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WHITENING BLACK MONEY

Don't give the scope next fiscal year

Experts urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A number of renowned economists and industrialists have urged the government not to give the scope for whitening black money in the next fiscal year.

Only a handful of individuals are reaping the benefits of Bangladesh's astounding GDP growth due to the discriminatory provision of whitening black money. This is escalating economic disparity in the country, they said at a webinar yesterday.

Eminent economist Rehman Sobhan, chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said, "Corrupt individuals who have amassed astronomical amount of money are getting amnesty just by paying a nominal amount of money as tax."

"This money whitening process will sharply increase economic discrimination in the country," he pointed out at the webinar titled "Black money being whitened: Beneficial or harmful for the economy?" organised by Citizen's Platform for SDGs.

Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, distinguished fellow at the CPD, said, "Money earned by committing crimes and corruption is being termed undisclosed income and being whitened by paying tax."

This directly collides with the constitution because it has been clearly stated in the charter that the state will create such conditions that none will be able to possess and benefit from unaccounted income, he noted.

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The waste of a dyeing factory accumulated on a street in the capital's Kadomtoli, Shyamoli area. Such mismanaged waste makes locals suffer immensely on Road-12 and nearby Gazi Tank areas. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Have EC probed by judicial council

101 SC lawyers ask president

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One hundred and one Supreme Court lawyers yesterday sent a letter to President Abdul Hamid, requesting him to constitute the Supreme Judicial Council to probe allegations of "financial corruption and gross misconduct" against the CEC and other election commissioners.

They also requested the president to remove the CEC and other commissioners from their posts.

In the letter, the SC lawyers urged the president to take away the post of chief election commissioner from KM Nurul Huda and hand his responsibilities to an election commissioner while an inquiry takes place into the allegations.

The 101 lawyers, who signed the letter, include AM Mahub Uddin Khokon, a joint secretary general of the BNP and also a former

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2 govt officials held for robbing exchequer of Tk 2.20cr

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Police arrested two government officials in Dinajpur on Monday for illegally transferring around Tk 2.2 crore digitally from the state treasury over the last two years by forging documents, user IDs and passwords.

The arrestees are cash officer of Dinajpur's M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital (MARMC) Amirul Islam, 34, and Mahfuzur Rahman, 42, audit officer of the district's account and finance department.

Officials of Dinajpur's detective branch (DB) of police interrogated the duo and produced them before a Dinajpur court asking for seven days' remand each, said Imam Zafar, officer-in-charge of Dinajpur DB.

The remand hearing will take place today, he added.

Saiful Islam, the district account and finance officer in Dinajpur who first detected their scheme on January 31, filed the case with Kotwali Police Station on Monday night.

In the first information report (FIR), Saiful Islam mentioned that Amirul Islam

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COVID ORIGINS PROBE

WHO slams critics

EU tightens rules for visitors from outside the bloc; Russia's Sputnik V vaccine 91.6pc effective in trial

AGENCIES

The World Health Organization blasted critics of its investigation into the origins of the Covid-19 pandemic and challenged those claiming to know better to come forward with the smoking gun.

A WHO investigative team is in Wuhan, China -- where the first cases were discovered in December 2019 -- trying to piece together how the virus jumped from animals to humans before going on to kill more than two million people.

The UN agency's emergencies director Michael Ryan hit out at those sniping at the mission, and said people claiming they have information on how the pandemic broke out should emerge from the shadows.

Ryan said many critics were saying they "won't accept the report when it comes out", or that there is "other intelligence available that may show different findings" on how the virus broke out.

"If you have the answers... please let us know," Ryan told a press conference from the WHO's headquarters in Geneva on Monday.

He asked how responsible it was "to say you won't accept a report before it's even written? To say that you have intelligence that has not been provided?"

The WHO mission comes with heavy political baggage -- China refused the team access until mid-January and there are question marks over what the experts can hope to find, one year on.

Beijing is keen to put the focus on its recovery from the outbreak. The team toured a propaganda exhibition celebrating China's recovery from the pandemic in Wuhan on Saturday.

The mission was going "very well", one of its members said yesterday, as the team visited an animal disease control centre in the city where the first cases were reported.

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TURKISH CHARTER

Erdogan ally backs call for rewrite

AFP, Ankara

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling coalition partner yesterday backed the Turkish leader's surprise call to draft a new constitution, which some see as a bid to extend his rule.

Erdogan caught many off guard on Monday by suggesting that the "clear source of Turkey's problems" was its constitution being "written by putschists" following a 1980 military coup and in use since 1982.

He said he would push for a constitutional assembly if his junior partners in the ultranationalist MHP party support rewriting Turkey's basic law.

MHP leader Devlet Bahceli told reporters yesterday that it was "evident that Turkey needs a new constitution" and

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Big stride made for creating 'quantum brain'



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Scientists say they have made major steps towards the creation of a "quantum brain" -- a computer that could function and change like a human's.

Researchers have long been looking to create an intelligent material that is able to learn by changing itself physically, in the same way our brain does. Such a discovery could open up an entirely new generation of computers.

Now researchers have been able to assemble a network of individual atoms that are able to pattern and connect in a way similar to the behaviour of

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Cold wave may end in a day or 2

STAR REPORT

The ongoing cold spell that causes immense sufferings to the people may continue for next two or three days.

"Temperature is rising gradually and the trend will continue. The cold wave may end by next two or three days," said Ruhul Quddus, a meteorologist of Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

"There is no possibility of further cold wave in the coming days. Mercury may fall in some places for one or two days in the next week. But no cold wave is likely to happen further," he told The Daily Star last evening.

Meanwhile, a weather bulletin yesterday said mild to moderate cold wave is sweeping over Rajshahi, Rangpur and Barisal divisions.

Besides, people of some places of Tangail, Faridpur, Madaripur, Gopalganj, Kishoreganj, Mymensingh,

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12 more die, 525 get Covid

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh's Covid-19 fatalities rose to 8,149 as the health authorities recorded 12 more coronavirus-related deaths in 24 hours till yesterday morning.

The mortality rate is now 1.52 percent, the Directorate General of Health Services said in a handout.

Meanwhile, 525 new cases were detected during the same 24-hour period, pushing the national tally to 536,107.

The daily detection rate has dropped to 3.63 percent. The current overall detection rate is 14.57 percent.

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PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 3

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
5:30	12:45	4:15	5:52	7:15	
JAMAT	6:05	1:15	4:30	5:56	7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Members of the Chhatra Union attending a human chain and rally in front of the National Press Club demanding proper uses of the Bangla language. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

EMPLOYMENT IN MALAYSIA

Dhaka urges KL to finalise protocol

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh has urged Malaysia to finalise the protocol amending the MoU between the government of Malaysia and the government of Bangladesh (G-to-G plus) on the employment of workers.

Bangladesh also requested Malaysia to take back the stranded Bangladeshi workers who could not return to Malaysia due to Covid-19 lockdown.

Bangladesh appreciated the government of Malaysia for allowing the workers to change employers and also for introducing the recalibration program under which illegal workers would have an opportunity to legalise.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen raised the issues when newly appointed High Commissioner of Malaysia in Bangladesh Hazanah Md Hashim met him at the State Guest House, Padma on Monday.

The Malaysian High Commissioner acknowledged the immense contributions of Bangladeshi workers and professionals in Malaysian economy and society.

She assured Dhaka of taking up the issue of worker's return with her government.

The Malaysian envoy was appreciative of the policy initiatives and social safety net programmes of Bangladesh in the face of the prolonged pandemic.

To expand trade, the High Commissioner hoped that the negotiations for Free Trade Agreement (FTA) will start soon.

Momen lauded the strong moral and political support

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