

All univs likely to open

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the resume in-person classes by the end of this time," Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam told reporters after the meeting.

He said as the dormitories in the university have remained closed for a long time, beds and other things there have got damaged. The authorities were fixing such problems and it was a reason for the delay.

"The education minister has assured that all exams will be held as per schedule. The schedule will remain unchanged if the Covid situation does not deteriorate drastically," the cabinet secretary said.

All educational institutions were closed in March last year to curb the spread of the Covid-19. The government reopened primary and higher secondary schools on September 12 this year after the Covid situation improved. The following day, medical colleges were reopened as well.

AMENDMENT TO MUNICIPALITY ACT

Municipality mayors would not be able to hold office for more than five years as the government is amending the respective act limiting their tenure to five years.

The cabinet yesterday gave the final nod to the Local Government (Municipality) (Amendment) Act 2021.

The tenure of an elected mayor of a municipality was five years. But there was a provision in the act that said the existing mayor would continue to be in that office until the next election was held, said the cabinet secretary.

The act was formulated in 2009. The issue had been overlooked, he said, adding that it came to surface that many mayors filed cases on different grounds to prolong their stay in office for even 15 or 16 years.

Since there were no clear directives to this end in the act, no measures could be taken. "The issue was discussed in several previous cabinet meetings. Today, the act was given the go-ahead," he said.

"The posts of mayors and councillors will fall vacant after a tenure of five years."

Administrative officers or any person deemed competent by the government will be appointed as administrator of the respective municipality. Such a provision is absent in the existing act.

"Once the act is passed in parliament, the local government will take an initiative to vacate the posts and appoint administrators," he said.

The election will be held within 90 days. If that does not happen for some reason, it will have to take place in six months.

The post of secretary of the municipality has been renamed Municipality Executive Officer in the amendment, he said.

Replying to a question, he said four or five years ago about 30 percent municipalities could not pay salaries to their officers and staffers on a regular basis.

But the situation has improved. "Now, about 80 percent of the municipalities can pay the salaries regularly," he said.

"Without proper reasons, a municipality will lose its status if it fails to pay salaries for 12 consecutive months," he said, adding that the provision has been incorporated in the amended act.

ESSENTIAL SERVICE ACT APPROVED
The cabinet yesterday also approved the draft "Essential Service Act, 2021" in principle.

Anwarul Islam said the draft was prepared incorporating The Essential Services (Maintenance) Act, 1952 and The Essential Services (Second) Ordinance, 1958, which are in effect right now.

"If the act is passed in parliament, the government can declare some services as essential for a specific period, if necessary. Therefore, strike or shutdown cannot be declared and owners cannot go for layoffs during the period," he said, terming it a very effective act.

Essential services include post, telecommunications, internet, digital services, including ICT, mobile financial service, digital financial services, power generation and supply, customs and food procurement.

The government can declare these as essential services anytime but for maximum six months, he said.

"For example, power generation work is going on. But lay-off or strike is called. During such times, the government can declare the services as an emergency one," he said.

After the declaration, strike, lock-out and lay-off will be illegal, said the cabinet secretary, adding that there is provision of handing punishment of both workers and owners in the act.

Replying to a question, the act will be applicable to both government and private service providers. "The government can declare the garment section as an essential sector," he said.

The labour ministry will select whether an act of strike, lock-out and layoff is illegal.

Hasina has also directed the commerce, the agriculture and the foreign minister to explore the opportunity to invest in the agricultural sector in the African countries.



A high school student receives the Pfizer vaccine for the coronavirus disease ahead of schools reopening in November, at a school in Bangkok, Thailand yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Double blow for those with fixed income

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more on flour. Coarse flour (ata) and fine flour are available at Tk 42 and Tk 52 a kg, which is nine-13 percent higher than before.

Md Shafiqul Ather Taslim, director of finance and operation at TK Group, one of the leading importers and processors of commodities, said flour prices have increased due to price hike in the international market. Now, flour price is about \$450 per tonne, about 29 percent up from weeks back, he added.

Onion price rose by around 50 percent to Tk 60-65 a kg within a week. Traders blamed a dearth of supply for this soaring price.

According to the state-run Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB), prices of unpacked soybean oil and unpacked palm oil have increased by around three percent and 10 percent a litre respectively within a month.

Unpacked soybean oil was being sold at Tk 130-135 a litre, bottled soybean oil at Tk 145-155 and unpacked palm oil at Tk 125-128 yesterday.

Hinting at the further increase in the edible oil prices, Taslim said price of crude soybean oil has gone up by around 21 percent to \$1,390 a tonne in the international market recently.

Broiler chicken was being sold for Tk 160 a kg and Sonali variety for Tk 300 at Town Hall kitchen market. Just

two weeks ago, their prices were Tk 140 and Tk 230 respectively.

Poultry and broiler chicken retailers said the price of chicken has recently shot up due to less supply against the increasing demand.

Meanwhile, poultry farmers said their production costs have increased as feed prices have gone up by about 35 to 40 percent. For this, many farmers have been forced to reduce production, they added.

Egg price has increased by around Tk 10 per dozen this week.

Fish price has also soared as the government imposed a 22-day ban on hilsa catching from yesterday during the main breeding season. Rui fish was available at Tk 260-360 a kg, Tilapia at Tk 160-180 and Pangas at Tk 120-180.

The price of green chilli has increased by Tk 80-100 a kg to Tk 200-220 over the last two weeks.

Pre-season beans were selling Tk 120-140 a kg while carrots and tomatoes were available at Tk 100-120 per kg.

Apart from green papaya, which was sold at Tk 30 a kg, there is almost no vegetables in the city markets that cost less than Tk 50 a kg.

However, prices of most of the vegetables were between Tk 25 and Tk 35 a kg in Boro Bazar wholesale market in Jashore, one of the biggest vegetable producing belts in the

country.

Sukumar Roy, a farmer and trader in Satmail area of Jashore Sadar upazila, said vegetables' supply in the market is very low as the summer vegetables are almost finished and the winter ones are yet to arrive.

Prices of all spices, including garlic and ginger, have shot up by Tk 5-10 a kg. Rickshaw-puller Rahmat Ali, of the capital's Tejgunipara area, said recently his family expenditures have almost doubled due to price hike of daily essentials.

"Several months earlier, I could buy daily essentials for my family spending Tk 300. Now I need to spend Tk 500," he said.

Shakil Ahmed, who lives in Kalabagan area, said now he goes to Karwan Bazar on foot during the off-peak hours to buy vegetables and daily essentials at a cheaper rate.

Ghulam Rahman, president of Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB), said vegetable prices remain high in every October due to shortage of supply.

"But in the case of other products, including oil, sugar, flour, prices in the local market have gone up much more than that of in the international market. Our traders hike prices on the pretext of international market prices," he said.

Ten-man Bangladesh hold

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on top of the five-team table with four points before the second match of the day between Nepal and Sri Lanka got underway at the same venue.

With a man short and a goal down, Jamal and Co never looked like giving up, rather they kept becoming stronger on the counter and created more chances but the luck was not fully on their side, however, the boys seemed thrilled to have registered a draw as they performed a winning lap to thank a vast expatriate fans who backed the men in green and red throughout the 90 minutes.

Bringing two changes in the playing eleven that beat Sri Lanka 1-0 on Friday, the charges of Bruzon started off cautiously against India, who beat them 2-0 three months ago during the World Cup Qualifiers in Doha, although the seven-time champions never looked as sharp as they had been in that match.

India kept the ball well in the first 15 to 20 minutes without penetrating the Bangladesh box as Jamal Bhuiyan, Mohammad Ibrahim and Biplu Ahmed stayed very compact in midfield to deny India building up from the back.

The trio also played key roles in attacking transition with Jamal taking set-pieces that created chaos inside the Indian box. And in one such situation, Bangladesh came close to taking the lead when Saad Uddin headed a Jamal free-kick for Yeasin Arafat, who back-volleyed wide and a good chance had gone begging in the 26th minute.

With Bangladeshi players holding their heads for the missed opportunity, India capitalised in the transition with Sunil Chhetri again breaking the hearts of the red and green with a neat strike off a Manvir Singh cutback in the 26th minute.

Four minutes later, Tapu Barman came close to levelling the margin but he could not collect a Jamal free-kick properly before Bangladesh exposed the Indian backline but goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh denied Biplu Ahmed from close-range placing shot to the far post in the 39th minute.

After resumption, Bangladesh came all out to fight neck and neck and yielded a brilliant opportunity seven minutes into the second half but Rakib Hossain volleyed wide off a Saad Uddin chip with only Gurpreet to beat.

Two minutes later, Bangladesh received a big blow as right-back Bishwanath Ghosh was sent off following a tackle on Liston Colaco from behind.

Bruzon then brought five changes in the squad and it worked really well with Martin Mia threatening a couple of times and even was fouled inside the box, which the referee ignored.

Goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico also made a couple of good saves before the pivotal moment arrived in the 74th minute when Rakib backheaded a glancing header off a low corner from Jamal and Yeasin Arafat equalised from Bangladesh with his maiden international goal through a diving header.

Kishida takes office

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do that, we must ask the people whether they trust me, Kishida, to carry out these policies," he said at his inaugural news conference.

"I would like to pursue a politics of trust and compassion with the people's mandate," he said, drawing on the main theme in his campaign to become leader of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), making politics more accessible to the public.

While Kishida may enjoy a honeymoon period usually afforded new governments, analysts said he probably didn't want to lose time, given risks posed by the pandemic.

His decision to call an election came as a surprise to most analysts who had expected the election to be held in November. Parliament will now be dissolved on October 14.

Kishida said he would consider Covid-19 relief payouts, adding he had also instructed ministers overseeing the pandemic response to come up with policies on vaccinations, to strengthen

the medical system and to expand testing to help reopen the economy.

New coronavirus cases in Tokyo yesterday totalled 87, the lowest since November 2 last year.

Kishida's predecessor Yoshihide Suga enjoyed support ratings of about 70% soon after taking office a year ago, but came under heavy fire over his handling of the pandemic. Following Suga's decision to make way for a new face, Kishida beat three contenders for the LDP leadership last week, paving the way for parliament to formally elect him premier yesterday.

ABE'S SHADOW

Kishida's cabinet features allies of Abe, Japan's longest-serving premier, who quit last year citing ill health as his dream of another term faded.

Of the 20 posts, 13 were filled by people with no prior cabinet experience, in line with Kishida's pledge to promote fresh faces, but many heavyweight jobs went to allies of Abe or of outgoing finance minister Aso.

3 shopping sites laundered Tk 350cr

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against them, he said, adding that the amount siphoned off may end up being higher following further investigation.

The CID had filed cases against SPC World Express and Dhamaka Shopping in August and September respectively, and on Sunday, Eorange was sued.

At least 11 people including Rana and his sister Sonia Mehjabin, chairperson of Eorange; her husband Masukur Rahman, the CEO of Eorange; Md Amanullah Chowdhury, its chief operating officer, were accused in the case filed with the Gulshan Police Station.

They used Eorange and its three affiliate companies -- Red Orange International, Orange Bangladesh and All Zone -- to launder the amount, said CID sources.

The CID in its investigation found that at least Tk 635 crore was deposited in Eorange's accounts with two private banks. Of the sum, Tk 630 crore has been withdrawn.

Before Eorange closed its delivery, Tk 188.6 crore was transferred to its sister concern All Zone's account in 22 transactions between February 17 to July 8, according to the case statement. Rana withdrew Tk 2.47 crore in 17

transactions from the account. From the same account, one Babu, Fazlu, Milon, Adity and Zobayer, among others withdrew Tk 31.6 crore, CID sources said.

Besides, Tk 99 lakh was transferred to Eorange's sister concern Red Orange International and Tk 15.18 lakh to Orange Bangladesh.

The CID also found that Eorange embezzled Tk 8.55 crore it had received from 26 customers.

Red Orange International, Orange Bangladesh and All Zone were made accused in the case.

FROM DESTINY TO SPC

SPC World CEO Al Amin was a senior-level team leader and instructor of MLM firm Destiny. Using the same model, he founded his own company.

SPC World, which has been offering 50-150 percent discount on electronic items and motorcycles, has a customer base of about one crore and had transactions of Tk 22 crore in recent months.

The company initially delivered products within the promised timeframe but as its customer number started to increase, it started to defraud customers, according to Kabir.

Al-Amin is accused of four cases on money laundering, digital security

act, MLM Control Act and cheating customers.

QCOOM TRENDS THE SAME PATH
In another development, the detective branch of police learnt Qcoom, another fraudulent e-commerce site whose owner Ripon Mia was arrested on Sunday, owes at least Tk 250 crore.

Besides, at least Tk 397 crore that Qcoom collected from customers through orders for motorcycles is stuck with payment gateways, said AKM Hafiz Akter, the DB chief yesterday.

The company also offered mindboggling discounts on motorcycles, which tempted many to hand over their money in advance.

Unable to deliver the motorcycles, Qcoom started to give cheques of Tk 1.3 lakh against each order.

On realising that Qcoom was not providing products to customers but were instead handing them cheques, the payment gateway Foster froze the money, Akter said.

Meanwhile, the CID is investigating 24 cases filed by customers over incidents of cheating by e-commerce firms, said Kamrul Ahsan, additional deputy inspector general of CID Cyber Police Centre.

Among them, Eorange alone is facing eight cases.

Congress suspends MLA

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drive in Assam's Darrang district on September 23 afternoon.

According to police, a mob of nearly 2000 people attacked the police team during the eviction drive following which police resorted to baton charge and firing that resulted in the death and injuries, reports Hindustan Times online.

Several videos of residents targeting the police team and police personnel firing at civilians and beating them with batons have been doing the rounds on social media following the incident. A photographer present at the scene is seen kicking an injured civilian lying at the scene in one video.

The areas where the eviction drive is taking place are part of Assam government's Garukhuti Project, which aims to remove encroachers from 77,420 "bighas" of land and start agricultural and allied activities for indigenous youth.

This year's state budget mentioned that the government plans to "develop this cluster as a beacon of resurgent Assam" and earmarked rupee 9.6 crore for it.

"As per the government plan of removing encroachers from the area,

we have been carrying out evictions in four zones. While the process is taking place peacefully in other three zones, violence erupted at the fourth zone on Thursday [Sept 23]," Sushanta Biswa Sarma, superintendent of police, Darrang said.

He mentioned that nearly 1500-2000 people had gathered at the area. At first there was no issue, but when police started removing encroachments using JCB vehicles, the mob started pelting stones and attacking the police with machetes, spears and other things.

"One police officer was hit with a machete on his head and sustained serious injuries. We had to resort to firing to disperse the crowd and protect our personnel. As per our information, two civilians have been killed and 9 policemen were injured. Additional force was deployed in the area and the situation is under control now," said Sarma.

Opposition Congress condemned the police firing on residents and termed the eviction drive carried out during the pandemic as inhuman and violation of Supreme Court directives.

Delwar, Kalam

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Judge Joyanal Abedin of Noakhali Women and Child Repression Tribunal-1 delivered the verdict in the presence of the accused around 11:00am yesterday.

Mamunur Rashid Lablu represented the state, while Mollah Habibur Rasul Mamun represented the plaintiff and Jasim Uddin Badal stood for the accused.

According to court sources, a rape case was filed against two people on October 6 last year with Begumganj Police Station on charge of raping the woman twice.

On December 15 that year, the PBI -- tasked with investigating the case -- submitted the charge sheet against the accused.

On February 18 this year, charges were framed against the accused in court.

Halt US aid

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At least 30 Pakistani soldiers and 20 razakars were killed in the action. A group of razakars surrendered to Mukti Bahini with their arms. In desperation, the Pakistani soldiers sent for air cover. Pakistani jets carried out intensive air strafing in the area twice during the day. A Pakistani helicopter carrying fresh troops tried to land around sunset but due to Mukti Bahini's firing the helicopter left for Dhaka.

In the Rangpur-Dinajpur-Rajshahi sector, Mukti Bahini fired on enemy troops near Khanjanpur killing 12 occupation soldiers. During October 4 and 5, 10 Pakistani soldiers were killed due to explosions of mines planted by freedom fighters along Bhurungamari road.

In the Dhaka-Cumilla-Chattogram sector, Mukti Bahini ambushed Pakistani troops near Khajuria and killed four. In a number of ambushes during October 4 and 5 near Guthuma, five Pakistani troops were killed. During the period, Mukti Bahini ambushed Pakistani troops near Ajanpur twice, during which 13 Pakistani soldiers were killed and three wounded.

On October 5, Mukti Bahini fired on Pakistani soldiers near Nayanpur and inflicted five casualties on the enemy. On the same day, Mukti Bahini ambushed Pakistani troops near Jambari and killed two enemies.

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No bar to airing

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rumours about the clean feed. The government is firm in implementing the law and we have enacted the law for the sake of the people, the media industry, and artists," he said.

Mobile courts started operating from October 1 under the direction of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to implement ad-free or clean feed broadcasting of foreign channels in accordance with Cable Network Operation Act, 2006.

However, cable operators have halted broadcast of all foreign satellite channels from the same day saying that broadcasting ad-free programmes was technically not possible.

US duo wins

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range of diseases and conditions, including chronic pain.

Julius, who in 2019 won the \$3-million Breakthrough Prize in life sciences, said he was stunned to receive the call from the Nobel committee early yesterday.

"One never really expects that to happen...I thought it was a prank," he told Swedish Radio.

The Nobel Foundation meanwhile posted a picture of Patapoutian next to his son Luca after hearing the happy news.

Our ability to sense heat, cold and touch is essential for survival, the Nobel Committee explained, and underpins our interaction with the world around us.

"In our daily lives we take these sensations for granted, but how are nerve impulses initiated so that temperature and pressure can be perceived? This question has been solved by this year's Nobel Prize laureates."

Prior to their discoveries, "our understanding of how the nervous system senses and interprets our environment still contained a fundamental unsolved question: how are temperature and mechanical stimuli converted into electrical impulses in the nervous system."

GROCERY STORE RESEARCH

Julius, 65, was recognised for his research using capsaicin -- a compound from chili peppers that induces a burning sensation -- to identify which nerve sensors in the skin respond to heat.

He told Scientific American in 2019 that he got the idea to study chili peppers after a visit to the grocery store.

"I was looking at these shelves and shelves of basically chili peppers and extracts (hot sauce) and thinking, 'This is such an important and such a fun problem to look at. I've really got to get serious about this,'" he said.

Patapoutian's pioneering discovery was identifying the class of nerve sensors that respond to touch.