

At least one playground for every area

PM says about govt plan at sports award function

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday underscored the need for creating opportunities for sports, exercise and cultural activities for everyone saying these are a must for building a nation.

Addressing a programme marking the handover of the National Sports Award 2013-2021, the premier regretted that open space for sports is very limited in the capital. She said the government has taken some steps so that every area has at least one playground.

The event was held at the capital's Osmani Memorial Auditorium, with the PM joining it virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

Hasina asked the authorities concerned

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Vehicles are caught in long tailbacks on both sides of Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in the capital's Karwan Bazar yesterday as the hustle and bustle of daily life is returning to the city after the Eid holidays. Government offices and banks reopened on May 5 after a four-day Eid break but the hiatus continued for a few more days.

PHOTO: STAR

Nothing wrong with the GDP calculation methodology

Finance minister dispels economists' doubts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal yesterday dismissed all doubts raised by economists about this fiscal year's GDP growth estimate amid the pandemic and the Ukraine war that has upset the global economy afresh.

"There is no need to see everything with a suspicious eye -- we followed the standard procedure for computing the GDP," he told reporters after a meeting of the cabinet committee on public procurement.

And the multilateral lenders like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund never raised objections about the methods of the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

In its provisional figures for the Bangladesh economy, the BBS said the GDP will expand by 7.25 percent, which coincidentally is the growth target laid out in the budget.

Thanks to a strong showing by the industrial sector, the economy would grow at more than 7 percent for the third time in 15 years. And yet, the use

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Ukraine claims battlefield gains

'Pushes back' invader forces in Kharkiv, shuts Russian gas to Europe; US House passes \$40b in aid for Kyiv

AGENCIES

Ukrainian forces reported battlefield gains yesterday in a counterattack that could signal a shift in the momentum of the war, while Kyiv shut gas flows on a route through Russian-held territory, raising the spectre of an energy crisis in Europe.

Following days of advances north and east of the second largest city Kharkiv, Ukrainian forces were within just several kilometres of the Russian border yesterday morning, one Ukrainian military source said on condition of anonymity.

Before the advance, Russian forces had been on the outskirts of Kharkiv, 40 km (25 miles) from the border.

The gains appear to be the fastest that Ukraine has achieved since it drove Russian troops away from Kyiv and out of the country's north at the beginning of April.

In Vilhivka, a village east of Kharkiv held by Ukrainian forces, the thump of near constant artillery and swoosh of multiple rocket launchers

could be heard from fighting at the front, now pushed substantially further east, where Ukraine has been trying to capture villages on the banks of the Donets river and threaten Russian supply lines on the far side.

Further east, Ukrainian forces seemed to be in control of the village of Rubizhne, on the banks of the Donets.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said successes were putting Ukraine's second largest city beyond the range of Russian artillery. But he cautioned Ukrainians against raising their expectations too high yet.

"We should not create an atmosphere of excessive moral pressure, where victories are expected weekly and even daily," he said.

Meanwhile, shipments from Russia's export monopoly Gazprom to Europe via Ukraine fell by a quarter after Kyiv said it was forced to halt all flows from the Sokhranovka transit point in southern Russia. Ukraine accused Russian-backed separatists of siphoning supplies.

Russian forces have also continued to bombard the Azovstal steelworks in the southern port of Mariupol.

With President Joe Biden warning that Ukraine would within days likely run out of funds to keep fighting, the US House of Representatives voted late Tuesday to send a \$40 billion aid package to the country.

The funding will be used to assist Ukrainian military and national security forces and will go toward weapons, equipment, training, logistics and intelligence support as well as other needs, reports Reuters.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday said he had agreed new deals with Sweden and Finland to bolster European security, pledging to support both countries' armed forces should they come under attack.

The agreements, described by Britain as "a step-change in defence and security cooperation", will go some way to assuage fears in Finland and Sweden over threats made by Russia should either nation decide to join Nato.

Complainant at court Govt now has its guard up

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and a government-appointed chemical examiner were also made prosecution witnesses. But none came to testify all these years until February this year.

Sheikh Abul Kashem, a Gabtoli bus counter worker in 1998, in his testimony on February 8 told the court that police came to him and wrote down his name and address for a case.

Ahad Ali, a farmer in Rajshahi's Godagari, has been shuttling between Rajshahi and Dhaka for the last 24 years to appear before the court for a crime that he claims he did not commit.

Arrested in 1998 from Dhaka's Gabtoli bus terminal on charges of possessing heroin, he repeatedly told police that the seized drug was not his.

He also alleged that police demanded Tk 5,000 for his release.

Yesterday, Judge ASM Ruhul Imran of the Special Judge's Court-2 in Dhaka began hearing the case around 11:00am. Three correspondents of this newspaper were present there.

After the testimony, Ahad's lawyer Sanjib Mondal cross examined the witnesses, asking why there were no witness signatures in the first information report.

Salam did not have a response and neither could he give a proper reply to the question of why they did not prepare a seizure list after recovering the said drug.

According to the Code of Criminal Procedure, before making a search, the officer shall call upon two or more respectable inhabitants of the locality to attend and witness the search, which has to be done in their

presence.

A list of all the things seized and the places they were found in must also be prepared by an officer and signed by witnesses.

When Mondal enquired about the search team leader, as a superior official is required for such a drive, Salam replied he led the team.

Another witness, Morshed Alam, a constable working in riot police, also testified yesterday, saying he was in the riot police and accompanied Salam as per the latter's order during the search.

During the cross examination, the defence told the court that as there was no seizure list prepared on the spot, "no heroin was recovered from his client".

The judge fixed June 14 for the next hearing, asking the authorities concerned to mandatorily produce the remaining witnesses, including the investigation officer named in the charge sheet.

The Daily Star talked to Abdus Salam, who has been living in Banaripara of Barishal since his retirement, after the hearing.

He said he got a phone call from the higher authorities on Tuesday saying he had to appear before the court.

Asked about Abul Kashem's testimony, he said he wanted to "know about" Kashem first. When asked to elaborate, Salam did not have a response.

Then when queried why he did not include the informant in his witness list, he chose to walk away.

The police witness, Morshed Alam, who is now working in the traffic division of DMP, said it was Salam who conducted the search.

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The government should have acted decisively much before, said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the WB's Dhaka office.

"I have been saying for a while that the government's foreign currency expenditure must be brought down promptly. If the import demand is not cut, the deficit in the current account that has been widening every month

Tk 390cr lost to graft

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In Matarbari, officials and employees concerned at the DC office took 20-30 percent "commission" from the compensations. There were also allegations of buying land at a lower price by showing them as salt pan or non arable land.

An NGO assigned to provide grants to the affected had collected 10-20 percent "commission" from the compensation, the TIB said.

TIB research fellows Md Mahfuzul Haque and Md Newazul Moula presided over the study.

They pointed to excess land acquisition too.

Neighbouring countries require an average 0.23 acres for every megawatt generated by burning coal. It is 0.053 acres in case of LNG. But "a total of 942 acres of additional land has been purchased or acquired for the projects selected under this study", said Md Newazul Moula presenting the study.

The power plant in Barishal should have needed 81 acres, but 310 acres were acquired. In Banshkhali, 660 acres were acquired against a requirement of 304 acres and in Matarbari, 1,358 acres against a need

will not be brought down. These are the right steps."

Hussain went on to advise the central bank to exercise restraint in its currency sales.

"The reserves have now come at a stage that it is the bare minimum. Normally, six months' import cover is sufficient but given the global inflation, eight to nine months' cover would be safe."

The exchange rate

of 418 acres, the researchers argued.

They said the price of the power produced from the plants was higher than that of plants in India, China, Pakistan, and Australia.

The researchers observed that none of the projects disclosed important project-related information, including the development project proposal (DPP), environmental impact assessment (EIA), loan rates, conditions, profit distribution, financial report, and audit report.

The power plant in Barishal initially did not have an EIA and ECC-Environmental Clearance Certificate. The EIA approved later failed to consider the environmental concerns of the Tengragiri Forest, known as the second Sundarbans; Andharamanik Hilsa Sanctuary; and Gorapadma Green Belt, the report said.

About the lack of competition in the power sector, TIB said the government could not prepare a master plan by itself. It took financial help from a donor instead, which in turn repeatedly appointed a certain consultant to prepare the plan.

adjustment must be allowed to depreciate more.

"It will have an impact on remittance and import -- it will help both ways."

The inflation will increase but that is necessary.

"Those who will be impacted by the rising prices should be given a helping hand through the budget as not everyone will be impacted. Monetary policy cannot help them much."

TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman said the policy framework of Bangladesh was being captured by the donor agencies and investors. Investors have been given undue benefits through special provisions.

The TIB made seven recommendations, including formulating a master plan excluding those with conflicts of interest and strategically prioritising renewable energy with a clear roadmap; abolishing the Quick Enhancement of Electricity and Energy Supply (Special Provisions) Act, 2010; ensuring transparency, accountability and integrity in determining conditions for loans and signing relevant documents.

It also recommended suspending the ongoing construction of coal and LNG-based power plants, building solar and other renewable energy projects on the excess land acquired for the coal and LNG-based power plants, ensuring compensation to the people affected, and taking strict legal actions against the people involved in corruption.

Casino 'kingpin' Samrat out on bail

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will have to consult the doctors in charge of his treatment, Nazrul said.

Judge Al Asad Md Asifuzzaman of Dhaka's Special Judge Court-6 yesterday granted ad-interim bail to Samrat in a case filed for siphoning off around Tk 222 crore and channelling it to casinos in Singapore and Malaysia between 2011 and 2018.

Samrat was given bail on grounds of his deteriorating health condition and long stay in jail since October 2019. He was given bail in the other cases against him on similar grounds, court sources said.

He was earlier granted bail in money laundering and arms cases on April

10, while he got bail in a narcotics case the next day.

The judge directed Samrat to submit his passport before the court yesterday while furnishing the bail bond.

Moreover, Samrat will not be allowed to go abroad without the court's permission and will have to submit his updated medical records before it, said the judge in his order.

On November 12, 2019, the Anti-Corruption Commission filed a case against Samrat with its Integrated District Office-1 of Dhaka for amassing Tk 2.94 crore illegally.

On December 7, 2020, ACC Deputy Director Jahangir Alam, also the

investigating officer of the case, submitted the charge sheet against Samrat, considered a kingpin in the illegal casino businesses in the capital, to the Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka.

On October 6, 2019, Rab arrested Samrat and his close aide Enamul Haque Arman, former vice-president of the same unit, in Cumilla after raiding a house near the Indian border.

The ex Jubo League leader came under the spotlight after Rab busted his illegal casino business at different sporting clubs in Dhaka. Following his arrest, he was expelled from the ruling party youth wing.

Bangladesh ineligible for US fund

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She also mentioned workplace safety as an issue of concern.

"We know there have been improvements in many of these areas, specifically in the ready-made garments sector, but on the whole, there still are significant concerns."

The DFC partners with the private sector to finance solutions faced by the developing world in areas like energy and infrastructure.

Coleman, who had visited Bhashan Char, an island dedicated to house Rohingya refugees, during this trip, also voiced some concerns about the island.

concerns about Bhashan Char. It is very remote and hard to reach. We have heard concerns about the voluntariness of the people going to Bhashan Char."

She also spoke about the lack of basic services there.

"The housing is certainly an improvement over Cox's Bazar [refugee camps]. [Regarding] the food delivery in Cox's Bazar -- they are getting all sorts of items in their food basket, including fresh vegetables. We did not see that in Bhashan Char. It is very difficult to reach and there is little storage facility there."

Coleman added that there are 400 thousand refugee children who need

Trial begins in cases against Madani

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The trial of two cases filed against Rafiqul Islam Madani, better known as Shishu Bokta for his boyish looks, began at a Dhaka court yesterday with testimonies of the complainants.

The cases were filed with Motijheel Police Station in the capital and Gacha Police Stations in Gazipur under the Digital Security Act.

Madani, aged reportedly over 25, faces allegations of anti-state remarks and trying to incite chaos.

The judge yesterday recorded the statement of the plaintiffs who were later cross-examined by Madani's lawyers.

Teacher accused of raping boy

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

An Arabic teacher has been accused of raping a 12-year-old boy in Kulaura, Moulvibazar, on Tuesday.

According to the complaint filed with Kulaura Police Station, Milik Mia, 24, took his student to an empty place near a brick kiln and raped him.

The boy, who is from a poor family, was bleeding profusely when his parents admitted him to a hospital.

Zakir Hosain, resident medical officer of Kulaura Health Complex, where the boy was first taken, said he was critically injured.

Binoy Bhushan Roy, officer-in-charge of Kulaura Police Station, said police were looking for the suspect.

Man jailed for torturing 12-yr-old

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A man landed in jail yesterday on charges of tying the hands of a 12-year-old school boy and torturing him in Atghoria, Pabna, on Monday.

In a video that went viral on social media, Kamal Hossain Bhuiya of Utorchok village in Pabna's Atghoria upazila was seen torturing the boy.

The 7th grader was treated at Atghoria Health Complex.

Kamal told police that the boy used to stalk his daughter.

The mother of the boy filed a case on Tuesday night.

Every heatwave enhanced by climate change: Experts

AFP, Paris

All heatwaves today bear the unmistakable and measurable fingerprint of global warming, top experts on quantifying the impact of climate change on extreme weather said Wednesday.

Burning fossil fuels and destroying forests have released enough greenhouse gases into the atmosphere to also boost the frequency and intensity of many floods, droughts, wildfires and tropical storms, they detailed in a state-of-science report.