



**P3**  
**Red zones: Off limit to hawkers**



**P6**  
**'A singer does not require solo albums'**



**P10**  
**Will India ever reciprocate our favour?**



**P11**  
**Bangladesh start SAFF Women's C'ship with win**

## Now school supplies get pricier

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and ARAFAT RAHAMAN

The prices of stationery items and study materials have gone up significantly over the past two months, putting thousands of guardians, already struggling to cope with surging prices of essentials, in a tight corner.

Many of them say they are paying 15-25 percent more than what they used to pay two months ago for school supplies such as notebooks, exercise books, pens, pencils, calculators and geometry boxes.

The rise in such out-of-pocket expenses comes at a time when soaring inflation is affecting every aspect of life, said a number of the guardians in the capital.

Moreover, the recent increase in the fees for private tuitions and coaching also added to their sufferings.

"The prices of almost all stationery items have gone up, hitting us hard in the pocket. Even the price of a small-size notebook doubled to Tk 20 from Tk 10 in just two months," said Mir Hafizur Rahman, a guardian.

His two children study in a private school, and their education cost keeps rising.

"My eldest son's tutor used to take Tk 3,000 a month a year ago. Now the private tutor charges an additional Tk 2,000. The prices of all commodities and services have increased, but my income remains



This photo of the metro rail station in Dhaka University shows the progress of the construction of Mass Rapid Transit Line-6. This portion of the country's first metro rail is set to be operational in December 2023. The section from Uttara to Agargaon is to open to public this December. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Delhi offers Dhaka free transit

Connectivity initiatives given priority in talks

STAR REPORT

Dhaka has requested New Delhi for "predictable supply" of essential food commodities such as rice, wheat, sugar, onion, ginger, and garlic from India.

Delhi has assured Dhaka of considering the request based on the supply situation in India, said a Bangladesh-India joint statement issued yesterday.

It said India offered free transit via its territory to Bangladesh for exporting products to third countries through specific land customs stations, airports, and seaports.

In this regard, the Indian side invited the Bangladesh business community for using its port infrastructure for transshipment of goods to third countries.

India has been providing free transit to Bangladesh for exporting its products to Nepal and Bhutan, according to the statement.

The issues came up for discussion during the bilateral talks between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi on Tuesday. The two leaders appreciated the growth in bilateral trade.

Hasina is now on a four-day state visit to India at the invitation of Modi.

The two prime ministers held discussions on bilateral cooperation, including political and security cooperation, defence, border management, trade and connectivity, water resources, power and energy, development cooperation, cultural and people-to-people links.

Hasina and Modi underscored the importance of implementing bilateral and sub-regional rail, road, and other connectivity initiatives.

The Bangladesh side requested India to allow it to have a rail connectivity with Bhutan through the newly inaugurated Chilahati-Haldibari route. India agreed to consider the request, based on its viability and feasibility.

To make this and other cross border rail links viable, India requested Bangladesh to remove port restrictions.

The two leaders agreed to expedite efforts to improve bilateral and sub-regional connectivity through early operationalisation of the BBIN motor vehicle agreement.

India requested Bangladesh to cooperate for initiating new sub-regional connectivity projects, including a highway from Hili in West Bengal to Mahendraganj in Meghalaya through Bangladesh, and in this regard

MORE ON PAGE 12, B1

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

### INDO-BANGLA JOINT STATEMENT

➡ The two countries agree to expedite efforts to improve bilateral and sub-regional connectivity through early operationalisation of BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement

➡ Dhaka wants Delhi to ensure predictable supply of essential food commodities from India

➡ Bangladesh reiterates the request for concluding the interim agreement on the Teesta water sharing

➡ Both sides agree to work toward bringing the border killings down to zero

## Seven Cumilla youths missing

Anti-Terrorism Unit of police investigating

STAR REPORT

Seven youths aged between 17 and 25 have been missing from Cumilla since August 23 with police not ruling out their possible involvement in militancy.

The individuals, who knew each other, did not take any clothes or phones, according to the general diaries filed by their parents with the Kotwali Model Police Station.

A high official of police said the digital footprints of the students indicated that they were radicalised. "We have not found any of them linked to any particular outfit," the officer said, requesting anonymity.

Md Asaduzzaman, chief of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit of police, said, "We are not ruling out the chances of the students' involvement in militancy."

The Anti-Terrorism Unit of police is investigating the matter, said Md Moniruzzaman, deputy inspector general of the unit.

Of the missing individuals, three are HSC students, three others are honours students, and one graduated from a university.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## 'EXCESSIVE PROFITS' BB serves notices to 6 more banks

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

Bangladesh Bank yesterday asked six more banks to explain why they made "excessive profits through purchase and sale of US dollars, ignoring banking norms during the volatile situation in the country's foreign exchange market".

The six banks are NCC Bank, HSBC, Mercantile Bank, Dhaka Bank, United Commercial Bank and Bank Asia.

Md Serajul Islam, spokesperson for the central bank, confirmed it while speaking to The Daily Star last night.

"The banks have been asked to reply within seven working days," he said.

Another BB official said the banks had purchased US dollars from exporters at a lower rate but sold them to importers at a much higher rate.

According to the BB letters to the banks, the six lenders gained abnormal

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina awarding the Mujib scholarship at the ITC Maurya hotel in New Delhi yesterday. She conferred the scholarship on 10 descendants of Indian soldiers who lost their lives during Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971.

PHOTO: PMO

## 4 rental plants to get fresh contracts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday decided to renew contracts of four expensive furnace oil-fired private power plants for two years with the condition that they would not get capacity charges.

The four plants started operation in 2012 and their contracts expired this year.

The Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase, with Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzaque presiding, made the decision yesterday.

The total cost of oil needed for electricity is roughly four times more than that spent on coal and gas. Over the last two years, the tariffs of these four plants have ranged from Tk 6.66 per kwh to Tk 36.73 per kwh, according to BPDB data.

The contracts of all four plants were renewed on "no power, no pay" basis, which stipulates that they would not receive any capacity payment, said Mohammad Hossain, director general (DG) of Power Cell.

Capacity payment is the money paid to plants for ensuring readiness to generate power. The payment must be made even when no power is being generated.

The four plants would however receive payments for operation and maintenance even when not supplying power. Those payments constitute approximately one-third of the total cost of the electricity bought from them, power division officials said.

Capacity charge constitute up to 60 percent of the total cost of power bought from rental power plants, according to Bangladesh Power Development Board (BPDB) data submitted to the parliamentary standing committee on the energy ministry last month.

The rental power plants are Julda 100MW in Chattogram, owned by Acorn Infrastructure Services Ltd; Katakali 50MW in Rajshahi, owned by Northern Power Solutions Ltd; Mutiara Keraniganj 100MW, owned

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2