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Road to ruins

RHD building road thru wildlife sanctuary in Ctg



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Conviction in corruption case

Myanmar junta court jails Suu Kyi for 5 years



P15

Victorious captain

Imrul learning on the job



B4

Crisis in Sri Lanka

WB to provide \$600m in financial aid

Vaccine plant initiative losing spirit

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

The country's initiative to build a vaccine plant and research centre of its own is losing steam apparently with the intensity of the pandemic waning.

The bitter experience of being promised Covid vaccines and not getting those in time seems to be lost on the authorities.

Even though the government had said it was a priority project, the plans have not gotten off the drawing board in over eight months.

The development project proposal (DPP) is yet to be finalised and the six-acre land in Gopalganj, designated for the project, has not been acquired yet, officials concerned said.

No headway has been made to get a foreign biotechnology firm signed for the technology transfer of vaccines and production of protein-based Covid-19 vaccines, they said.

In July last year, the government moved to set up a fully-fledged vaccine plant and research institute after the Covid-19 vaccine supply debacle earlier that year.

On July 16, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced in parliament that her government was going to set up a vaccine institute.

The institute, the first of its kind here, would have three components -- a vaccine institute, a vaccine packaging plant, and a research and development site. The packaging plant would fill ampoules, label them, and ensure quality.

Health ministry officials at that time had said the construction of the packaging plant would be done by this May. Now they are saying they have made major progress but it would take up to a year and a half to finish.

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HERE WE GO ... Children in festive mood and attire leaning out the window of the Silk City Express at the Kamalapur Railway Station yesterday afternoon. They are visiting their grandparents' home in Rajshahi after a gap of two years to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr, which is less than a week away.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Railway service revamped

Says PM flagging off 46 locomotives of BR

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her government turned the state-run Bangladesh Railway into a profitable agency, mentioning that it was left in tatters during the previous BNP rule.

"As we made BRTC a profitable organisation, today we have proved that train service can be made profitable," she said.

The premier was addressing a programme marking the launch of two Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Mobile Rail Museums and 46 locomotives.

Hasina said the previous BNP government had shut down train services on different routes following suggestions of the World Bank.

She said her government has not only revived the rail transport service agency, but also made it profitable.

The PM joined the function at the Kamalapur Railway Station through videoconferencing from the Gono Bhaban.

She stressed the need for expediting recruitment of more manpower for the Bangladesh Railway (BR) to expand its services.

Hasina said though the BR is a service organisation, it should earn profit. This would be possible after the expansion of the railway network and opening of new routes being constructed by the government, she added.



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TENTULTALA PLAYGROUND

Home boss yet to find a solution

Meeting with rights activists yields no results

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal could not yet come up with a clear-cut solution after meeting rights activists yesterday, the debate over the construction of a police station on the Tentultala field rages on.

Talking to reporters after the meeting at his secretariat office, Kamal said, "For now, this [field] is fixed for the Thana [police station]. It belongs to them as it was allocated following proper procedures.

"We need a place for the Kalabagan Police Station... If anyone else or the respective mayor can arrange another appropriate place, then we'll consider [moving the station].

He further said, "It [Tentultala] was never a playground. It was an abandoned land of the Ministry of Housing and Public Works. Most of the new police stations are situated in rented houses, due to which police are facing various problems."

Khushi Kabir, governing body secretary of Nijera Kori; Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association; Iqbal Habib, architect; and Sangeeta Imam, cultural activist, attended the 30-minute-long meeting with the home boss.

"We want the ongoing construction to stop. We want the Eid-ul-Fitr prayers to take place here [Tentultala playground]. He [Kamal] said he will discuss the issue with the prime minister," Khushi Kabir said after the meeting.

Rizwana Hasan said the home minister also feels the necessity of a playground but the authorities have already allocated Tk 27 crore to build the station.

The activists also requested Kamal to stop erecting brick walls there.

"We don't want any face-off between police and locals. If

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COMMENTARY

What sort of a mindset is it?

MAHFUZ ANAM

Our foreign minister announced on Tuesday that he sought India's assistance in lifting the sanctions against Rab. According to him, last December when the sanctions against Rab -- which, we have regularly reported on, has done creditable work against terrorism and in our fight against extremism -- were imposed, he sought India's help to lobby with the US to lift those. This he said was possible because of our extremely warm relations with India.

We welcome the level and warmth of our ties with India and express our appreciation of the many areas of cooperation with our neighbour. We also welcome the visit of Indian Foreign Minister S Jaishankar today to extend Indian PM's invitation to our PM to visit India. These and other signs are indeed indicative of the high level of support and cooperation that currently exists in our bilateral relations.

However, we consider it extremely demeaning that another country's assistance has been sought to get the sanctions against Rab lifted. Seeking an ally's help in matters of supreme national interest is not only fine but expected. But to try to use India's goodwill for us to plead for the lifting of

the sanctions against Rab, which consists of cancellation of visas for seven serving and former officials and restrictions on financial transactions of Rab members, should be below our dignity. In matters of state, this however should not warrant soliciting our neighbour's help. In fact, we consider it to be misuse of our "good neighbourly" relations.

The demeaning nature of the story does not end there. Our foreign minister gleefully said he met the members of Indian-American community (US citizens of Indian origin) who agreed to lobby for the lifting of the sanctions, adding, "India's 4.5 million Hindus are a very influential group, and they promised to raise the issue with the US administration." (Why he had to bring the religious identity here beats me. From the last that I know there is a very large number of Sikhs among the Indian-Americans. Why does he preclude any Muslims from being a part of India's diaspora?) So he went beyond the state-to-state relations and lobbied with the Indian diaspora. This we consider beyond his remit and demonstrative of his mindset that we are so weak in dealing with the US that we cannot do things on our own and need others' help.

We accept that the Indian community

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61 ZILA PARISHADS

AL men appointed as administrators in most

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday appointed immediate past elected chairmen of 61 zila parishads as administrators, most of them ruling Awami League leaders of the respective districts.

The LGRD ministry's Local Government Division yesterday issued a gazette notification to this end.

The development comes 10 days after the government dissolved the Zila Parishad councils (district council) of the districts after their five-year tenure expired.

Chief executive officers of the zila parishads and financial matters during the period.

"We have already appointed immediate past chairmen of 61 zila parishads as administrators," Tazul Islam, local government, rural development and cooperatives minister, said in a statement

"Administrators will perform their duties until the new district councils are formed through election."

yesterday.

"Administrators will perform their duties until the new district councils are formed through election."

Dormant district councils were revived via the first-ever Zila Parishad polls that took place in

December 28, 2016.

Amid boycotts by the major opposition parties, the ruling AL-backed candidates became chairmen in 25 districts, AL leaders running as independents won in 13, and AL leaders won unopposed in 21. Polls were held in two other districts later.

In a letter to the Election Commission on April 18, the Local Government Division urged them to take necessary steps to hold Zila Parishad elections as soon as possible, as tenure of the councils was completed.

About the polls, EC Secretary Humayun Kabir Khandaker said they received the letter from the government and that they were

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The glorious comeback of Jabbarer Boli Khela



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