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A foreign trip okayed quizzically

Govt order tweaked to let 25 officials visit Australia next month amid restriction

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

The public administration ministry has changed the category of a trip to allow 25 officials to go on tour to Australia, effectively letting them bypass restrictions on foreign visits.

On May 12, the government suspended overseas "exposure visits" and trips under several other categories as part of austerity measures.

Since the trip in question was originally planned as an exposure visit, the officials would not have been able to go with the restrictions in place. But the Ministry of Public Administration (MoPA) recently changed the category of the trip to "overseas training".

The exposure visit originally scheduled for March 2020 was postponed because of Covid restrictions. In the last two years, seven of the 26 officials named in the original order had retired and one died.

The new MoPA order issued on July 12 this year contains the names of the 18 officials from the previous order and seven new entrants as a replacement for officials who are no longer in service. Both the 2020 and 2022 orders mention that the trip is part of the Policy Planning and Management Course (PPMC).

The PPMC requires an official to attend a 7-day exposure visit which can be done at home or abroad, mentions the government guideline.

The purpose of the exposure visits is to enable participants to be exposed to a civil service organisation of a country which has developed significantly, according to the PPMC guideline.

Besides, only the additional secretaries are entitled to participate in the PPMC. But, six higher-ranking officials, including three secretaries, were named in the list of 25 officials.

Moreover, the director general of Water Resources Planning Organisation, whose name appears on the list, will have only a couple of weeks left before he goes on "leave before permanent retirement" after returning from the trip.

Requesting not to be named, an additional secretary of the finance ministry said, "Some of our colleagues are extremely disappointed at the restrictions on foreign visits. They are looking for ways to go on foreign trips. They should understand that the order came from the top level of the government."

The 25 officials going to Australia will attend the "training" at Deakin University of Australia from August 28-September 3.

FOREIGN TRIPS DISCOURAGED

On Thursday, it was decided at a meeting chaired by

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CU admin identifies 2 molesters

NAIMUR RAHMAN

The administration of Chittagong University yesterday claimed to have identified two persons who sexually assaulted a female student on the campus on Sunday night.

"We have identified two of them. We verified their images with the victim and her friend. They confirmed that the people in the images were involved," said CU Assistant Proctor Shahidul Islam.

He also said that the university administration was fully cooperating with police to identify all the accused in the case filed over the assault.

Contacted, Ruhul Amin, officer-in-charge of Hathazari Police Station, said they could not disclose the names or identities of the identified accused for the sake of investigation.

"We identified a few people already," he said.

Meanwhile, CU Chhatra League President Rejaul

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Ignoring a ban, a group of men catching fish with gill nets on the Padma in Munshiganj yesterday, a day before the 65-day fishing ban ends. The use of gill nets is also prohibited. The government is set to celebrate the National Fisheries Week from today.

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Dhaka has lost around 56 percent of its green spaces over the last three decades. In 1989, this mega city had 12,745 hectares of vegetation, which came down to just 5,599 hectares in 2020, a new study has found.

The green spaces with dense forest declined from 17 percent to 2 percent while green spaces with moderate forest came down to 10 percent from 24 percent in the capital.

The study titled "Present status and historical changes of urban green space in Dhaka city, Bangladesh: A remote sensing driven approach" was published in the US-based "Environmental Challenges" journal in December last year.

The study covered the entire Dhaka



metropolitan area -- nearly 30,640 hectares or 306.4 square kilometres.

Carried out by four researchers, the study was done using Landsat data from the database of the US Geological Survey. It analysed green spaces of Dhaka city through geospatial analysis by using Geographic Information System (GIS) and Remote Sensing.

"The way green spaces are declining is alarming. This has an adverse impact on the lives of the city residents," Md Mostafizur Rahman, the paper's lead author who teaches environmental sciences at Jahangirnagar University, told The Daily Star recently.

According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), an ideal city should have at least 25 percent green space. Dhaka has only 8 percent, said the study.

Population boom and unplanned urbanisation are key reasons for the decline in green spaces -- a top contributor to the rising temperature of Dhaka city, multiple studies have shown.

The reason for green spaces

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Rohingya genocide case to proceed

Say world court judges rejecting Myanmar's objections; Bangladesh welcomes the ruling

STAR REPORT

The World Court yesterday rejected Myanmar's objections to a genocide case over its treatment of the Muslim Rohingya minority, paving the way for the case to be heard in full.

Myanmar, now ruled by a military junta that seized power in 2021, had argued that Gambia, which brought the suit, had no standing to do so at the top UN court, formally known as the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

But presiding Judge Joan Donoghue said the 13-judge panel found that all members of the 1948 Genocide Convention can and are obliged to act to prevent genocide, and the court has jurisdiction in the case.

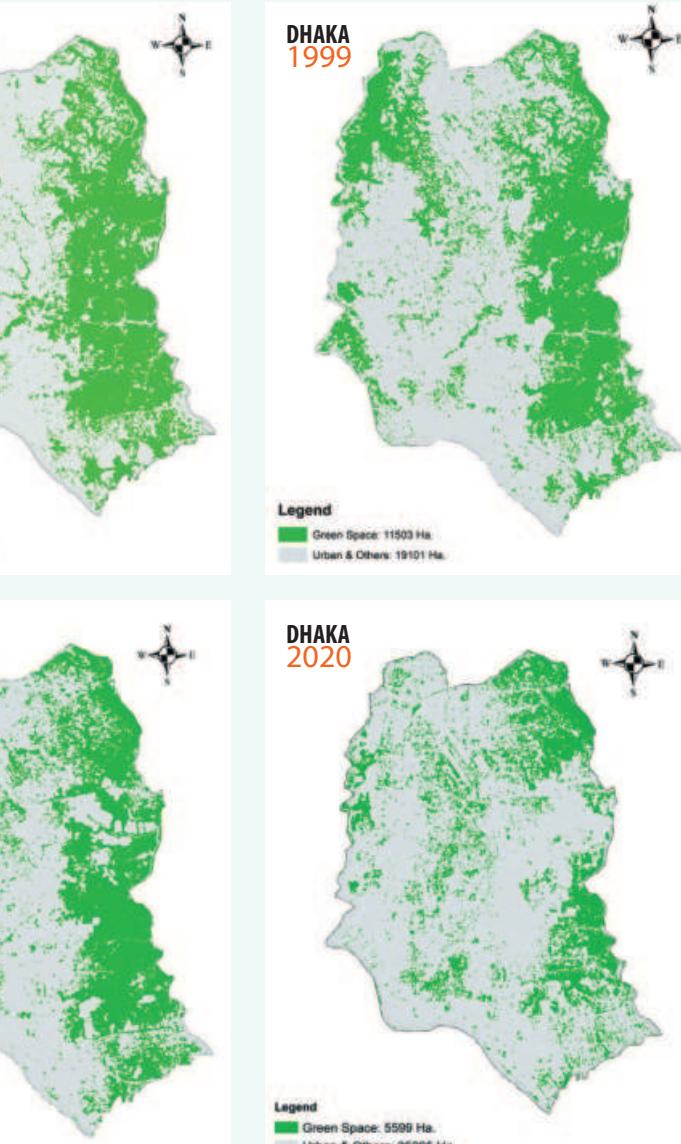
"Gambia, as a state party to the Genocide convention, has standing," she said, reading a summary of the ruling. The court will now proceed to hearing the merits of the case, a process that will take years.

Bangladesh has welcomed the judgment. "Bangladesh maintains that the question of international justice and accountability will be critical in finding a durable solution to the Rohingya crisis, and would also prove to be a confidence building measure for the sustainable repatriation of the Rohingyas to their homes in Myanmar with their legitimate rights restored," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Dhaka said in a statement.

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"In order to enjoy the full economic benefits of the JCPOA, the Americans must accept some commitments and guarantees."

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on nuclear deal



"The way green spaces are declining is alarming. This has an adverse impact on the lives of the city residents."

Md Mostafizur Rahman
Associate professor,
environmental sciences at
Jahangirnagar University

Dhaka witnessed a rise in temperature of nearly 3 degrees Celsius in the last 20 years

Population boom and unplanned urbanisation are key reasons for the decline in green spaces

According to UN Environment Programme, an ideal city should have at least 25 percent green space but Dhaka has only 8 percent

Over the last 3 decades, the city lost 56 percent of its green spaces

IMAGE SOURCE: A STUDY PUBLISHED IN US-BASED JOURNAL "ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES"

MOSTAFA YOUSUF

Renowned Bangladeshi mountaineer Wasfia Nazreen conquered the treacherous K2 in Pakistan, becoming the first person from Bangladesh to summit the second-tallest mountain in the world.

The 39 year-old reached the top of the 8,611-metre (28,251-foot) mountain early this morning, AFP reported yesterday.

According to a 2019 National Geographic article, K2 is widely considered the toughest and most dangerous mountain to climb.

Nicknaming K2 the "Savage Mountain", the article said, "Unlike Everest, it is not possible to 'walk' to the top; all sides of K2 are extremely steep and see frequent rockfalls and avalanches."

Wasfia also climbed Everest, the world's

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Need 1 week to assess situation State minister says on load shedding schedule

STAR REPORT

Admitting that the Power Division could not impose schedule-wise power cuts across the country, State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid yesterday sought one week's time to address the issue.

"In many places, load shedding continued for more than an hour. We've seen that a feeder takes 2-3 hours to resume electricity supply after being shut. In many areas, it takes 4 hours. This has happened in my area also. We need one week's time to assess the situation and address it," the state minister told reporters at his Gulshan residence in the capital.

The government will plan its next steps for electricity rationing after analysing the data of the first week of power outages, he said.

The government on Tuesday imposed countrywide power cuts with timetables for specific areas as part of austerity measures to save fuel amid soaring energy prices in the global market.

It also has temporarily shut down all diesel-fired power plants, which contribute 1,000-1,500MW to the national grid daily.

The state minister said new schedules

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