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A footbridge built by the Dhaka South City Corporation on Buet campus has remained blocked for more than a year now. The footbridge connects the Buet administration building and a students' dormitory. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

LANGUAGE MOVEMENT: IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Momentous phase

Kamruddin Ahmad

Around 9:00am on February 21, 1952, members of the State Language Action Committee were informed that Dhaka University students were not in agreement with the decisions taken by it and they had decided to break the law if necessary.

The students decided to have processions in batches towards Jagannath Hall, where the assembly session was going on. The committee in this circumstance decided to depute some representatives to convince the university students not to clash with the police who, however, failed to persuade them.

At 9:30am, some boys were arrested from Nawabpur Road for picketing.

Around 10:00am, in accordance with the decisions taken by the students, the first batch of the students marched in procession and reached the Medical College gate, where they were arrested and taken away by police in a van. The next batch faced the same fate.

At 2:00pm, police took position and the East Pakistan Rifles were also brought to assist them. They fired at a large crowd of students near the Medical College gate. Three bodies were brought to the college and then sent to the morgue.

By 3:00pm, members of the assembly, which was in session and insisted that Nurul Amin, the then chief minister, should go to the spot. He, however, refused to do so.



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More projects revised, costs increased

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As many as four projects were revised yesterday with their costs swelling by Tk 34,483 crore.

This takes the total number of revised projects in the first eight months of the fiscal year to 32 and the additional costs to Tk 59,919 crore.

Of the four projects that were revised at yesterday's meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council, the "Fourth Health, Population and Nutrition Sector Programme" saw its cost shoot up the most: by Tk 30,448 crore to Tk 145,934 crore.

The project, which began in 2017, has 29 components including setting up primary health complexes at the upazila level and community clinics at the union level and providing health services for mothers and newborn babies.

Two new components were included in the programme -- vaccination for Rohingya people and infrastructural development of upazila health complexes' infrastructural development -- that necessitated the revision, an official of the Prime Minister's office told The Daily Star.

The project also got a year's

extension.

"It is not a slow-implementing project," said Nasima Begum, a member of the National Planning Commission.

The project is 63 percent complete.

"It's on track now and one year will be enough to complete it," she added.

As a result, the cost of the project, implemented with the Indian line of credit, would increase by a staggering 62.3 percent to Tk 5,791.6 crore and its implementation period by three years to June 2025

The upgradation of the link of Ashuganj river port-Sarail-Dharkhar-Akhaura land port was tabled for revision yesterday as well.

The project got a new highway package, said Md. Mamun-Al-Rashid, another member of the Planning Commission said

The 50.56-kilometre highway project has included new work components such as land acquisition, construction

of flexible pavements, rapid pavements, drains, bridges, railway overpass, foot overbridges, culverts and others.

As a result, the cost of the project, implemented with the Indian line of credit, would increase by a staggering 62.3 percent to Tk 5,791.6 crore and its implementation period by three years to June 2025, according to the meeting minutes.

The improvement of Dhaka's water supply network also got the nod for revision yesterday.

The project, which started in 2016, had ended in December last year. So far, only 27 percent of the money has been spent, indicating very poor progress. Subsequently, its tenure was extended to December 2023.

About the slow progress, Rashad said Wasa had to compensate two city corporations for road excavation, which was a lengthy process.

"The project design had some errors too," he said.

The other revised project is for the improvement of the Gopalganj district's rural infrastructure.

Also at the meeting, seven fresh projects were approved.

Independents outdo AL picks

Take 60pc of the chairman posts in 7th phase UP polls

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The ruling Awami League suffered an election debacle in the seventh phase of union parishad polls as independent chairman candidates outdid them.

In the elections held on Monday, independents won 64 percent of the chairman posts while the Awami League won only 30 percent, according to the Election Commission data unveiled last evening.

For the AL this was the lowest winning parentage in the seven phases in the staggered Union Parishad election that began in June last year.

Yesterday, the EC announced unofficial results of 134 union parishads. It shows that independent candidates won in 86 UPs and AL nominees in 40.

Three nominees from the Jatiya Party and one from Jatiya Party (JP) also won in the polls.

Ruling party insiders said many of the winning independents were disgruntled AL leaders who ran as independents after failing to get the party's nomination.

The AL nominees' performance is in a gradual decline in the staggered UP polls, according to the unofficial results announced by the EC.

The EC has so far announced unofficial results of 4,027 UPs in seven phases.

The AL chairman nominees won in 2,172 UPs

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BARAPUKURIA COAL SCAM HC clears the way for trial

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday cleared the way for the lower court concerned to try a corruption case filed over the "theft" of over 1.43 lakh tonnes of coal from Barapukuria Coal Mining Company Ltd (BCMCL) in Dinajpur.

The coal is worth Tk 243 crore.

The HC rejected three separate petitions filed by six former BCMCL officials, who are accused in the case, challenging the trial court order that on November 25 last year framed charges against them.

The accused in the petitions sought exemption from the charges of the case.

The accused petitioners include former BCMCL managing directors Md Abdul Aziz Khan, SM Nurul Aurangzeb, Khurshidul Hasan, Md Kamaruzzaman, and Md Aminuzzaman, and its former official Abu Taher Md Nur-uz-Zaman Chowdhury, Anti-Corruption Commission lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star.

Yesterday, the HC bench of Justice SM Kuddus Zaman and Justice Md Riaz Uddin Khan rejected all three revision petitions considering that those were not presented properly.

Lawyers Rakanuddin Mahmud and Mustafizur Rahman Khan appeared for the petitioners.

Md Anisur Rahman, manager (admin) of the coal mining company, filed the case accusing 19 people with Parbatipur Police Station in Dinajpur on July 24, 2018 in connection with the coal going missing.

According to the case statement, the accused officials were behind the coal going missing.

‘Now possible’ to move forward

Says Macron after talks with Putin, Zelensky on Russia-Ukraine tensions

AFP, Kyiv

French President Emmanuel Macron said yesterday that after talks with the Russian and Ukrainian leaders he saw a path toward easing tensions.

Speaking at a joint press conference after talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in Kyiv, Macron said he believed it would be possible to make progress on two fronts.

Both Zelensky and Russian President Vladimir Putin, who Macron saw on Monday, said they remained committed to the 2015 Minsk peace agreements on the country's separatist conflicts, the French leader said.

"We now have the possibility to make these negotiations move forward," Macron said.

And on tensions between Russia and the West over Moscow's military build-up on Ukraine's borders, Macron said: "I believe for my part that

there are concrete, practical solutions that will allow us to move forward."

As Macron sought a diplomatic solution with Kyiv, US President Joe Biden ramped up the pressure on Moscow Monday by warning he would "end" the controversial new Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia to Europe if tanks rolled into Ukraine.

After talks with Zelensky yesterday, Macron said nobody was "naïve" enough to believe that the tensions were not linked to the Russian deployments, calling them "unprecedented".

"In adopting this threatening posture, Russia decided to put pressure on the international community," Macron said.

"We cannot underestimate the moment of tension that we are living through," Macron said.

"We cannot resolve this crisis in a few hours of talks," he said. "It will be the day and the weeks and the months to come that will allow us to progress."



It looks like a foggy day but it is actually dust in the air at the capital's Gabtoli yesterday. Heavy vehicles that carry construction materials improperly often drop dirt and sand on the road, contributing to air pollution which becomes worse during the dry season.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON