



"If it depends on Russia, there will be no war. We do not want wars."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Ukraine crisis

The Daily Star

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

SECOND EDITION

"To be properly informed, to be helped to understand situations based on scientific data and not fake news, is a human right."

Pope Francis slams Covid disinformation



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Election Antics

Exciting and curious events on polls day at BFDC



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Tamim hits ton in BPL

Left-handed opener slams unbeaten 64-ball 111



Bruised but not beaten

For Sabekunnesa, life is a raw struggle for survival. Even in her eighties, she has to work hard every day to scratch out a living. A widow deserted by her two sons, she now collects iron scraps from a dumping ground, using a magnet, and sells them for Tk 30 a kg. The photos were taken in Beribadh area of the capital's Hajaribagh recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



BR's poor show yet again

Five railway projects face uncertainty

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

In August 2011, the government took up a Tk 1,946 crore project to procure 70 Metre Gauge (MG) locomotives to mitigate the growing crisis of rail engines and expanding the services of Bangladesh Railway.

The locomotives were supposed to be added to the BR fleet within June 2017, but the project authorities could not even complete the bidding process by that time.

The deadline was extended twice before the project went through a major revision in 2018, when the costs jumped to Tk 2,659.33 crore. The deadline was extended, again, this time to June 2024.

Later in October 2018, BR signed a deal with South Korean Hyundai Rotem Company for the procurement. As per the agreement, Hyundai Rotem was supposed to arrange the required funds.

Now, the HRC, however, wants to pull out from the project after the government asked it to manage soft loans instead of non-concessional loans as agreed by both sides earlier, causing the project's fate to hang in the

balance.

Four other Bangladesh Railway projects find themselves in a similar situation, mainly due to complexities over funding, further exposing the BR's poor skills in project implementation.

Of the 37 ongoing projects of BR, 26 have

been spent after the project to procure the 70 MG locomotives.

Failing to get contractor through two tenders, the project authorities floated the third one in December, 2014, and took four years to pick Hyundai Rotem.



PROJECT	COST	IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD
Procurement of 70 MG locomotives	Tk 2,659cr	Jul 2011-Jun 2024
Renovation of 21 locomotives	Tk 242cr	Jul 2019-Dec 2022
Technical assistance for rolling stock operation improvement	Tk 45cr	Jul 2019-Jun 2021
Joydebpur-Iswardi double line	Tk 14,251cr	Jan 2019-Dec 2024
Converting Akhaura-Sylhet single line into dual gauge	Tk 16,104cr	Apr 2019-Jun 2025

been extended at least once.

The four projects were taken up to renovate 21 MG locomotives, provide technical assistance for developing rolling stock operations, and expand the Joypurhat-Iswardi and Akhaura-Sylhet rail lines.

70 LOCOMOTIVES

Over the last 10 years, Tk 5.15 crore has already

As per the 2018 agreement, the company was supposed to supply all the locomotives to BR within five years of the contract taking effect.

In February, 2020, the Standing Committee on Non-Concessional Loan approved the Tk 1,946-crore fund. The railway ministry

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ROHINGYA CAMPS

Arsa riddle needs to be solved: experts

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Despite the government's assertions to the contrary, the recent arrest of an Arsa chief's brother from a Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar strongly hints at the insurgent group's presence inside the refugee camps, residents and experts said.

Experts also said the government should seriously investigate the arrest of Mohammad Shah Ali, also an alleged operative of Myanmar's banned organisation Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (Arsa), not only to ascertain the presence of Arsa members in the camps, but also for the sake of ensuring security.

They warned that a volatile situation in the camp would create more uncertainty around the repatriation of the Rohingyas.

A team of the Armed Police Battalion (APBn) arrested Shah Ali, brother of Arsa commander Ataullah Abu Amar Jununi, on January 16 from Noukarmath Rohingya camp in Ukhiya of Cox's Bazar.

Following the arrest, APBn filed a case against him. According to

the case document, it has been known locally that the arrestee is "an identified Arsa member".

"He [Shah Ali] is also an armed criminal and kingpin of a gang that is involved with abduction, and also runs drug trading. In interrogation, the accused admitted that he used to keep firearms for security while trading drugs," it said.

The issue of Arsa's presence in the country has been widely discussed as Rohingyas and experts believe there are members of the Myanmar insurgent group in the camps. It came to the fore prominently after the murder of popular Rohingya leader Mohib Ullah last year.

However, the government and law enforcers alike maintain this group does not exist in Bangladesh and that some criminals might have falsely identified themselves as Arsa operatives to intimidate the refugees.

But experts said the government should take the matter seriously as it can affect the security of Rohingyas as well as the country.

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Country logs highest ever positivity rate

20 more die from Covid, 15,440 new infections reported in a day

UNB, Dhaka

The country reported 20 more Covid-linked deaths with 15,440 fresh cases in 24 hours till yesterday morning.

The daily positivity rate rose to highest-ever 33.37 percent after testing 46,292 samples, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

On Thursday, the positivity rate was 31.98 percent.

The country's previous highest daily positivity rate (32.55 percent) was logged on July 24 last year.

On Thursday, the country reported 15 Covid-related deaths and 15,807 fresh cases.

The fresh numbers took the country's total Covid fatalities to 28,308 while the caseload went up to 1,762,771.

Among the 20 deceased, 12 were women and eight men.

Five deaths were reported in Dhaka division while nine in Chattogram, two each in Rajshahi and Sylhet and one each in Barisal and Mymensingh divisions.

Meanwhile, the mortality rate further declined to 1.61 percent.

The recovery rate also dropped to 88.63 percent with the recovery of 1,326 more patients during the 24-hour period.

Bangladesh's total tally of Covid Omicron cases reached 69 with the detection of five more cases till Sunday, according to GISAIID, a global initiative on sharing all influenza data.

On December 9 last year, Bangladesh logged zero Covid-related death after nearly three weeks as the pandemic was apparently showing signs of easing.

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A firefighter tries to douse the blaze at the factory of Jahin Garments in Narayanganj's Madanpur yesterday after a fire broke out there. No casualties were reported.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Cold wave to continue few more days

STAR REPORT

Many parts of the country have been experiencing a mild to moderate cold wave since Thursday night which may continue for the next few days.

A bone-chilling cold is affecting the daily life in the country's northern part and several other districts.

According to a report of Bangladesh Meteorological Department, a mild to moderate cold wave is sweeping over Rangpur and Rajshahi divisions and Gopalganj, Tangail, Mymensingh, Moulvibazar, Jashore and Kushtia districts and it may continue and spread.

Children and elder people in these areas are being affected by various cold-related diseases.

The temperature dropped by three to five degrees Celsius in several parts of the country yesterday. It may further go down by one to two

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