

'Effective investment of surplus foreign currency reserves'

PM launches Bangladesh Infrastructure Development Fund

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday inaugurated Bangladesh Infrastructure Development Fund (BIDF), aiming to finance different development projects from the country's fund.

BIDF -- formed to take funds from the foreign exchange reserves -- began its journey through financing capital and maintenance dredging in Ramnabad Channel of the Payra Port.

To this end, a tripartite agreement between the Finance Division, Payra Port Authority, and Sonali Bank was signed yesterday at the Finance Division.

BIDF is the first fund of its kind in South Asia, which will finance such development activities.

The prime minister joined the signing ceremony as chief guest virtually from her official residence Gono Bhaban in the capital.

Speaking on the occasion, she said as a developing nation, Bangladesh now has to move forward on its own and finance its development work.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the country's foreign currency reserve increased along with a reduction in other costs, Hasina said, adding that the government has thought about the potential use of this foreign currency to move away from loan dependency.

She also said the government has framed BIDF to meet the country's import costs of six months considering frequent natural calamities, and

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Bangladesh's soil is not known to be good for Cherry trees. Maybe that's why the few that grow during spring stand out so much. As this one breathes in DU's Department of Physics, with cherry flowers blossoming from every branch, it brings a sense of serenity to the pedestrians who pass by. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

12th JS session to begin April 1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 12th session of the eleventh parliament will begin on April 1.

President Mohammad Abdul Hamid has convened the session exercising the power bestowed upon him as per the Article 72 (1) of the Constitution, parliament secretariat said in a release.

The session will be held at 11am at the parliament complex at city's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, the official also said.

Before commencing the House sitting on the day, the Business Advisory Committee of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban is likely to hold a meeting to set the duration and business of the session.

Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury will chair the meeting, sources said.

According to the constitution, there is an obligation to convene the parliament session within 60 days after the end of the previous session.

The eleventh session of the parliament was prorogued on February 2. The 12-day session began on January 18.

The budget session is scheduled to be held in the first week of June. The 12th session will be a brief one, sources said.

Due to the ongoing global Covid-19 pandemic, health guidelines will be followed during holding of the session, like the six previous sessions of parliament.

The session is likely to pass several important bills.

DMP begins block raids in the capital

Strict security for high-profile visits marking Golden Jubilee of Independence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) has started block raids in the city to ensure foolproof security during the 10-day state celebrations starting March 17, marking the country's golden jubilee of independence and Mujib Borsho.

The block raids started since Sunday after a meeting of DMP high-ups decided to take stern security measures including conducting block raids in all its crime divisions, to ensure flawless security to state celebrations to be attended by high-profile dignitaries.

Shazzadur Rahman, deputy commissioner of DMP's Ramna Division, yesterday said strict instructions have been given to ensure security on the occasion.

"A meeting at DMP headquarters on

Sunday decided to conducted block raids in all eight divisions to ensure strict security and such raids started after the meeting at different places," he told The Daily Star.

Block raids are being carried out to prevent unnecessary gatherings, criminal activities and untoward incidents, police said.

The 10-day special programme will start from March 17 and continue till March 26. DMP has already urged city dwellers not to hold any political and social programmes in the capital during the time.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Sri Lankan President Nandasena Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Maldives President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, Nepalese President Bidya Devi Bhandari and Bhutanese Prime

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MARCH 17-26

Restrict movement unless urgent: IGP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inspector General of Police (IGP) Benazir Ahmed has requested to restrict the movement "unless urgent" during the 10-day program from March 17 to 26 to mark the birth centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the golden jubilee of independence.

He was speaking as the chief guest at a scholarship awarding ceremony organised by the Bangladesh Police Service Association at the Rajarbagh Police Auditorium in the capital yesterday.

Addressing dwellers of the capital, the IGP said heads of state of five countries would come to Bangladesh to celebrate the birth centenary of Bangabandhu and the golden jubilee of independence.

"It is our state responsibility to provide security to VVIPs and it is being requested to restrict movement during the celebration if there is not a serious need," said the police chief.

The IGP also requested political parties not to announce any programme for these few days.

At the ceremony, Benazir Ahmed handed over

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PROBE INTO ALLEGED CORRUPTION, IRREGULARITIES

UGC delegation visits Begum Rokeya, Hajee Danesh univs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A three-member team of University Grants Commission (UGC) has visited Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur (BRUR) and Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University (HSTU) to investigate various complaints of corruption, irregularities and anomalies filed separately in 2019.

The team, headed by UGC Member Dr Bishwajit Chanda, visited BRUR on Sunday and HSTU yesterday.

The UGC officials stayed at BRUR for around 12 hours, reaching there at 10am, while they stayed at HSTU campus from 10am to 4pm.

The other team members were UGC Senior Assistant Secretary Jamal Uddin and UGC Member Dr Abu Taher.

During their visit, the team interviewed 32 teachers, officials and staffers of BRUR. However, BRUR Vice Chancellor (VC)

Prof Nazmul Ahsan Kalimullah was not present on campus.

There were 45 allegations against the VC and his administration.

According to BRUR teachers, Komolesh Chandra Roy and Moshir Rahman, president and general secretary of Bangabandhu Parishad, respectively, and BRUR teachers filed a written complaint against the VC and his administration over corruption and irregularities in 2019.

The UGC officials collected all relevant papers centring the allegations.

Dr Biswajit said they recorded statements during their visit throughout Sunday.

Everything is being considered seriously, as the allegations were raised against the VC and his administration, he further added.

"The VC's prolonged absence at the campus was the key allegation," he said. The

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VANDALISING, LOOTING OF STORE IN BARISHAL

Teenager wrongfully sent to jail, claims his family

OUR CORRESPONDENT, BARISHAL

Parents of an arrestee in a case filed over vandalising and looting of a fashion outlet in Barishal city on March 7 have alleged that their teenage son was falsely sent to jail while the actual accused roam free.

Around 40 to 45 miscreants on the evening of March 7 vandalised and looted the outlet -- Top Ten Mart Limited -- on Sadar Road in the city, according to its authorities.

During the incident, the employees of the shop detained five attackers and handed them over to police, they further said.

The outlet's branch manager filed a case over attacking and looting goods worth Tk 50 lakh with Kotwali Police Station against 21 named and 20 to 25 unnamed accused the next day.

Following that, police also arrested 14 people.

According to Kotwali police, a youth named "Al-Amin Sohan" surrendered and was sent to jail as a named accused in the

case on March 10.

But Al-Amin's mother, Fulbanu Begum, alleged that her son left for Kuakata on March 8 and was not involved with the incident.

She also showed his birth certificate, school and other documents, according to which, his name is not Al-Amin Sohan. It's Al-Amin.

Moreover, he was born on December 5, 2005 and he is 16 years old at the moment, she said.

Contacted, SI Ashrafur Alam, the investigating officer of the case, said the youth introduced himself as "Al-Amin Sohan" and said he was involved with the incident.

"So, we produced him before a court, which sent him to jail the next day," he added.

About his age, the IO said they are looking into the matter.

OC Nurul Islam of Kotwali Police Station said according to the case

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DEFAMATION CASE BY BGB

Charges framed against BLAST employee

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A Cox's Bazar court yesterday framed charges against an employee of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) in a defamation case of Tk 100 crore filed by Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) last year.

The court of Senior Judicial Magistrate Tamanna Farah in Cox's Bazar passed the order in presence of the accused, said BGB's lawyer Md Sazzadul Karim.

Abdul Sukkur, a lawyer for the BLAST employee, said, "We have submitted a petition to the court for my client's acquittal, but it was rejected."

Asked, Borkot Ali, a lawyer of BLAST, also said they had filed an application under Section 241(A) to discharge the employee from the charges, but the application was rejected. He did not want to make any further comment on this issue.

Protiva Das, a conducting lawyer; BLAST president at Cox's Bazar Abul Kalam Siddique and ex-president advocate AJM Moinuddin took part in the hearing.

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MISHAP ON BRT LINE-3

Work resumption could take a month: officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Resumption of construction works near Dhaka Airport for Bus Rapid Transit Line-3, which witnessed two accidents on Sunday that left six workers injured, may take up to a month, officials said.

Meanwhile, a probe committee formed by road transport and highways division (RTHD) has started their work and would visit the spot today, they said. Besides, a team of Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority (DTCA) also visited the spot yesterday.

At least six workers, including three Chinese nationals involved in construction of BRT Line-3, were injured as a part of a launching girder fell on them while they were working near Dhaka airport.

The accident took place hours after a pier cap of an elevated section of the same BRT line collapsed early on Sunday, exposing serious weaknesses in safety measures.

A launching girder is a type of gantry crane used for lifting and installing girders of viaducts.

Of the injured, four got released from Evercare Hospital while two were still in hospital with one Chinese national in intensive care unit, a hospital

official said.

The Tk 4,268-crore project, which witnessed several revisions of both cost and deadline, is being implemented by Dhaka Bus Rapid Transit Company Limited (DBRTCL), a government-owned company, to set up a 20.5km line for dedicated bus service from Dhaka airport to Gazipur.

Three government agencies -- Roads and Highways Department (RHD), Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA) and Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) -- are involved in the implementation of various segments of the project.

The portion of the line near the airport where the accident took place is being carried out by RHD with their contractor -- China Gezhouba Group Co Ltd.

DBRTCL Managing Director Shafiqul Islam said it would take at least 15 days and up to one month to fix the launching girder and works of this portion would remain suspended till then. There is only one launching girder for this portion, he added.

The project was supposed to be completed in between December 2012 and 2016, but has

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The traffic at Old Dhaka's Babu Bazar bridge remains congested throughout the working day. Vehicles passing through here often take sharp turns towards Mitford Hospital. Locals say it's these vehicles that are to blame for the incessant traffic in the area. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMARN HOSSAIN

836 acres of forest land recovered

Environment ministry tells JS body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 836 acres of forest land that was illegally occupied by different people have been recovered so far, the environment, forests and climate change affairs ministry told a parliamentary standing committee meeting yesterday.

The meeting of the parliamentary watchdog on the ministry was held at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, with ruling Awami League MP and chief of the committee Saber Hossain Chowdhury in the chair.

Earlier in a meeting of the committee held in February, it was said that a total of 1,60,566 people had been occupying over

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OBITUARY

Professor Muhammad Munirul Islam
(1936-2021)

Professor Munirul Islam passed away peacefully on Friday, 12 March, 2021 at his home in Dhaka. Born in Chittagong, he was the son of Justice M. Idris and Begum Kulsum Idris.

A Professor of Physics at the University of Connecticut, USA, he was elected a Fellow of the American Physical Society and retired as Professor Emeritus in 2007. Prof. Islam was a Kali Narayan Scholar of Dhaka University and received his doctorate from Imperial College, London.

His lifelong research focused on developing a theoretical model for the structure of the proton, which is being evaluated by Large Hadron Collider (LHC) experiments at CERN, Geneva.

He shall be missed dearly by his family and friends.