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needs a
solution



Iran blames
US for stalled
nuclear talks



World
Motorcycle
Day 2022

UNIVERSAL PENSION

Govt okays
draft act

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet yesterday gave the final approval to the draft of Universal Pension Management Act, 2022.

People aged between 18 and 50 can participate in this pension scheme. The expatriate Bangladeshis can also take part in it, Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam told reporters at the Secretariat after a cabinet meeting.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina chaired the meeting virtually from her office.

He said the cabinet gave the nod to the draft law on condition that it be vetted by the Legislative Division. It will then be placed before parliament.

As per the draft law, a person will have to provide a premium for at least 10 years to get pension from the age of 60 until his death. The amount of premium will

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Flood victims gathered around a boat to get relief materials including drinking water being given away by a voluntary organisation in remote Boithakhali village of Sylhet's Gowainghat upazila yesterday. The people of the haor area have been desperate for relief since being hit by the deluge five days ago.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

**Not an order but
a 'humble request'**

**CEC Awal says about letter to MP
Bahar over Cumilla city polls**

MOHUDDIN ALAMGIR

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal yesterday apparently changed his tune about the step the Election Commission took against ruling Awami League lawmaker AKM Bahauddin Bahar ahead of the Cumilla City Corporation polls.

He said the commission did not order the lawmaker to leave the electoral area but made a humble request.

"We are frequently hearing that he [Bahar] was ordered by the Election Commission to leave the area. But we have thoroughly checked and found the MP was never ordered to leave the area by the Election Commission," he said in a press conference.

"We haven't seen him participate in the campaign in public. But some said he took part in the electioneering tactfully. We had an expectation that if we requested him, there would be no more debate on the matter."

The CEC said according to the electoral code of conduct, Bahar is a very important person who enjoys government privileges and he is not allowed to join any polls campaign.

The Election Commission can't even order a common man to leave an area, let alone a member of parliament,

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NATURAL DISASTERS 2015-2020

Loss, damage rise tenfold

Flood the biggest cause, says BBS survey

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and JAMIL MAHMUD

Household loss and damage due to natural disasters saw nearly tenfold increase in 2015-2020 compared to that in 2009-2014, says a report of Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Flooding alone accounted for 56.4 percent of the total loss and damage of Tk 1,79,198.8 crore.

In 2009-2014, the total amount was Tk 18,424.7 crore of which Tk 4,280.71 crore or 23.2 percent was lost to flooding.

When it comes to proportion of damage and loss to total income, the members of the lowest income group lose 97.17 percent of their income during the period of a disaster while it's only 9.33 percent for the highest income group.

Besides, the lowest income group is more than 10 times vulnerable compared to the highest income group in terms of exposure to damage and loss.

Talking to this newspaper, Zahid Hussain, former lead economist at the World Bank's Dhaka office, and Prof Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the increase in production cost and the size of the country's economy was one of main reasons behind the rise in monetary value of loss and damage.

The government should have special allocations for its social

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FLOOD SITUATION

Worse likely
yet to come

Experts say

STAR REPORT

The flood situation in the northern region and low-lying parts of Dhaka division is likely to worsen in the coming days, officials and experts said yesterday.

There is a chance of medium to heavy rains in northern and northeastern parts of the country, along with Indian states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and West Bengal, in the next 48 hours, the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) said in a report at 6:00pm.

"... Water levels of the Brahmaputra-Jamuna, the Ganges-Padma, the Dharla, the Dudhkumar and all other major rivers may continue to rise in the next 48 hours. Meghalaya

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'Hungry for two days'

Says mother of five; flood-hit
people in Sylhet plead for
relief materials

STAR REPORT

"Sir, please note down my name. I have five daughters and we have been going hungry for two days."

Shamsunnahar of Mrittimalah village in Sylhet's Gowainghat upazila spoke these pleading words to a correspondent of this newspaper yesterday, in the hope that getting her name "on record" will somehow conjure some relief materials.

Mrittimalah and many other villages on the bank of Chengerkhali river -- a tributary of the Sarigowain -- are flooded and most of their residents have taken shelter in the nearby college, schools and in Shalutikar bazar, which is on higher ground.

After reaching the bazar at 10:30am, the correspondent was surrounded by a crowd. They said their houses were flooded, the paddy they had stored was damaged and now they were in dire need of relief materials.

Kuddus Miah, a freedom fighter, said, "Everyone of all nearby villages is in distress and without food or relief."

A woman said she had seen many people come with relief materials, but they preferred to go to remote villages while people in the bazar stayed hungry for days.

While visiting Boithakhali, Toakul, Lakshminagar, Newarkandi, Chaitabari and several other villages in the upazila, the correspondent witnessed a desperate need for relief materials.

"The previous flood during Baishakh took away Boro harvest from the fields. This flood has taken rice from granaries in our homes, leaving nothing to eat."

Sirajuddin of Gowainghat

The correspondent also found that a lack of coordination between government and private relief distributors was prolonging the distress.

According to Divisional Commissioner Md Mosharrof, around 40 lakh people have been marooned in Sylhet and Sunamganj districts since Wednesday.

As many as 3.72 lakh people have taken shelter in the two districts. The administration in the two districts has disbursed 1,062 tonnes of rice, Tk 1.62 crore and more than 13,000 sacks of dry food.

However, the materials are yet to reach many of the shelters. Even the 56 shelters in Sylhet city are yet to receive relief materials, said Ruhul Alam, executive engineer of Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) and also in-charge of the shelters.

"We were allotted only 500 sacks of dry food when there are 6,000 people in the shelters. But we are trying to get dry food with our own funds," he said.

"It's been three days, we have not received any government relief, but locals are generously feeding us," said Md Mostu Miah of Sylhet city's Chhararpur area, who along with 150 others took shelter at Durgakumar Pathshala near SCC and district administration offices.

Md Taj Uddin, a resident of Boithakhali village, said, "None of us imagined that the flood would turn so severe. We had to leave all our belongings and our homes. We have lost everything. We have nothing to eat."

At Lakshminagar village, 60-year-old Sirajuddin said

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FINING JOURNOS

**'No record of press
council members
disapproving it'**

**Says its chairman in an
interview with Star**

GOLAM MORTOZA

The Press Council Act-1974 was being amended with a provision to fine a journalist up to Tk 10 lakh for offences under the law. Bangladesh Press Council Chairman Justice Nizamul Haque Nasim said the council's senior journalist representatives had been consulted with, and they gave their blessings.

However, five journalist members of the current press council committee told this newspaper that they were not consulted and this initiative was not discussed with the committee.

The Daily Star discussed the issue with Justice Nizamul Haque Nasim before the cabinet yesterday crossed out the fine amount mentioned in the draft amendment and left it at the press council's discretion.

The Daily Star (DS): You said press council's journalist representatives agreed with the amendment and also



**Tk 10 lakh
struck out,
fine stays**

**Cabinet okays draft
of press council act**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The information and broadcasting ministry yesterday placed the draft Press Council (Amendment) Act-2022, before the cabinet with a provision for the council to fine media outlets up to Tk 10 lakh for compromising state security, harming public harmony, and unethical journalism.

The cabinet, however, crossed out the fine amounts, said Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam at a press briefing after the cabinet meeting.

Anwarul said the draft proposed a fine of Tk 5 lakh for intentionally violating section 12 of the act. He, however, did not say what is in section 12.

He said the press council act would be applicable to print and digital media houses.

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The Public Library building is being knocked down in the capital's Shahbagh. The housing and public works ministry will build a new structure for the library with modern facilities. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ