



... My car just got fired at and two men on a motorbike held the vehicle at gunpoint!! ... This is Imran Khan's New Pakistan?

Reham Khan, activist and ex-wife of Imran Khan

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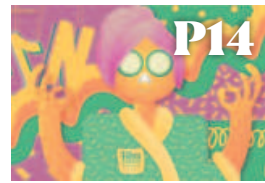
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5 resolutions for 2022

New year, old problems

Project revisions galore at the first 2022 Ecne meeting despite PM's strong directive

10

projects to be placed at Ecne today

7

of the projects are set to be revised

Tk **3,099** cr
Original estimated cost
Tk **14,061** cr
Proposed cost after revisions

BEPZA ECONOMIC ZONE (MIRSARAI 1ST PHASE)

Estimated cost (approved)	Tk 750.58 cr
Proposed cost (1st revision)	Tk 1302.91 cr
Implementation period	Sept 2018 to June 2021
New Implementation period	Sept 2018 to June 2023



ASHRAYAN-2

Estimated Cost (approved)	Tk 1169.18 cr	Proposed cost (4th revision)	Tk 11,142.8 cr
Implementation period	July 2010 to June 2014	New implementation period	July 2010 to June 2023



SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR MOBILE GAMES AND APPLICATIONS

Estimated cost (approved)	Tk 281.97 cr	Implementation period	July 2016 to June 2018
Proposed cost (3rd revision)	Tk 330.08 cr	New implementation period	July 2016 to June 2023

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MAHMUDUL HASAN

Old problems greet the Prime Minister-led Executive Committee of the National Economic Council when it convenes today for its first meeting for 2022: applications for project revisions.

Time and again, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has expressed annoyance over the unusual delays and cost escalations and even gave several directives to check cynical project revisions.

And yet, in 2022, the phenomenon is alive and kicking. Of the 10 projects that would be placed in today's meeting, seven are for revisions. The Daily Star has a copy of the proposals prepared for the meeting.

When the projects were conceived, they were supposed to cost Tk 3,099 crore. Their estimated expenditure has now billowed close to five times to Tk 14,961 crore, making a mockery of the government's continuous emphasis on formulating appropriate project plans.

The projects

are seeking an extra year to a full decade, and that too after several revisions, adding fuel to the longstanding criticism that a project ends up costing the taxpayer exponentially more money and time by the time it is completed.

Robust projection and planning are needed before starting any project, said Towfiqul Islam Khan, a senior research fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, a private think-tank.

Both of the features seem to be lagging.

The initial phase of a project -- which involves feasibility study, land acquisition and supply of human resources -- takes longer while implementing projects in Bangladesh, according to Khan.

As a result, the projects do not get completed within the stipulated time and need revision. "Ultimately, the expenditure of the project increases," he added.

For instance, one of the seven projects was taken up in 2010 for completion in June 2014. It has gone through three revisions and will now be seeking extra time and

money.

That project is Ashrayan-2, a landmark endeavour of the Awami League-led government to alleviate poverty and homelessness.

Its outlay now stands at Tk 4,826.2 crore, four times higher than the original cost.

But that is not enough. It now needs another year and an extra Tk 6,316 crore.

The reason for the higher budget is the increased construction cost of a single house for durability.

Similarly, the project to equip the youth with skills to develop mobile games and apps has gone through multiple revisions.

With the view to getting a slice of the rapidly growing international mobile gaming market that is worth about \$90 billion, the government took up the project in 2016 at a cost of about Tk 282 crore.

In the past revisions, more time was sought but not more funds. But this time, an additional Tk 49 crore has been sought and a two-year extension.

The revision is needed due to

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Tigers enjoy one of their 'best days'

SPORTS REPORTER

"It was one of the best days. Yes, it was challenging but the process was fantastic. We managed to execute our plan brilliantly and I think the boys really did well," Bangladesh team director Khaled Mahmud said after Bangladesh took a rare 73-run first innings lead over New Zealand on the third day of the first Test yesterday.

There were many instances in the past when individual heroics did not help the cause of the overall unit but a collective effort from Mominul

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Bangladesh batsman Liton Das smashes one during his scintillating 86-run knock on the third day of the first Test against New Zealand at the Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui on Monday. The stylish right-hander had ten fours to his credit.

PHOTO: AFP

India 'clearly' going thru third wave

Says task force chief

AGENCIES

A large chunk of Covid-19 cases in Indian metro areas reported in the last few days are of the Omicron variant, a top official said yesterday, adding that the country is "clearly in the third wave" of the pandemic.

Large cities like Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata have a combined 75 percent share of infections of the highly transmissible coronavirus variant that was first detected in South Africa in November, the head of the country's vaccine task force Dr NK Arora told NDTV.

India has so far reported 1,700 Omicron cases, with Maharashtra reporting the most number of infections at 510. The country also saw a 22 percent jump in new Covid-19 cases, government data this morning showed. 33,750 new infections and 123 deaths were reported in the last 24 hours.

Dr Arora, who is Chairman of the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation, or NTAGI, said the third wave

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Govt set to slap curbs

Inter-ministerial meet on Omicron discusses measures to contain Covid-19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will soon announce restrictions to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus, but has no plan right now to enforce any lockdown.

The restrictions include reducing the number of public events, cutting the number of passengers in public transport, restricting restaurants from selling foods to unvaccinated customers and penalising people for not wearing masks outdoors, if necessary.

Besides, the number of Covid tests at all ports will be increased and quarantine for the people entering the country will be strictly ensured.

The decisions were made at an inter-ministerial meeting on Omicron, chaired by Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, at the Secretariat yesterday evening.

Following the meeting, Health Minister Zahid Maleque told reporters that the cabinet division would issue a circular in this regard within the next 15 days.

Earlier in the day, Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said the Omicron variant may cause a major spike in Covid-19 transmission in the country in March-April.

RESTRICTIONS

Reducing the number of events countrywide

Cutting the number of passengers in public transport

Penalising people for staying outdoors without masks, if needed

Ensuring stricter quarantine rules for all passengers from abroad

Zahid said, "No situation to impose any lockdown has arisen yet. So, we did not recommend a lockdown for now. The meeting was called to decide steps so that lockdown can be avoided."

At the meeting, Prof Tahmina Shirin, director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), shared information on the current Covid situation.

She said transmission of Omicron variant has not yet become alarming for the country, said meeting sources.

Tahmina later told The Daily Star, "Those who have not been jabbed will get time to get the shots."

Meanwhile, replying to reporters'

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THRICE THE WIN THRICE THE COMMITMENT

Akij Ceramics wins Best Brand Award 2021 as well!
An award actually makes us put more effort into progress and three consecutives take the commitment towards success.

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