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TERROR CHARGES Ex-Pak PM Imran granted bail by court

AFP, Islamabad

Former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan yesterday accused the government of trying to score a "technical knockout" against him, after being granted bail on charges brought under the country's anti-terrorism act.

Khan's court appearance is the latest twist in months of political wrangling that began when he was ousted by a vote of no confidence in the national assembly in April.

The former cricket star retains widespread support, however, staging mass rallies railing against Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's government and scoring successes in recent provincial assembly by-elections.

A court judgement was not

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Hills are being illegally cut by politically influential locals to develop lands and sell those as plots in Alinagar of Chattogram's Sitakunda. Hills on at least 3,070 acres of government land are being razed from as early as 2006, as authorities continue to turn a blind eye to the violations of the law and the risk of landslides.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

BFIU asks banks to give info on Wasa MD's accounts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) has asked banks to provide account information of Dhaka Wasa Managing Director Taqsem A Khan by August 29.



The BFIU, designated for combating money laundering and militancy financing, wrote to the banks on August 24. The BFIU would examine whether the MD had laundered money, said an official of the intelligence unit.

On August 17, the High Court sought information on his salary, bonus, and other benefits over 13 years when Taqsem was the managing director of the state-run water supplier in Dhaka.

The court had asked the chairman of the Dhaka Wasa to submit the information before the court within 60 days.

The HC came up with the directives after hearing a writ petition.

Taqsem was made Dhaka Wasa MD in 2009. Despite severe criticism of his role in ensuring quality Wasa services, he was reappointed for a sixth term on October 1, 2020.

SPORT



Over the next 17 days, six teams will engage in enthralling contests as the battle for Asian supremacy is set to commence in the UAE from August 27. The 15th edition of the Asia Cup is only the second time that the continental tournament will be played in the T20 format, meaning a lot more fireworks will be on offer for the cricket fanatics. Marking this occasion, The Daily Star on Friday brings out a **SPECIAL FOUR-PAGE PULL-OUT** that includes stories, facts, figures and in-depth analysis regarding the much-anticipated tournament.

SUGAR PRICE HIKE JS body slams two ministers

RASHIDUL HASAN and MOHAMMAD SUMAN

A parliamentary watchdog yesterday came down heavily on Industries Minister Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun for the price spiral of sugar despite ample supply of the commodity.

In the last month, sugar imports increased 32 percent while the price of the commodity has held steady in the international markets. And yet, the price of sugar has increased in both the wholesale and retail markets.

For instance, yesterday, sugar was selling at Tk 90-93 a kilogram at the retail level, up from Tk 83-85 last month.

At the wholesale markets, the sweetener is selling at Tk 3,050 to Tk 3,080 a maund (37.32 kg). A month earlier, the price ranged from Tk 2,800 to Tk 2,830.

Subsequently, members of the parliamentary standing committee on the Industries Ministry blasted Humayun as well as Kamal Ahmed Mojumder, the state minister for industries.

Several MPs told the meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban that people do not ask the minister about the price hikes but the MPs.

A ruling Awami League MP told the meeting that every time people ask him about the soaring price of the sweetener, he does not have a convincing reply that calms them down.

Another MP said the price hike of sugar has created a problem for them as well as for the government.

Subsequently, the parliamentary body asked the ministry to take necessary measures to bring the price of sugar under control.

However, sugar importers blamed the price hike on the depreciation of the taka, which has increased the import costs by 20-23 percent.

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2 RAILWAY PROJECTS

Consultants come 4 months before deadlines end

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Bangladesh Railway yesterday signed two separate contracts with consultants for two expansion projects, just four months before the project deadlines end.

As per the contracts, a joint venture of companies will carry out the feasibility studies, detail designs, and prepare tender documents within 11 months.

It means the projects' preparation work will end six months after the original deadlines in December this year.

The consultants would then provide construction supervision services for four years, including a one-year defect liability period, indicating that the deadlines will be extended for over four years.

The development in the two projects -- conversion of meter gauge line to dual gauge from Parbatipur to Kaunia and the construction of a double line from Khulna to Darshana -- came at a time when most of BR's 36 ongoing projects are behind schedule.

The two projects worth Tk 5,187 crore were taken up in early 2018 to boost internal and inter-country rail communications. They were to be implemented with Indian lines of credit (LoC).

The BR is currently implementing seven projects with Indian LoCs and grants and all of them are behind schedule.

BR Director General Dharendra Nath

Mazumder said it was not possible to give details and exact reasons behind the delay but long procedures to get approval from the Indian side was one.

"We are sorry for the delay but the main thing is the contracts have been signed, meaning the physical work of the projects will start now," he told The Daily Star last night.

Meanwhile, project authorities have already placed two proposals for extending the deadlines for one year. The proposals are now pending with the planning Commission, BR sources said.

"One-year long time extensions were sought to complete feasibility studies and detailed designs. The costs of both projects will then be revised as they are likely to go up due to the delay in starting physical works. Deadlines will also have to be extended," a top BR official, wishing anonymity, told this correspondent.

The government in May 2018 approved one of the projects to build a parallel line along the Khulna-Darshana line at a cost of Tk 3,506.75 crore. India will provide 77 percent of the cost as a loan.

The project aims to increase transportability via Dhaka-Khulna and Khulna-Chilahati. The existing Khulna-Darshana section of the Dhaka-Khulna line is a single broad-gauge line.

Under the project, the section will be made into double line by installing

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Teenager becomes youngest person to fly solo around world

CNN Online

A 17-year-old has become the youngest person to fly around the world solo in a small aircraft on Wednesday after first taking off on March 23, according to Guinness World Records (GWR).

British-Belgian national Mack Rutherford touched down earlier in the day in the Bulgarian capital of Sofia, where his journey began, according to Rutherford's official website and GWR. He first set off when he was still 16.



Rutherford's route spanned 52 countries across five continents on a specially prepared ultralight Shark aircraft with cruising speed reaching 300 km/h, according to his website.

"I want to use the opportunity to meet young people on my route who do incredible things, making a difference to their communities or even to the world," he wrote before jetting off.

His journey was tracked on his website, which shows he set off from Bulgaria towards the Mediterranean then through the Sahara, onwards through the Middle East and then East Asia.

He smashed two world records, previously held by his older sister Zara Rutherford, as the youngest person to fly around the world solo and also the youngest person to do so in a microflight aircraft, the GWR website states.

He entered his last leg through the United States, Canada and Mexico before flying back through Europe and landing in Sofia.

TEA WORKERS' STRIKE Owners of tea estates to meet PM tomorrow

MINTU DESHWARA

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has invited all tea estate owners to the Gono Bhaban for a meeting tomorrow.

She would discuss the ongoing crisis over the strike of tea plantation workers, confirmed sources at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

Meanwhile, tea estate workers continued to protest for the 13th consecutive day yesterday demanding a pay hike.

Hundreds of workers protested in Moulvibazar, Sylhet, and Habiganj.

A meeting, scheduled between the labour and employment minister and the agitating workers yesterday was cancelled as the prime minister was dealing with the matter directly, said Mohammad Nahidul Islam, deputy director of the Divisional Labour Office in Moulvibazar's Sreemangal.

Yesterday, multiple groups of workers blocked roads for hours, staged demonstrations and formed human chains in Moulvibazar, Sylhet, and Habiganj.

Several hundreds of them blocked the Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Moulvibazar's Varirpar area for about three hours from around 1:00pm.

At the same time, another group staged demonstrations at Moulvibazar's Rajnagar upazila halting vehicular movement on Dhaka-Bianibazar and Moulvibazar-Sylhet highways.

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CATCH OF THE DAY ... A Whiskered Tern glides through the air with its fresh catch in Kurigram's Rajarhat upazila. Among the many species of terns existing in the country, the most common is the Whiskered Tern -- found mainly in marshes, lagoons, rivers and lakes. While these sleek birds are found in many parts of the world, including Asia, they migrate to Europe, Africa and Australia during the winter. They are known to be clever, active, agile, and unafraid of humans or other bigger species of animals. Though their worldwide population is not evaluated, the IUCN has listed them in the "least concern" category. PHOTO: TUHIN WADUD

Bangladesh's credit rating unchanged

Standard & Poor expects
external pressure to
ease in a year

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

Global rating agency Standard & Poor yesterday maintained its long-held credit score for Bangladesh despite the ongoing hiccups in the economy, in a development that will ward off fears of any financial crisis similar to South Asian neighbours.

S&P maintained its "BB-" long-term and "B" short-term sovereign credit ratings on Bangladesh.

In general, a credit rating is used by sovereign wealth funds, pension funds and other investors to gauge the credit worthiness of Bangladesh, meaning it has a big impact on the country's borrowing costs.

Bangladesh's short-term credit rating of "B" means a country is more vulnerable to adverse business, financial and economic conditions but currently has the capacity to meet financial commitments.

The long-term credit rating of BB- means the economy is less vulnerable

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