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Inflation reaches 78-month high



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A day of gridlock and sufferings



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Mirpur Road in front of the city's New Market turned into a battlefield yesterday as traders and their staffers fought with Dhaka College students over an altercation at an eatery the previous night. Because of the clashes, traffic was at a standstill all along the thoroughfare and it had a cascading effect on other streets, causing immense sufferings to commuters. More photos on page 2.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

MEDIA WORKERS BILL

It will harm media and journalists

Says Editors' Council

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Editors' Council (Sampadak Parishad) has said the space for independent media will shrink further if the proposed "Mass Media Employees (Services Conditions) Act-2022" is passed by parliament. "The newspaper industry is going through trying times, still reeling from the effects of the pandemic. Many daily newspapers at home and abroad have either started curtailing their print editions, or stopping their print circulation altogether," the council said in a press statement yesterday.

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5 projects 52pc costlier now

Ecneec also okays deadline extensions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

About eight years back, the government took up a project to excavate a canal to ease the sufferings of Chattogram city residents from waterlogging, a perennial problem. Though the Tk 327 crore project was supposed to be completed by June 2017, the implementing authority, the Chattogram City Corporation, failed to do so and had got the deadline extended till June 2021, raising the project cost to Tk 1,256 crore. But again, it failed to finish the job within the stipulated time and sought another extension of the deadline. Yesterday, the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) approved the deadline extension till June 2024 for the project, "Excavation of Canal from Bahaddarhat Baripara to Karnaphuli River", for the second time, raising the cost four times the original one to Tk 1,363 crore. Apart from it, four projects got deadline

ORIGINAL COST | REVISED COST
Tk 3,105cr | Tk 6,550cr

extensions at an Ecneec meeting chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who joined it virtually. Meeting documents show that with the extension of deadlines, the costs of the five projects shot up by 52 percent to Tk 6,550 crore from Tk 3,105 crore. Briefing reporters after the meeting, Planning Minister MA Mannan said, "The prime minister has voiced concern over the delay. She gave directives to look into the matter and ensure that all projects are completed in time. "There is no institutional failure but there are individual failures regarding delays. We are conscious about it and trying to finish the projects in time.

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IMF cuts GDP growth forecasts to 6.4pc

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and AHSAN HABIB

The International Monetary Fund has revised down its economic growth projection for Bangladesh to 6.4 percent for the current fiscal year largely because of Russia-Ukraine war and supply chain disruptions. Yesterday, the IMF published its Global Economic Outlook from Washington DC. In October last year, the IMF projected that Bangladesh's GDP growth would be 6.5 percent. Later in January this year, it slightly increased the projection to 6.6 percent based on the country's better economic recovery

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An overnight brawl, daylong battles

1 dead, 50 hurt as Dhaka College students, shopkeepers clash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shopkeepers in the capital's New Market area and Dhaka College students fought pitched battles all day yesterday over a brawl that started on Monday night centring an argument at a fast food shop. After suffering injuries during the clashes around noon yesterday, 18-year-old courier service employee Nahid Hasan died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital at 9:35pm, said Dr Tawfique Elahi, an emergency unit doctor at DMCH. Nadim Hasan, father of the deceased, said his son was injured in the morning while going to work in the Bata Signal area from their home in Kamrangirchar. More than 50 people were injured, including journalists and students, while five shops of Nurjahan Supermarket were gutted during the clash. The Daily Star's photojournalist Prabir Das was among those beaten up by agitators. The clashes brought the city's traffic to a standstill for hours, causing untold hardship for commuters. It also led to closure of shops on both sides of Mirpur Road stretching from New Market to the Science Laboratory intersection amid the busy shopping period ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr. Locals alleged that lack of prompt action by police allowed the violence to continue for hours. As the two sides clashed, Dhaka College authorities in the afternoon announced closure of hostels until May 5, asking students to vacate the dormitories by today. The clashes ended around half an hour before iftar, said Harun Or Rashid, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police. However, the usually bustling area was quiet as tensions prevailed late into the night. Clashes between Dhaka College students and traders of nearby shops, including New Market, are nothing new. Locals said Monday's incident occurred when some students interfered in a dispute between staffers of a fast food shop and others near the second gate of New Market around 10:00pm. At one stage, a rumour did the rounds in the campus that students were stabbed by the storekeepers. Students then arrived in groups and attacked the staffers, who also retaliated. Police dispersed them around 2:00am by firing tear gas shells. Witnesses said students barred traders from opening their shops early yesterday. The traders then banded together and engaged in chase and counter-chase with the students from 11:00am to 1:00pm. Both sides threw brick chaps at each other and also hurled crude bombs in full view of police. At one stage, a fire broke out at a ground-floor shop of Nurjahan Supermarket, witnesses said. Md Shuvo, who took Nahid to hospital around noon, told reporters at the time that the 18-year-old was lying on the road after being critically injured during the chase and counter-chase. Agitators also set fire to an ambulance that was carrying a patient from Anwar Khan Modern Hospital to Dhaka Medical College Hospital. They injured the patient too, witnesses said. Traders alleged that this incident was an outburst of their pent-up grievances over "rampant extortion" by a section of Dhaka College students. Students however termed it as a protest against harassment by shop owners of the area. There were clashes between Dhaka College students and traders in 2008, 2009 and 2015.

There were clashes between Dhaka College students and traders in 2008, 2009 and 2015.

AS USUAL, PEOPLE BEAR THE BRUNT -- PAGE 3

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New Covid variant a cause for concern

Say experts, urge precautionary steps ahead of Eid rush

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

The government should take precautionary measures to prevent a fresh surge in the number of coronavirus cases during the Eid vacation, suggested experts. Mentioning other countries, including neighbouring India, they said the country was likely to witness a fresh surge within the next month. Mushtuq Hussain, a consultant at the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research, said, "There will be a fresh spike in our country. "There is a trend of seeing a spike in Covid-19 cases with a three-month interval in Bangladesh." The severity will be as like as Omicron's previous variants, he added. Recently, South African scientists have detected Omicron BA.4 and BA.5 in the last month. Several recombinant viruses were also spotted and are currently circulating in different parts of the world, reports livemint.com. Against this backdrop, health officials said that they have been observing the situation and will sit within a couple of days in this regard. Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, director general of the health directorate, said, "People have already been rushing to the shopping malls and there will be a home rush during the Eid holidays. We will announce new measures in this regard shortly." About the spike in India, Khurshid said, "We are thinking what and how to do in reality that so many

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Water rushing into Khaijra Haor in Sunamganj's Tahirpur upazila through a breach in an embankment yesterday. Farmers are in a race against the clock to save paddy in the Haor region amid threats of fresh flash floods. Story on page 12.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Eight journo attacked by shopkeepers and students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least eight newsmen, including a photojournalist of The Daily Star, were attacked and injured while performing their duties during the clash between New Market employees and students of Dhaka College in the capital's New Market area yesterday. The injured are Prabir Das, photographer of The Daily Star; Asif Zaman, senior reporter at Deepto TV; Imran Lipu, cameraperson at Deepto TV; Al Amin Razu, reporter at Ajker Patrika; Taifur Rahman Tuhin, reporter at SA TV; Kabir Hossain, cameraperson at SA TV; Jasim Uddin Mahir, senior reporter of online news portal Dhaka Post; and Shahed Shafiq, senior reporter of Dhaka Tribune. All the injured said both parties involved in the clash assaulted them

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