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TK 44CR LAUNDERING

Another case filed against PK Halder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday filed another case, accusing PK Halder and 11 others of laundering Tk 44 crore.

The other accused include Shib Prashad Banarjee and Papia Banarjee, who were the managing director and director of Deya Shipping, which existed only on papers, and the former chairman and directors of FAS Finance.

PK Halder, the former managing director of NRB Global Bank, faces 35 cases over allegations of money laundering.

Yesterday's case was filed after an ACC enquiry found that the accused individuals managed to secure a loan of Tk 44 crore for Deya Shipping and laundered the money in 2014.

ACC Assistant Director

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START OF HAJJ FLIGHT

Govt likely to miss May 31 deadline

RASHIDUL HASAN

The government is likely to miss the May 31 deadline for starting hajj flight as many hajj-related activities are yet to be completed with the hajj only one and a half months away.

The largest annual congregation of the Muslims may be held on July 8, subject to sighting of the moon.

Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh, a platform of around 1,500 private hajj agencies, said it is certain that the scheduled date for commencing the hajj flight would be missed as all procedures in this regard have not been finished yet.

Haab President Shahadat Hossain Taslim recently sent a letter to the religious affairs ministry asking it to start the flight from June 10.

Talking to The Daily Star recently, he said the Saudi Arabian government was yet to finalise the slots for the hajj flights.

Haab said smooth hajj management would be a very challenging task this year.

"Hajj management is a massive work. Previously, the work used to begin seven to eight months before the hajj. Many tasks relating to this management are yet to be done this year although we have a few days left," Shahadat said.

For example, he said, the hajj agencies will have to hire monazem (representative of a hajj agency who coordinates all tasks of hajj in Saudi Arabia), rent homes or hotels for pilgrims, send money for this purpose, and pay moallem (guide) fees.

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ECONOMIC CRISIS IN SRI LANKA

Fuel shortage set to ease

Says central bank governor after securing foreign exchange

AGENCIES

Sri Lanka's central bank has secured foreign exchange to pay for fuel and cooking gas shipments that will ease crippling shortages, its governor said yesterday, but police fired tear gas and water canon to push back student protesters.

Most of Sri Lanka's petrol stations have run dry as the island nation battles its most devastating economic crisis since independence in 1948. At some pumps in the commercial capital, Colombo, dozens of people stood in lines holding plastic jerry cans, as troops in combat gear and armed with assault rifles patrolled the streets. Traffic was extremely light.

Residents said most people were staying at home because of the lack of transport.

Hundreds of students carrying black flags marched on Colombo's central Fort area, chanting slogans against the government, according to a Reuters witness.

Central bank Governor P Nandalal Weerasinghe told a news conference adequate dollars had been released to pay for fuel and cooking gas shipments, utilising in part \$130 million received from the World Bank and remittances from Sri Lankans working overseas.

SYLHET, SUNAMGANJ

Troubles mount as more areas flooded

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

As the Surma and the Kushiara keep rising, more and more areas of Sylhet and Sunamganj are going under water every day and large number of flood victims suffering from scarcity of food and drinking water.

Around 20 lakh people have been affected by the flash floods in the two districts. Thousands of them along with their cattle have taken refuge at 110 shelter centres in the last one week, said officials.

The Sylhet district administration has kept 231 more shelter centres ready. In Sunamganj, the number is 60.

At least four people died either from drowning in flood water or in landslides at hillocks in the last seven days. Besides, 96 people caught waterborne diseases during the same period, said sources at the Sylhet civil surgeon's office.

Police said three children were killed and eight other people injured by lightning strikes in Sundarpahari village of Sunamganj's Tahirpur upazila yesterday while they were harvesting peanut in a field submerged in flood water.

According to officials, all 13 upazilas of Sylhet and five out of 11 in Sunamganj have so far been hit by flash floods due to onrush of water from upstream and torrential rains. As many as 873 educational institutions have been shut in the two districts.

Road communications have collapsed in about one-third area of the Sylhet city. Road links between Sylhet city and Gowainghat upazila remain snapped for six days.

Road communications between Chhatak and Dowarabazar upazilas of Sunamganj were cut yesterday.

Around 1.5 lakh families in Sylhet and Sunamganj have been without power since Tuesday.

Nizam Uddin, a resident of Purba Jallong area in Gowainghat upazila, said, "My house has collapsed and the Aush saplings have been damaged. I wonder how I will get back to normal life after the flooding is over."

Habiba Begum of Tukergaon village in Sylhet said, "We are facing an acute shortage of food and drinking water. As flood water entered our house, I took shelter at a nearby home with my three children. I don't know when I will be able to return to my home."

The overall flood situation worsened in Sylhet in 24 hours preceding 3:00pm yesterday.

According to the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre, the Surma was flowing 47cm above the danger level at Sylhet city and 21cm above at Sunamganj town at 3:00pm yesterday, up by 5cm and 13cm respectively in 24 hours.

The Kushiara was flowing 175cm above the danger level at Amolshid in Sylhet's Zakiganj upazila at 3:00pm yesterday and 57cm above at Sheola point in the district's Beanibazar upazila, up by 17cm at Amolshid 24 hours ago. The water level remained unchanged at Sheola in the same period.

However, the Surma was flowing 110cm above the danger level at Kanaighat of Sylhet at

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Bangladesh players appear relaxed during a drinks break on the final day of their first Test against Sri Lanka, which ended in a draw at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday. Read more on page 11.

Find ways to ease economic pressure

PM directs finance, commerce ministries, BB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed the finance and commerce ministries and Bangladesh Bank to find ways to deal with the economic pressure caused by the Russia-Ukraine war and Covid pandemic.

After a cabinet meeting held at the Prime Minister's Office, Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam told reporters that Bangladesh Bank was asked to find ways to control the volatile dollar market.

Speaking on the unscheduled agenda of the meeting, the PM instructed the ministries of commerce and finance to come up with a comprehensive plan within two or three days to address the price hike, the cabinet secretary said when asked whether the rising prices of essentials were discussed.

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26.5pc people suffer from obesity

Says health directorate report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 26.5 percent of the country's population suffer from obesity while 13 percent from hypertension and seven percent from diabetes, find multiple studies by the health directorate.

Alarming, around 68 percent people with high blood pressure are asymptomatic while 61 percent diabetic patients are asymptomatic, researchers said while disclosing the findings at the Annual Research Dissemination Programme-2022 at a hotel in the capital.

Of all the eight divisions, Rangpur has the highest 33.7 percent obese people, followed by around 32 percent in Dhaka.

Khulna division has the lowest 14 percent obese people while Chattogram has 29 percent, Rajshahi 26.7 percent, Sylhet 23 percent, Barishal 19.5 percent and Mymensingh 16.1 percent.

The non-communicable disease control wing of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) conducted the 12 studies last year.

Funded by the DGHS, the studies were carried out based on patients' data collected from different upazila health complexes, hospitals and analyses of related studies conducted earlier.

Researchers from different health organisations, including the icddr, b, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, National Institute of Mental Health, and National Heart Foundation, conducted the studies,

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PM's remark on Khaleda tantamount to 'death threat'

Says BNP

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

The BNP yesterday said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's remark about pushing the party's Chairperson Khaleda Zia into the river from the Padma bridge was tantamount to a "death threat".

"I was surprised by the prime minister's statement on the Padma bridge involving our leader [Khaleda]. Being a prime minister of a country, no matter how she comes to power, [she] can't make such a comment," Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, BNP secretary general, said while addressing a meeting of Jatiyatabadi Sramik Dal at the BNP office in

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