



112 officials of SP rank transferred

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a major reshuffle in the police force, 112 officials of the rank of superintendent of police were transferred yesterday.

This is the second such large transfer this month. According to the latest orders issued by the home ministry, the 112 officials were posted to different police units, including those in metropolitan areas.

The ministry issued three circulars, signed by Deputy Secretary Dhananjoy Kumar Das, ordering immediate transfers.

According to circulars, these officials will join in-service training centers of different districts, Criminal Investigation Department, Special Branch, Dhaka Metropolitan Police, anti-terrorism unit, Gazipur Metropolitan Police, Barisal Metropolitan Police, Armed Police Battalion, Highway Police, Tourist Police, Police Bureau of Investigation, industrial police and offices of deputy inspector general of ranges.

In another major reshuffle on August 3, 50 superintendents of police were transferred. Forty of them were transferred to as many districts in what officials had said was the largest shake-up of SPs in a decade.

On July 13, the home ministry transferred 139 additional DIGs of police to different units and districts.

According to insiders, new faces are expected for the posts of the inspector general of police, additional inspector general (administration) of Police Headquarters, Rapid Action Battalion director general, and Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner.

FIRING OF SHELLS Govt lodges protest Summons Myanmar envoy

UNB, Dhaka

The foreign ministry yesterday summoned Myanmar Ambassador Aung Kyaw Moe to its office and lodged a strong protest over firing of mortar shells into Bangladesh territory from Myanmar a day earlier.

“We have lodged a strong protest with Myanmar so that such incidents do not happen again. We have also strongly condemned the incident,” Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen told reporters at the ministry office.

He said a note verbale was handed over to the envoy.

On Sunday, the foreign secretary said it would first be investigated whether the firing of unexploded mortar shells on the Bangladesh border was an accident or intentional.

Meanwhile, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) has stepped up vigilance along Bangladesh-Myanmar border in Bandarban after two Myanmar mortar shells landed in an area near Tambu in Bandarban’s Naikhongchhari upazila on Sunday afternoon.

Locals were panicked seeing the unexploded mortar shells.

KHULNA-MONGLA RAIL LINE

Not opening this year

Officials ask for more time weeks after minister said it’ll open in December

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

When Bangladesh Railway in December 2010 took up the project for constructing Khulna-Mongla new rail line without any feasibility study, its deadline was December 2013.

But its physical work began around six years after approval, driving the project cost up to Tk 4,260.88 crore from Tk 1,721.39 crore. The deadline was extended up to December this year after several revisions.

Visiting the project site early this month, Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan announced that the Khulna-Mongla railway line would be opened by December.

Within two weeks after his visit, the project authorities on August 14 sent a proposal to the BR seeking an extension of the project deadline till July 2024, meaning people’s wait for using the rail line will be longer.

The BR will now send the proposal to the railways ministry and later it would be forwarded to the planning ministry, officials said.

According to the proposal, the project authorities would need six months to complete the rest of the work, including installation of the signaling system, and another year for the defect liability and a month for other related jobs after the expiry of the current deadline.

This means the rail line to link the Mongla Sea Port with the country’s railway network will not be opened before June next year.

BR Director General Dharendra Nath Mazumder said, “The project works will not be completed within December and that’s

why the deadline is going to be extended.”

Enquired about the reasons for the extension, he told The Daily Star last night that here were some issues regarding the signaling system. He asked this correspondent to talk to the project director (PD) to get details.

This newspaper could not reach PD Md Arifuzzaman over the phone as he didn’t respond to calls and text messages.

This is the second oldest project among the 36 currently being implemented by BR. Most of the projects are now behind schedule, show railway documents.

Once the 64.75km Khulna-Mongla broad gauge rail line is installed, Mongla port will directly be connected to the capital.

The Khulna-Mongla rail line project is being implemented with 69.18 percent funding from Indian Lines of Credit (LoC).

In an attempt to reduce dependency on the Chattogram port and increase the capacity of the Mongla port, the government has taken several initiatives. Bringing Mongla port under the railway network is one of them.

Once the 64.75km Khulna-Mongla broad gauge rail line is installed, the port will directly be connected to the capital. It would also boost the regional rail connectivity.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) had approved the project on December 31, 2010.

Apart from the rail line, the project includes

a 21.11km loop line, eight stations, 716-metre Rupsha Bridge, and 31 other bridges.

The overall progress of the project was 95 percent till July, show project documents.

NEW PROPOSAL

Although the project was approved in December 2010, its physical work could not be started before September 2016 allegedly due to complications concerning various issues, including land acquisition and changes in the design.

Moreover, a significant amount of time was spent on feasibility study and detailed designs, BR sources said.

Visiting the under-construction Rupsha Rail Bridge of the project in January last year, the railways minister apparently expressed discontent over the delay.

“Whatever the problems are, those should be solved and the work has to be completed within this year. For doing this, you [project authorities] have to engage all necessary manpower,” he said.

Even after his warning, the project deadline was extended up to December this year.

REASONS BEHIND THE EXTENSION

One of the major reasons behind the time extension is the delay in starting installation of the signaling system, a BR official said wishing anonymity.

He said as a LoC-funded project, the contractor for installing the signaling system was supposed to be from India and the project authorities twice floated the tender accordingly. But in both cases, India companies quoted “unusually high costs”,

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5



A vet cuddles a rare white tiger cub in Chattogram Zoo. The cub is among the four born to parents Raj and Pori on July 30. The four were on view for visitors yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

WOMEN’S DRESS

Now’s not the time to talk about it Says Dipu Moni

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Minister Dipu Moni has said that now is not the time to talk about the length of women’s attires.

“When the world is advancing, society is moving forward; we will now talk about robotics, we will talk about artificial intelligence. Now is not the time to talk about the length of women’s dresses. Whether one has worn teep—cannot be a question by any means,” she said.

While speaking at a view exchanging meeting organised by Education Reporters Association of Bangladesh yesterday, she said, “We are observing a kind of communal behaviour at different places in the country. Some days ago, there were talks over teep. Now at some

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

BATTLE ON WINTER SMOG

Indian helmet promises ‘fresh air’

REUTERS, New Delhi



As India’s capital of New Delhi prepares for winter - and the accompanying season of acrid smog - the government is promoting a motorcycle helmet fitted with filters and a fan at the back that it says can remove 80 percent of pollutants.

State agencies have pumped thousands of dollars into Shellios Technolabs, a startup whose founder Amit Pathak began work on the helmet, which he calls the world’s first of its kind, in a basement in 2016.

That was the year of the first headlines about the filthy air that makes New Delhi nearly unbreatheable from mid-December to February, as the heavy cold traps dust, vehicle emissions and smoke from burning crop waste in nearby states.

“Inside a home or office, you could have an air purifier,” said Pathak, an electrical engineer. “But the guys on the bike, they have no protection at all.”

So his company designed a helmet with an air purification unit, fitted with a replaceable filter membrane and a fan powered by a battery that runs six hours and can be charged through a microUSB slot.

Sales of the helmet began in 2019, and tests on New Delhi’s streets by an independent laboratory confirmed it can keep more than 80 percent of pollutants out of users’ nostrils, Pathak added.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

Next polls will be a better one

Hopes Japanese envoy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Ito Naoki yesterday said they expect the next general election in Bangladesh would be a better one.

He was talking to reporters after a meeting with Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal at the latter’s office in the capital.

“Election is drawing near; you have still one year and three to four months. So, I do hope that with efforts of the government, particularly the chief election commissioner and the Election Commission, the next general election will be a free, fair and participatory one. We do really hope that the next general election will be a better one,” he said.

The envoy added that he visited the chief election

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Workers load newly-harvested jute on a boat at the floating jute market at the tributary of the Padma in Mushiganj’s Tongibari Dighirpar yesterday. Jute farmers from Munshiganj and its adjoining districts bring their produce to this market, open on Mondays and Fridays. The golden fibre is sold for Tk 1,800-Tk 2,800 a maund depending on quality.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

ENGINE PROBLEM

Nasa calls off launch of giant Moon rocket

REUTERS, Cape Canaveral

An engine problem yesterday forced Nasa to postpone for at least four days the debut launch of the colossal rocketship it hopes will one day fly astronauts back to the Moon, more than a half-century after Apollo’s last lunar mission.

The US space agency cited a problem on one of the Space Launch System (SLS) rocket’s main engines, as launch teams began a test that would have cooled the engines for lift off. One of them would not cool as expected.

The delay was called at 08:35 am EDT (1235 GMT), two minutes after the targeted launch time, as the 32-storey-tall, rocket and its Orion capsule awaited lift off from the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida.

The mission, dubbed Artemis I, calls for a six-week, uncrewed test flight of Orion around the Moon and back to Earth for a splashdown in the Pacific.

Nasa did not give a new launch date for the two-stage rocket but said its first available opportunity was Friday, September 2.

Whether the agency sticks with that date depends on how quickly engineers can resolve the engine issue. The subsequent launch opportunity is Monday, September 5.

Late-hour launch delays are routine in the space business, and yesterday’s postponement was not an

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4