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DOING BUSINESS WITHOUT PERMISSION Govt employees flouting rules

Such unlawful practices by many must be stopped, says ACC; Govt makes employees aware of rules; no action, probe

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Even though they are quite well paid and receive plenty of perks from the government, a "huge" number of civil servants own and run businesses on the side violating service rules, according to the Anti-Corruption Commission.

It said these government employees have either become contractors or opened businesses in their names or in the names of their dependents. They have accumulated a "huge" amount of wealth, the graft watchdog said in a letter.

The ACC said these employees do mention their wealth and their sources in the tax returns, but they do not have the government approval made mandatory in the Government Servants (Conduct) Rules, 1979, said the letter sent to the cabinet secretary on March 29.

"The commission thinks such unlawful practices should be stopped immediately," reads the letter, a copy of which The Daily Star has obtained.

Section 17 (1) of the rules says: "Subject to the other provisions of this rule, no government servant shall, except with the previous sanction of government, engage in any trade or undertake any employment or work, other than his official duties."

Section 17 (3) of the rules says: "A government servant shall not, SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



A newly-built mosque on Khulna city's Khan Jahan Ali Road. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina virtually inaugurated 50 such model mosques across the country yesterday from the Gono Bhaban, marking the Mujib Borsho. She hoped these mosques would help spread the essence of Islam. PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Model mosques to help spread essence of Islam PM says as she inaugurates 50 govt-built mosques



UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday hoped that model mosques would help spread the essence of Islam and its inspirational practices to all irrespective of their religions and castes.

"Through these model mosques, the culture and messages of Islam will draw the attention of all. The people of the country, irrespective of their religions and castes, will be able to comprehend the essence of Islam," she said. SEE PAGE 10 COL 3



Lt General SM Shafiuddin named new army chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lt Gen SM Shafiuddin Ahmed, quartermaster general of Bangladesh Army, will be the chief of the force for the next three years.

"Bangladesh Army's BA-2496 Lieutenant General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed, OSP, NDU, PSC, SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Health crisis deepens in border districts

Hospitals refusing treatment to Covid patients for lack of capacity; hard to find empty beds

STAR REPORT

Many hospitals in the districts along the border are at capacity as they are grappling with an increasing number of Covid-19 patients.

There is hardly any bed for new Covid patients in at least five hospitals in Satkhira, Khulna, Natore, Rajshahi and Panchagarh. These hospitals have been turning away patients for the past few days.

Besides, the number of daily new cases has increased across the country.

For the 24 hours preceding 8:00am yesterday, the Directorate General of Health Services reported 2,576 new cases, the highest daily cases since April 28. The DGHS said 40 people died in the same period, which was 36 the previous day.

The positivity rate has also gone up. It was 13.25 yesterday from 12.33 the day before.

With the new cases, the total number of active Covid-19 cases rose to around 50,000. Of them, 3,200 were being treated at hospitals, according to a press release from the DGHS.

The official death toll in the country has reached 12,989 and the death rate stood at 1.58 percent.

Of those who were reported dead yesterday, the highest -- 12 -- were in Chattogram division, followed by eight each in Dhaka and Rajshahi, and six in Khulna, four in Rangpur and two in Sylhet.

HOSPITALS OVERBURDENED
With no bed available, the authorities of Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH) SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

US to provide AstraZeneca vaccine jabs

Says Momen

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said the US will provide AstraZeneca and other vaccines to Bangladesh.

The minister revealed the information after handing over essential medicines, donated by the Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries, to Palestinian Ambassador Youssef SY Ramadan at the State Guest House Padma.

Momen said Bangladesh requested two million AstraZeneca vaccine doses from the US as soon as it learnt that the US had 60 SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

BASIC Bank, BDBL merger on cards

Says finance minister

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The troubled BASIC Bank is heading for a merger with the better-performing Bangladesh Development Bank Limited (BDBL) as part of the government's efforts to improve the overall health of the country's state banks, which have historically been sitting on a heavy pile of soured credit.

"They are both state banks, so the merger should not raise any objection from anyone," Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal told The Daily Star in an interview this week.

Once a model for state-owned banks, BASIC Bank's fortune took a turn for the worst when the present government came to power in 2009 and appointed Abdul Hye Bacchu as its chairman.

Between 2010 and 2013, more than Tk 4,500 crore flew out, leaving the state bank in financial quicksand. The government had to keep pouring in funds to keep the bank standing.

In 2020, BASIC Bank's net loss widened to Tk 366 crore from Tk 326 crore in 2019, according to data from the Bangladesh Bank.

At the end of last year, as much as 51 percent of its outstanding loans were bad: Tk 7,502 crore. As of March, the bank has a capital shortfall of Tk 1,072 crore, down 28 percent from a quarter earlier.

BASIC Bank alone accounted for 17.7 percent of the default loans attributed to the state banks at the end of 2020.

As of last year, which is the latest SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Business

Relief for customers as BB lowers charges on deposits, loans

The central bank yesterday either lowered or eliminated charges on deposits and loans, bringing an end to the excessive fees and commissions that banks used to impose on customers.

STORY ON B1



A woman puts a wet piece of tissue on her husband's forehead as the man, who was suffering from fever for the past few days, sits on a chair outside the capital's Mugda Medical College and Hospital around 9:30am yesterday. The couple went to the hospital earlier in the day to have the man tested for Covid-19. They, however, did not know that they needed to book an appointment online. They had to go back home even after standing in a queue for around two hours.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Bearing the unbearable

A helpless father's ordeal after one son killed, another framed

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

While he was still reeling with shock from the loss of his eight-year-old younger son, Mohidul Islam had to see his elder son taken away by police.

Sourav, 12, was not only shown arrested in the case for murdering his brother Sohag but also forced to give a confessional statement, said the father, a day labourer by profession.

"Police took bribe from the murderers since they are influential people and forced my elder son Sourav Mia to confess to the killing of my younger son Md Sohag," Mohidul told The Daily Star on Wednesday. After recording Sourav's statement, SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

police submitted a charge sheet naming him as the lone accused.

But the father filed a no-confidence motion and the court handed over the investigation charge to the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) on July 11, 2017.

After investigating the case for the last four years, PBI found Sourav to be innocent and managed to arrest two persons in connection with the murder, officials said.

Md Mansur Ali, sub-inspector of PBI Bogura, also the present investigating officer of the case, said, "We did not find any involvement of Sourav. He was not even present near the spot at the time of occurrence."

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