



Rain coupled with construction work has made a part of the road in front of Government Science College in Tejgaon virtually unusable. If anyone even dares to use the path, they have to brave through inches of mud just to reach their destination.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

‘We see more opportunity, less challenge’
South Korean envoy on bilateral collaboration

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The current global geopolitical situation is creating more opportunities rather than challenges for South Korea and Bangladesh for closer collaboration due to their deep relationship, said Ambassador Lee Jang-keun yesterday.

“The companies have realised the risks from geopolitical confrontations and the necessity of diversifying their investment and partners. Bangladesh is becoming an increasingly attractive partner for Korean companies,” he said while addressing a seminar on 50 years of Bangladesh-South Korea relations at the Foreign Service Academy.

The foreign affairs ministry, South Korean Embassy in Dhaka and the Dhaka University’s East Asia Study Centre organised the event.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen was present as chief guest, while Lee Jang-keun and Bangladesh Ambassador to Korea Delwar Hossain were special guests. Dhaka University International Relations Prof Dr Delwar Hossain chaired the event.

Lee Jang-keun said Bangladesh and Korea produced many successful

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‘Introduce new app before Eid’

Railway directs vendor handling online-ticketing

The new vendor took charge of BR’s ticketing service in March, but the app that was previously used remained non-functional, as it was operated by the previous vendor.

MEETING DIRECTIVES

- Improving ticketing system
- Preparing for next Eid
- Introducing more counters at Kamalapur

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Railway authorities have directed its vendor that handles online-ticketing services to deploy a new app before Eid-ul-Azha to improve the service.

They also asked the Shohoz-led joint venture firm to further improve their system to provide smooth services during huge rush, especially ahead of Eid. Officials of Bangladesh Railway (BR) were also asked to start preparing for the next Eid, to be celebrated in early July.

All these directives were given at a meeting held yesterday to evaluate BR and its vendor’s performance centring Eid. Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujon presided over the lengthy meeting held at Rail Bhaban. It was participated by top officials of the ministry, BR and the vendor firm.

The Daily Star came to know about the development after talking to at least three meeting participants.

The journey home and return via train went quite smoothly this Eid. However, like previous years, hundreds of people thronged Kamalapur and other stations to buy train tickets in advance ahead of Eid. Many spent sleepless nights to buy tickets, while others complained about the online service.

The new vendor took charge of BR’s ticketing service in March, but the app that was previously used remained non-functional, as it was operated by the previous vendor.

Currently, 50 percent of the total tickets are

being sold through a website, while rest from counters, where the vendor has a role to play.

In this situation, the minister asked Shohoz to deploy the app as soon as possible.

Officials of the vendor said they are developing the app and taking time to avoid any problem once it comes into action.

In reply, the minister asked them to place the app before authorities within the middle of next month to check different aspects.

The incident of an employee of the vendor being arrested ahead of Eid for selling train tickets in black market was also raised at the meeting.

When it was mentioned that the arrestee also worked for previous vendor, the current vendor was asked why it is hiring employees of previous vendor. The previous one did not hand over documents and data properly, and that’s why it was forced to hire them, said an official of the new vendor.

Some other problems regarding online-ticketing services were also discussed at the meeting, and authorities asked the new vendor to update its service further.

The issue of huge crowds at Kamalapur station was also discussed, and it was decided that more spots and counters are to be introduced ahead of Eid. Some officials said as they have to take standing passengers in many trains despite a ban, it is better to re-introduce the system on some scale.

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‘Ensure timely interview’

Students urge govt regarding US visa

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 300 students who obtained scholarships and got admitted to different universities in the US urged the government to take necessary steps to ensure their visa interview slots on time.

A six-member student delegation yesterday submitted a memorandum to the foreign minister at his office.

A member of the delegation told this correspondent that they met Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen at noon. The minister assured them that he would write to the authorities concerned soon.

Another delegate said a large number of applicants got interview slots in late 2022 and early 2023 while they have to join their programmes by this July.

“We are not able to reschedule the slots due to a recent policy change by the US embassy,” he said.

The delay has pushed around 2,000 students of the Fall 2022 session into uncertainty regarding joining their programmes on time.

The memorandum read that a significant portion of the students have received financial aid from the universities in the form of merit scholarships, research, and teaching assistantships and they are fearful that they will have to forfeit such hard-earned awards.

NATIONAL BUDGET

Allocate 8pc for health sector

Say speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 8 percent of the national budget in 2022-23 fiscal should be allocated for the health sector, putting primary healthcare in the heart, speakers at a pre-budget webinar recommended yesterday.

Bangladesh Health Watch, Brac James P Grant School of Public Health of Brac University, and Unnayan Somonnoy organised the dialogue.

Dr Atiur Rahman, former governor of Bangladesh Bank and president of Unnayan Somonnoy, presented the keynote at the event.

“Majority of healthcare seekers go to healthcare centres for primary health care. So, allocation for this segment should be as much as 30 percent of the total health budget,” he said.

Currently, around 25 percent of health budget is spent for primary health care, while 39 percent for secondary health care and 36 percent for tertiary health care.

He said the budget size of 2022-23 fiscal is forecasted to be Tk 6,78,000 crore, which is 15.4 percent of the GDP, while it is 17.5 percent of the GDP in current fiscal.

He opined that if the government allocation for medicine is increased by three-fold, the health expenditures borne by patients can be decreased to 58 percent from 68.5 percent currently.

Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, founder of Gonosasthaya Kendra, said investing Tk 10 crore in each union health sub-centre can bring a

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Provide them with language skills training
Say speakers on female migrant workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Female migrant workers should be provided with sufficient skills training, including learning the host country’s language for their empowerment and safety in receiving countries, said speakers at a workshop yesterday.

They said strong network among civil society groups in Bangladesh and the receiving end can also play a vital role in ensuring their safety.

International Food Policy Research Institute organised the workshop on “Strengthening Institutions for Empowering Female Migrants in Bangladesh” at a city hotel.

Nomita Halder, managing director of PKSF, said to provide language training to aspirant migrants, returnee migrants who have good knowledge on host countries’ language could be employed as trainers.

Nomita, a former secretary of the expatriates’ ministry, said such issues should be addressed in government policy intervention.

Disseminating findings of a study report, Nazmun N Ratna of Lincoln University, New Zealand, said female migrant workers are vulnerable to job loss, reduced pay and health issues. Besides, abuse of female migrant workers may be under-reported, she said.

They should also be provided with accurate information regarding their jobs and environment in host countries, said Prof Sadeka Halim, a sociologist and teacher at Dhaka University’s sociology department.

Sumaiya Islam, executive director of Nari Sramik Kendra, said female migrant workers in Saudi Arabia could be provided with hostel facility for safety. She stressed for recognising middlemen in migration channel to hold them accountable for fraudulence.

PRAYER TIMING
MAY 13

	Fazr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	4:10	12:30	5:00	6:36	8:00
Jamaat	4:45	1:15	5:15	6:40	8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Using expats to smuggle gold

At least 40kg gold seized, 7 held at Dhaka airport in one month

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

In the name of sending gifts to dear ones, several syndicates have been using expatriates to smuggle gold into Bangladesh.

The criminals pack gold bars inside electronics like charger fans, cameras or phones, and then ask the expatriates to carry them to Bangladesh, telling them that the packages are for relatives.

These consignments are coming to the country mostly from Saudi Arabia, Dubai and Qatar.

Expatriates mostly take the packages out of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) by themselves, but in a couple of cases, airport and airline staffers were found to be involved.

Analysing data on gold smuggling



Criminals pack gold inside electronics, ask expatriates to carry them

Consignments coming mostly from Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Qatar

In some cases, airport, airline staffers involved

Sometimes, expatriates knowingly smuggle gold to earn easy money

of the last month, investigators claimed to have come up with the findings.

In the last month, around seven people were arrested and at least 40 kg of gold were seized from HSIA, according to officials of airport customs.

On Wednesday night, officials of Dhaka Customs House arrested an expatriate -- Md Shafiqul Islam -- with 20 gold bars weighing over 2.5 kg and worth around Tk 2 crore. Shafiqul had come to Bangladesh from Saudi Arabia.

Md Riiazul Islam, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Customs House, confirmed the development to The Daily Star yesterday.

He said Shafiqul had brought a charger fan with him, and after

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Police bar a procession of Communist Party of Bangladesh at the capital’s Gulistan from going towards the commerce ministry yesterday. CPB held the programme demanding that the commerce minister be removed over price hike of edible oil, and the number of TCB shops and vehicles be increased to ease public sufferings.

PHOTO: COLLECTED