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BPL final today
Shakib's Fortune Barishal take on Imrul's Comilla Victorians

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STIMULUS FOR THE LAID-OFF

Only 0.5pc spent in a year

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ASIFUR RAHMAN

The government spent only about 0.5 percent of a Tk 1,500 crore stimulus package unveiled in 2020 for laid off workers of export-oriented apparel and leather factories.

The labour and employment ministry launched the programme in October 2020 with money granted by the European Union and Germany.

Every worker who became unemployed amid the pandemic was supposed to get a monthly allowance of Tk 3,000 for three months unless they got a new job.

As of November last year, less than Tk 8 crore was spent from the fund, according to a finance ministry review. Officials, requesting anonymity, said no significant amount has been spent since November and the picture remains the same.

The reason behind the lacklustre performance is that the labour ministry has yet to finalise a list of workers eligible for the benefit, sources said.

Goutom Kumar, director general of the Department of Labour, said only the workers who were laid off from export-oriented garment and leather factories during the shutdown of the economy in 2020 and 2021 are eligible for the support.

It is difficult to find such workers, he said, adding that the workers of other sectors like transport should also be eligible.

Seven other stimulus schemes launched in 2020 have seen little progress.

The government released a total of 14 stimulus schemes of Tk 15,279 crore in 2020 and 2021. According to the finance ministry review of November last year, 60 percent of the money has been spent.

FOOD PROGRAMMES

In 2020, the government took up a Tk 2,500 crore scheme to distribute food among the poor people for free from April-June.

Less than one-third of the money was spent for what officials said was the lack of a list of people eligible for the benefit.

However, funds allocated for the Open Market Sales programme, which sells essential food items at lower prices, were properly utilised.

Another Tk 770 crore package to sell rice at Tk 10 a kg was also utilised properly.

CASH SUPPORT

In 2020, the government planned to give cash support to 50 lakh labourers, farmers, house staff, transport workers, and teachers of schools

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- Tk 1,500cr Covid stimulus for laid-off workers
- Tk 8cr spent as officials lack data on beneficiaries



Vehicles, including garbage trucks of Dhaka South City Corporation, parked illegally next to a ramp of the Mayor Mohammad Hanif Flyover in the capital's Sayedabad yesterday. The DSCC has space for parking on its office premises nearby but doesn't seem to be using it.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

WATER PROJECT AWAITING REVISION Officials 'not involved', yet they travelled abroad

ASIFUR RAHMAN and
MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

Three government officials toured abroad this month using funds from a water development board project in Cox's Bazar, although none of them was directly associated with the work.

The "experience sharing visit" took place at a time when the project

expired its tenure and is currently awaiting approval for revisions in its deadline and costs.

Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) took up the project four years ago to reconstruct a dyke spanning Ukhia and Teknaf upazilas. The work was supposed to be over by June last year.

After the deadline could not

be met, project officials sought additional time and a 349 percent raise in the costs, which were initially Tk 141 crore.

The planning ministry later formed a committee. Its members visited the project site and met the project officials on several occasions. Then on January 31, the Project Evaluation

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IGP cancels Germany trip amid uproar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

IGP Benazir Ahmed has cancelled his trip to Germany planned for this month amid a controversy over the visit regarding "procurement of one lakh pieces of bedsheets and pillow covers for the force".

Md Kamruzzaman, assistant inspector general of police at the Police Headquarters, said this to The Daily Star yesterday.

"We wrote to the home ministry on Monday seeking cancellation of the government order [GO] as it mentioned pre-shipment inspection of bedsheets and pillow covers as the reason for the trip," he said.

On Wednesday, the PHQ in a press release sought to clarify the reason for the cancellation, but did not mention about its letter to the home ministry.

The release said false and misleading information was spread on social media recently stating that the inspector general of police would visit Germany to buy one lakh bedsheets from there for the police force.

"A quarter is trying to tarnish the image of the police force by spreading rumors on social media intentionally due to an inadvertent linguistic confusion created by the home ministry's order," it added.

On February 7, the

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Metro rail authorities have started installing rail lines in the capital's Farmgate area. The trains are expected to be running commercially between Uttara and Agargaon from December. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Ensure pension for all above 60 PM directs authorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed the authorities concerned to set up a universal pension scheme for people aged above 60 and also for those who worked in the informal sector.

The pension scheme was in the election manifesto of the ruling Awami League.

The PM gave the directive while witnessing a presentation on "Introduction of Universal Pension Scheme" at the Gono Bhaban, reports UNB.

Meanwhile, the Finance Division of the finance ministry in a press release yesterday said the PM instructed the division to enact a law on an urgent basis to introduce the scheme.

Finance Division Senior Secretary Abdur Rouf Talukder made the presentation on the strategic paper of the



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Secondary schools, colleges to reopen on February 22

Both vaccine doses required to attend class; primary schools may follow suit 2 weeks later

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In-person classes will resume partially in secondary schools and colleges on February 22, and only students with two doses of Covid-19 vaccines will be allowed in classrooms.

The authorities hoped they would be able to resume in-person classes at primary schools within two weeks after February 22, as the Covid-19 infection rate is declining significantly.

In addition, universities will be able to take their own decision regarding reopening as well.

"Covid-19 safety protocols will be followed strictly when in-person classes begin," Education Minister Dipu Moni said at a press conference at the Secretariat yesterday. Zakir Hossen, state minister for Primary and Mass Education also attended the conference.

Dipu Moni also said that students with only one dose of vaccine will have to attend online or TV classes, adding that she hopes they will all receive the second dose by February 22.

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WHERE
SKY IS THE
LIMIT



RK SQUARE
GULSHAN SOUTH AVENUE

RK Square, at Gulshan South Avenue, developed its design on the pillars of employee wellbeing. As the city's future thriving business center, it will feature business centers of 4000 sqft, gym, sauna, infinity pool, food court, drop off point, separate entrance and exit, automated parking, sky deck at different levels, double glazed windows, and many other modern amenities. This way, at RK Square, the sky is the limit.

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