White House official said.

Biden last week tightened mask-wearing rules and ordered quarantine for people flying into the country, which on Sunday topped 25 million cases.

Since it emerged in late 2019, Covid-19 has killed more than 2.1 million people, with almost 99 million cases registered, according to an AFP tally

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

ROHINGYA RELOCATION Third batch goes to Bhasan Char on Jan 29-30

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Almost 3,000 Rohingyas will be relocated to Bhasan Char by the end of this month, a top official said.

This would be the 3rd batch of the refugees to be relocated to the island.

"The relocation will take place on January 29 and 30," said the top official of Refugee, Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), wishing not to be named.

The RRRRC is undertaking the relocation process amid concerns from the international community that the island is a risky place to live.

The first batch of 1,642 Rohingyas was relocated to Bhasan Char on December 4. Over 1,800 others were relocated on December 29.

Most of the relocated refugees told reporters that living quarters on the island were way better than the congested makeshift shanties in Cox's Bazar refugee camps.

They also said they chose to move there. Bangladesh Navy has undertaken a Tk 3,100 crore project titled the Ashrayan-3 Project on Bhasan Char for the refugees.

"More Rohingyas are becoming

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

ACC sues SI for amassing illegal wealth

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

The Anti-Corruption Commission has filed a case against a police sub-inspector over acquiring properties worth Tk 39.13 lakh illegally.

The accused is Md Alamgir Hossain, 43, -- an SI at Sonatala Police Station of Bogura. He hails from Shoulisbala village in Sirajganj's Raiganj upazila.

Sudip Kumar Chowdhury, ACC deputy assistant director in Bogura, filed the case on Sunday.

According to the case statement, Alamgir joined police service as a constable of Dhaka Metropolitan Police in 1997. Later, he was promoted as sub-

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3



Teachers and authorities of Brojmohun Biddyalaya (Barishal Zilla) school on Barishal's Kalibari road are dusting off tables in their institution. After a long closure since March last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic, schools are finally set to open next month.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Poor suffer in widening Covid divide

Says Oxfam, demands steps to tackle inequality

THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION, London

Billionaires including Amazon's Jeff Bezos and Tesla founder Elon Musk have seen their wealth soar during the Covid-19 pandemic while the world's poor face years of hardship, charity Oxfam said yesterday as it demanded steps to tackle inequality.

Nations have a "shrinking window of opportunity" to build a fair, green recovery, according to "The Inequality Virus" report, published as global leaders tune in for the World Economic Forum's virtual "Davos Dialogue" meeting.

"We stand to witness the greatest rise in inequality since records began," Gabriela Bucher, executive director of Oxfam International, said in a statement as the charity called for higher wealth taxes and stronger protections for workers.

"Rigged economies are funneling wealth to a rich elite who are riding out the pandemic in luxury, while those on the frontline of the pandemic -- shop assistants, healthcare workers, and market vendors -- are struggling to pay the bills."

Covid-19 has unleashed an economic storm that hit the poor and vulnerable hardest, with women and marginalised workers facing the worst of job losses and the World Bank warning more than 100 million people could be pushed into extreme poverty.

It could take more than a decade to reduce the number

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 26
Fazr Juma Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5-35 12-45 4-15 5-46 7-15
JAMAT 6-10 1-15 4-30 5-50 7-45
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION