

LAUNDERING MONEY PK Halder produced in Kolkata court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The hearing of a money laundering case against Prashanta Kumar Halder, former managing director of erstwhile NRB Global Bank, will be held on August 10 in Kolkata, India.



Halder and his associates were yesterday produced before a special court, which fixed the date for the hearing.

Having embezzled at least Tk 3,000 crore from financial institutions in Bangladesh, PK Halder had been on the run since October 2019, when the Anti-Corruption Commission filed money-laundering cases against him. He was arrested along with an associate in West Bengal on May 14 this year.

On July 11, India's enforcement directorate (ED) pressed charges against Halder and five others under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.

Halder, who is being interrogated by India's ED, revealed names of some persons in West Bengal who have links to ruling politicians in the state, sources in ED said.

The ED is investigating how many properties were bought by Halder in India.

Hindu temple, properties vandalised

STAR REPORT

A mob yesterday vandalised a temple, a grocery store and several houses of the Hindu community in Sahapara area of Lohagara, Narail.

Angry villagers went on a rampage in the afternoon, alleging that a Hindu man said to be 18 years old made a post on Facebook that hurt their religious feelings, officials said.

After Juma prayers, the villagers went to a grocery store owned by the individual's father and vandalised it.

The mob then attacked and vandalised several houses, including the family's.

After they broke into the Sahapara temple and broke the furniture, the police used tear gas and fired empty shells, officials said.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6



Passengers bound for India queue to enter the Benapole land port terminal in Jashore to complete immigration. They had to wait under the scorching sun for about a couple of hours due to post-Eid rush. The photo was taken around 10:30am yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Russia behind global economic 'shockwave'

Say Western nations as they condemn Moscow over Ukraine war at G20 talks

AFP, Bali

Western finance chiefs condemned Moscow's invasion of Ukraine at G20 talks in Indonesia Friday, accusing Russia of sending a "shockwave" through the world economy and its technocrats of complicity in the war's alleged atrocities.

The two-day meeting on the island of Bali began under the shadow of a Russian military assault that has roiled markets, spiked food prices and stoked breakneck inflation, a week after Moscow's top diplomat walked out of talks with the forum's foreign ministers.

"Russia is solely responsible for negative spillovers to the global economy," US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told the Russian delegation in the opening session, according to a US official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"Russia's officials should recognise that they are adding to the horrific consequences of this war through their continued support of the Putin regime. You share responsibility for the innocent lives lost," Yellen added, according to the

official.

The official did not comment on whether the Russian delegation responded. Russian officials did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment.

Russia calls its invasion of Ukraine a "special military operation" and blames subsequent Western sanctions for blocked food shipments and rising energy prices.

"Russia tried to say that the world economic situation had nothing to do with the war," a French delegation source told AFP.

Australian Treasurer Jim Chalmers condemned Russia's "immoral transgression" against Ukraine, saying that Moscow must take the blame for the impacts on the global economy caused by the war.

"Russia's unjust actions have had terrible human cost but they've also increased global uncertainty," Chalmers said, according to a transcript. "Russia must take full responsibility."

Canadian Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland told Russia's delegation they were

responsible for "war crimes" in Ukraine because of their support for the invasion, a Canadian official said.

"It is not only generals who commit war crimes, it is the economic technocrats who allow the war to happen and to continue," said Freeland, according to the official.

Both Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov and Ukrainian Finance Minister Serhiy Marchenko participated virtually in the meeting.

Moscow sent Russian Deputy Finance Minister Timur Maksimov to attend the talks in person. He was in the room as Western officials expressed their condemnation, according to a source present at the talks.

Ukraine's Marchenko said Russia's invasion of Ukraine "clearly marks the end of the existing world order", and blamed Moscow for the world facing hunger, inflation and energy insecurity.

"We need to stop the cause of these problems. The true practical solution... is imposing more severe targeted sanctions," he told ministers, according to the Ukrainian finance ministry.

Circuit houses

FROM PAGE 1

field-level administration on practising austerity regarding spending from their allocated budget.

In 2022-23, the MoPA has cut the expenditures for refreshment allowance, stationery and usable goods in circuit houses to Tk 3.61 crore, down from Tk 5.96 crore in the last fiscal year, documents show.

The expenditures under other components remain unchanged, show the documents.

The order signed by Masudul Hasan, joint secretary of the ministry's budget management branch, said approvals will not be given for exceeding the allocation limits.

The DCs were asked to keep expenditures within the allocation limits and refrain from accumulating arrear bills.

They were also directed to closely monitor the payment of monthly utility bills of circuit houses. "Budget implementation plans should be adopted at the beginning of the fiscal year and the tendency of spending money hastily at the end of the fiscal year needs to be avoided," the order reads.

The public administration ministry has also asked the DCs to follow the Finance Division's July 3 directives on austerity measures. According to the directives, maximum 50 percent of the allocation for refreshment and stationery can be spent in case of any emergency.

On the first working day of the current fiscal year on July 3, the finance ministry in three notices rolled out a "cocktail of austerity measures" for all ministries and divisions, saying following those directives can save about Tk 60,000 crore.

The instructions came after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on June 29 urged everyone to practise austerity.

The government proceeded with the move in the face of strained foreign currency reserves, rising global and domestic inflation and continued jitters surrounding the Russia-Ukraine war.

Forestland taken for training centre

FROM PAGE 1

with court orders. Where does it get such confidence from?" She also questioned the BFF's intention to use the forestland when they could have easily got plain land for the training facility.

The noted environmentalist said the provision for de-reserving a forest in the century-old Forest Act should not be applicable now given the scarcity of forest at present.

Ishtiaq Uddin Ahmad, former Chief Conservator of Forest and president of the Institute of Foresters Bangladesh, told The Daily Star that already pressure was mounted on Cox's Bazar forests to accommodate the Rohingyas fleeing persecution in Myanmar.

"If everyone is hell bent on building structures in Cox's Bazar forests, there will be no forest in near future there. The tendency to take Cox's Bazar forestland must be stopped," he said.

Contacted, Abu Nayem Shohag,

general secretary of BFF, said they wanted the land from the government.

"The land was given to BFF as per the government decision. There are no big trees in the part of the forest where the field and building will be built, and the rest of the land will be kept as it is," he said.

He said BFF has sent the land documents to Fifa, which "intends to furnish the centre by the end of 2023".

Asked how the decision to hand over the forestland to BFF is justified, Shahab Uddin, the minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, told this newspaper that they handed over the forestland to the federation on condition that it has to be maintained as it is.

There was no alternative to it and had there been any, they would not have done it, he added. "We will make sure the harm to forestland will be kept at a minimum level."

Lanka looks past Rajapaksa era

FROM PAGE 1

seeking "action against persons responsible for the current economic crisis".

"We are so happy today that he resigned and we feel that when we, the people, come together, we can do everything," said Arunanandan, 34, a school teacher who had been camping at the main protest site opposite the presidential secretariat for the past three months.

"We are the real power in this country."

Sri Lanka is a major tourist destination in the Indian Ocean and well known for its tea industry and garment exports.

Speaker Abeywardena said he hoped to complete the process of selecting a new president within a week. Parliament would reconvene today and be notified formally of the vacancy at the top, with a vote for a new president set for July 20.

The Bar Association of Sri Lanka, an influential lawyers' collective, called on parliament to ensure that the election of Rajapaksa's successor

is held without delay.

The opposition's presidential nominee is Sajith Premadasa, while the potential dark horse is senior lawmaker Dullas Alahapperuma.

After he was sworn in by the chief justice as interim president, Wickremesinghe said he would follow the constitutional process and establish law and order in the South Asian country.

He also vowed to start moves to increase parliament's powers and reduce those of the president, as demanded by protesters.

"This change can be completed by the new president once he is elected by parliament next week," Wickremesinghe said.

Street protests over Sri Lanka's economic meltdown simmered for months before boiling over last weekend when hundreds of thousands of people took over government buildings in Colombo, blaming the Rajapaksa family and allies for runaway inflation, shortages of basic goods, and corruption.

Two children drown after falling into pond

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Two children aged three and four drowned yesterday after falling into a pond in Bagerhat's Mongla upazila.

The deceased were Jim Sheikh, 3, son of Delwar Sheikh in Gabbunia village, and Brishti Akter, 4, daughter of Lavlu Sheikh of the same area.

Locals and family members said the two were playing in Delwar's yard around noon and fell into the pond when no one was looking.

Family members found the children floating in the pond, and quickly took them to Mongla Upazila Health Complex, where the duty doctor declared them dead.

Md Monirul Islam, OC of Mongla Police Station, said two unnatural death cases were filed, adding that the bodies were handed over to the respective families.

Buet student's body recovered from Padma

UNB, Keraniganj

The body of a final-year student of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) was recovered from the Padma river yesterday, nearly 24 hours after he went missing.

The deceased was identified as Tariquzzaman Sunny.

Mostafa Kamal, officer-in-charge of Dohar Police Station, said Sunny went missing while bathing in the river with three of his friends at Moinot Ghat of Dhaka's Dohar upazila around noon on Thursday.

Members of the fire service fished out his body around 11:00am, he said.

An unnatural death case was filed in this regard and the body would be handed over to the deceased's family after an autopsy, said the OC.

Padma Bridge rail installation may start next week

Says railways minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Installation of rail track on the lower deck of Padma Bridge is likely to start from next week, Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujon said yesterday.

He said the date to start the work will be set at a meeting to be held tomorrow between Bangladesh Railway and Bangladesh Bridge Authority.

"There is a possibility that the installation of track will start from next week," Sujon told reporters while visiting the under-construction Mawa Station. He also said operation of trains on Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga section will start by June next year.

Replying to a question, the minister said a technical team will assess whether vibrations of the road bridge could cause problems in track installation and they will solve any problems that may arise.

Sujon also said the Khulna-Mongla port rail route will be opened by December next.

Children to get 2yrs

FROM PAGE 1

all teachers have more idea of child psychology and pedagogy.

He said that there will be no crisis of teachers as the recruitment of 45,000 assistant teachers to government primary schools is at the final stage.

The WB study said despite increases in pre-primary enrolment overall, there are notable disparities in access to pre-primary education across socioeconomic groups.

In 2017, around 30 percent of 5-year-old children from the poorest families were enrolled in PPE compared to 40 percent from the richest families.

In 2019, 84 percent of 5-year-olds from the richest quintile were attending an early childhood education programme or primary school, while the number was only 69 percent in the poorest quintile, said the study.

Children with disabilities, either physical or cognitive, also have inequitable access to PPE. An analysis of 2016-17 Household Income and Expenditure Survey data shows that a child with a disability is 54 percent more likely not to be enrolled in PPE compared to a child with no disability.

With the upcoming expansion of PPE, the expected rise of 29 lakh 4-year-old students will further increase the need for additional trained teachers, said the study.

Headteachers, who oversee PPE as part of their role, are not required to take PPE training, and have limited guidance on supervision and mentoring of PPE teachers, it added.

According to the study, the growth of PPE teacher recruitment and deployment is inadequate to meet the increasing demand for PPE.

Contacted, Muhibur Rahman, director general (additional charge) of the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE), said they were working on revising the PPE teachers' training curriculum and duration.

Alamgir Mohammed Mansurul Alam, immediate past DPE DG, said the government has a plan to cover the PPE issue in the Diploma in Primary Education (DPEd) curriculum so that

Conflict and climate change in West Africa's Sahel region have prompted nearly five million to flee their homes, the UN's refugee agency says.

At the end of June, 4.8 million people had fled in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, the UNHCR said in a press release to trail a visit by the agency's chief to the

troubled region.

Of these, nearly three million of those people were displaced within their own countries, it said.

"The worst-affected country is Burkina Faso, where there are nearly two million internally displaced," the High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said in a two-day visit to camps in Chad, which hosts more than a million people.

UN alarmed as fighting, climate displace five million in Sahel

AFP

Conflict and climate change in West Africa's Sahel region have prompted nearly five million to flee their homes, the UN's refugee agency says.

At the end of June, 4.8 million people had fled in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger, the UNHCR said in a press release to trail a visit by the agency's chief to the