



Abdul Alim playground now full of life



BCC to 'allow' easy-bikes on city streets



I focus on my work, not my co-star



Pacific nations reject China security pact

DHAKA-MAWA-BHANGA EXPRESSWAY

Higher toll proposed

Previous rate still not implemented; collection to begin on July 1

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Even before implementing the toll rate previously fixed for Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga Expressway, the government is planning to increase it, a move that will push up transport costs.

The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) has proposed four base tolls -- Tk 18.40, Tk 25, Tk 33.71 and Tk 34.70 -- 84 to 250 percent higher than the rate fixed earlier.

The finance ministry in April last year approved Tk 10 as the base toll -- proposed by the Road Transport and Highways Division -- for an interim period, until the opening of Padma Bridge.

The fee per kilometre for a medium-sized truck (two axle) is considered the base toll.

The authorities could not implement it mainly because the infrastructures required for this -- including four exits and entrances of the expressway and the toll plaza -- were not ready.

Meanwhile, observing the newly proposed rates are high, the Road



Two pedestrians with umbrellas cross the Mirpur Road in front of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital amid the rain yesterday. Another pedestrian has given up on staying dry. They were crossing the street while cars were making U-turns and right turns. Drivers' visibility greatly reduce during such heavy showers.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Woman held over assault on female student at train station

A CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Law enforcers yesterday arrested a woman who was allegedly involved in the assault on a female university student over her outfit at Narsingdi Railway Station about a couple of weeks ago.

The middle-aged woman was identified through video clips doing the rounds on social media and was arrested from her relative's house in Shibpur upazila around 3:00am, Flight Lieutenant Tauhidul Mobin Khan, Narsingdi camp commander of Rab-11, told The Daily Star.

The arrestee, Marzia Akter alias Shila alias Saima, works as a matchmaker and lives at a rented house in Narsingdi Sadar upazila. She went

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

BRINGING BACK BLACK MONEY Will amnesty work at all?

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ZINA TASREEN

Wishful thinking -- is what best describes the maiden tax amnesty campaign the government is planning to lure money back home next fiscal year.

Bangladeshi citizens who have cash squirrelled away in foreign shores can bring them back home by paying a 10 percent tax. The Daily Star has learnt from finance ministry officials involved with the proceedings.

And those who have immovable assets bought with undeclared income from Bangladesh can legalise those by paying at least 15 percent in tax.

"Lots of money came back to those countries that offered this incentive," Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal told reporters after a meeting of the cabinet committee on purchase on Thursday.

He cited Indonesia as a country that enjoyed great success in its chase for undeclared wealth stashed abroad.

In July 2016, Indonesia provided a nine-month window for its citizens with illegal income parked overseas to declare them at home, pay tax on the sum and avoid persecution.

This was the fourth time Indonesia had

tried such a scheme -- in 1964-65, 1984 and 2008 -- with the previous efforts failing for poor incentives.

So the Indonesian government was mindful of making repatriating undeclared wealth somewhat attractive, modelling it on a successful but controversial Italian tax scheme that helped Rome recoup billions of euros unlawfully parked in Switzerland against the payment of a modest penalty.

Those who declared their assets within three months of the window opening could legalise their wealth by paying between 2 and 4 percent tax. Regular tax rates for individuals range from 5 percent to 30 percent and for corporates 25 percent.

Those coming forward after three months but within six months were taxed at 6 percent and after that, 10 percent.

About \$350 billion was declared in the nine-month month window, and about \$11 billion was repatriated to Indonesia, prompting many to dub the scheme a success.

When compared with Indonesia's tax amnesty campaign, Bangladesh's one seem destined for failure: not only is the penalty higher, there will not be a fixed window to declare the hidden assets abroad.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Clamp down on rice hoarders PM asks officials at cabinet meet; drives to begin after monitoring

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



The cabinet yesterday directed authorities concerned to take action against companies involved in unauthorised rice trading and hoarding.

"Raids will be conducted after serving notices to the respective businesses," said Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam at a press briefing at the secretariat.

The directives came at a cabinet meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in chair.

According to the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB), the price of coarse and fine rice has increased by 5.38 percent and 1.59 percent in a week.

"Why is the price of rice high in the peak season? We've got some intelligence reports and there were some suggestions. A detailed discussion has taken place," said Anwarul at the briefing.

The meeting decided to issue directives to conduct raids like it was done in case of illegal hoarding of edible oils, he said.

Companies cannot engage in businesses beyond their declared memorandum of association in other countries, said Anwarul. There is information that some might be engaged in rice trade, breaching the memorandum of

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Transport and Highways Division at a recent meeting proposed to set Tk 15 or 18.40 as the base toll.

However, a final decision would be taken following a meeting with stakeholders, expected to be held next month.

RHD, which is the custodian of the country's first expressway, will start toll collection from July 1, and until a new rate is fixed, they will follow that of the interim period, officials said.

A vehicle on the route also has to pay for using the Padma Bridge, which is in the middle of the expressway.

The authorities have already fixed toll for the bridge; the amount is around 1.5 times higher than the average toll paid by ferries plying the Padma river.

HOW MUCH A VEHICLE HAS TO PAY?

As per the interim rate of Tk 10 per kilometre, a medium-sized truck would have to pay Tk 550 for using the 55km expressway.

The toll for a bus would be Tk 495 (90 percent of the base toll), for a car (sedan) Tk 138 (25 percent) and for a bike Tk 28 (5 percent).

For using the Padma Bridge, a medium-sized truck has to pay Tk 2,100 while Tk 2,400 for a bus, Tk 750 for a car and Tk 100 for a motorcycle.

If the base toll is Tk 15, a medium-sized truck has to pay Tk 833 to use the expressway.

If the base toll is fixed at Tk 18.4, then it has to pay Tk 1,020 and if the base toll is at Tk 33.71, then it has to pay Tk 1,854. Rates for other vehicles will increase accordingly.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in March 2020 opened the 55km expressway, implemented at the cost of Tk 11,003 crore, making it the most expensive road (considering per kilometre expenditure) in the country.

During an Ecne meeting in September 2019, she instructed the authorities concerned to collect tolls from long-haul vehicles on the national highways. The amount collected would be spent for maintenance.

RHD the next year had prepared a toll structure for the expressway

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

ILLEGAL HEALTHCARE FACILITIES DGHS inundated with licence applications

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN and ZYMA ISLAM

The health directorate is seeing a barrage of applications from healthcare facilities for authorisation following the countrywide drive against unauthorised healthcare organisations.

Just in a single day -- on May 29 -- 558 such organisations applied to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) online. Yesterday's figure is yet to be known.

About 44 percent are new applications filed by healthcare facilities having no licences, while the rest are seeking renewal of their expired licences.

Healthcare organisations are filing for licences fearing raids, said the directorate officials. Once applications are filed, they check their documents and if those are found to be in order, they schedule an inspection date, the officials added.

"Many hospitals are not bothered about the stages following an

application, such as, filing proper documents -- they are only filing applications so as to be able to say that their licences are under process," said Masud Reza, assistant director (hospitals) at the DGHS.

There are as many as 2,276 healthcare facilities whose status is "pending", meaning they have applied for licences but have missing documents or made mistakes in the process.

Meanwhile, at least 267 illegal private hospitals, clinics, diagnostic centres and blood banks were closed by the DGHS officials during the nationwide crackdown yesterday.

With this, the number of such healthcare organisations has risen to 1,149 since the drive began on Wednesday afternoon.

Health officials said the drive would continue as a routine work.

"We will not let any unauthorised hospitals operate. Those who will meet the standard must apply for

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

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