



Community centres not serving the community



Choking the life out of Dhaka's lifeline



When it's the BNP, you never know



Private sector's foreign loans rising

PROJECT DELAY, COST OVERRUN

Ills lie deep in ERD, Planning Commission

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

That development projects in Bangladesh are rarely completed on time and within the original budget is well established by now.

But in an extraordinary session yesterday, called to discuss how to establish good governance in foreign-aided projects, a picture emerged of why the phenomenon has been persisting.

Sometimes it is collusion, sometimes it is carelessness. If it isn't ineptitude, it is the lack of resolve to better manage resources. And sometimes, good intentions come undone by the inherent structural loopholes.

For instance, the Economic Relations Division, the government wing that negotiates foreign loans, does not have the resources to thrash out robust international contracts.

The ERD officials negotiate with the foreign lenders and the loan agreement is sent to the law ministry for vetting. No opinion is taken from legal counsel who is well-versed in international contracts.

Subsequently, clauses are slipped in that are not always in

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



There are thousands of dead mangrove trees on Kotka beach of the Sundarbans in Bagerhat. Forest department officials say sand brought inlands during cyclones in recent years formed a very thick layer on the ground, causing the trees to die.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Check before you allege

Hasina tells BBC; Charles III calls to thank her for attending queen's funeral

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



People should judge for themselves how much truth there is in the allegations of enforced disappearances before making comments, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said in an interview with the BBC.

In the interview uploaded on the news agency's website yesterday, she also said free and fair elections were only possible under an Awami League government and that it was her struggle to ensure free and fair elections.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

TENSIONS IN GHUMDHUM

300 families 'to be moved'

Locals, Rohingyas in fear with no let-up in gunshots, blasts in Myanmar

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and MOHAMMAD ALI JINNATI, from Cox's Bazar

Amid incessant gunfire and mortar shelling in Myanmar close to the Bangladesh border, the local administration is planning to evacuate around 300 families in Ghumdhum union of Bandarban's Naikhongchhari upazila.

At least 1,500 members of the families live at Betunia, Baishfari, Tambru, Konarpara and Reju Amtoli of Ghumdhum.

The plan to move them to safety was discussed at an emergency meeting held at the office of upazila nirbahi officer around 11:30am yesterday, Jahangir Aziz, Ghumdhum union Parishad chairman, told The Daily Star.

But relocating so many families would be difficult as there is no shelter home in Ghumdhum and the condition of local schools is also not good, he said without giving any timeframe for a possible evacuation.

The closed-door meeting was attended by members of intelligence agencies, BGB and police and other union parishad representatives.

"We have discussed the strategies to keep our people in the bordering areas safe," said Naikhongchhari UNO Salma Ferdous. "Many proposals were discussed at the emergency meeting and we sent those to higher authorities for a decision."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Myanmar envoy blames it on AA

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Myanmar Ambassador Aung Kyaw Moe yesterday blamed the Arakan Army for the landing of mortar shells on the Bangladesh side of the border -- a violation of international rules.

He said this after he was summoned to the foreign ministry for the fourth time in a month.

Rear Admiral (retired) Kurshed Alam, secretary of the ministry's Maritime Affairs Unit, said, "We have lodged a strong protest note against the violations of air and land space, and warned Myanmar that such actions ought not to be repeated."

Najmul Huda, director general of the ministry's Southeast Asia wing, summoned Moe to hand the protest note, two days after mortar shells fired from Myanmar killed a Rohingya man and injured several others in no-man's land near Tambru of Bandarban's Naikhongchhari.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

BIMAN BANGLADESH AIRLINES

Female cockpit crew alleges disparities

RASHIDUL HASAN

Nine out of 15 female cockpit crew members of Biman have alleged that their bosses in training and scheduling departments discriminate and harass them so much so that it even jeopardised flight safety on at least one occasion.

They said the work environment has become hostile due to intentional discriminations, harassment, regular verbal abuse, and deprivation of promotions and training opportunities.

This has caused female cockpit crew members to be under tremendous stress and some have even quit Biman, the nine said in their first group report -- Confidential Report on Female Cockpit Crew Harassment -- to Biman's chief of flight safety, other officials, and the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh.

Biman has five female captains and 10 female first officers, according to the national flag carrier.

This paper has a copy of the report and has spoken to a number of them. It is withholding their names to protect them against any possible reprisals.

One of the first officers mentioned in the document that she reported to the Biman chief medical officer that she had a high fever

and would be unable to fly. The medical officer asked her to have a Covid-19 PCR test done and take necessary medicines.

She tested positive.

"Instead of giving me the required sick leave, I was threatened by the chief of the scheduling department [a section that assigns flights to pilots] with halting promotion and was told that if I did not operate the flight, my name will be given to the managing director for action against me," she told The Daily Star.

Following misbehaviour and unprofessional language used against her, she became so scared that she operated the flight with fever, chills, and dehydration.

"... At one stage, I fainted at the outstation. I became so sick that I couldn't fly the return flight, and another set of cockpit crew had to be sent from Dhaka to operate the return flight," she added.

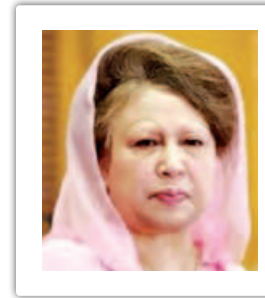
She said the actions of the Biman official endangered the crew members and the passengers on that flight. She said if she had fainted during the flight, an emergency would have had to be declared.

The report said verbal abuse and inappropriate behaviour have become common and each and every crew member has

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



Sentence of Khaleda to be suspended again



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is going to again extend the suspension of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's jail sentence for six more months, as the law ministry has given its opinion to this effect.

The home ministry would issue a notification soon in this regard. This suspension would be the fifth.

Law Minister Anisul Huq, who is now in the US, told The Daily Star yesterday that he gave his

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2



Thousands of BNP leaders and activists at a rally in front of the party's office in the capital's Nayapaltan yesterday. BNP's Dhaka city units organised the rally in protest of the recent attacks on demonstrators in different districts.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Govt creating chaos to stay in power: BNP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday said the government wants to create a state of chaos in the country through violence, murders, and by foiling the processions and rallies of opposition parties.

The ruling Awami League is doing this with the aim of staying in office, BNP leaders told a rally in front of the party's office in the capital's Nayapaltan in protest of the recent attacks on demonstrators.

"When the people of Bangladesh are fighting and struggling for their rights, they want to create chaos in Bangladesh through violence, murder, and obstruction of processions so that they can stay in power," said BNP Secretary General BNP Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Thousands of people chanting slogans marched to the rally organised by Dhaka city units of BNP, prompting police to close the VIP Road to traffic. This caused severe gridlocks and long tailbacks in Paltan, Dainik Bangla, Kakrail, and Fakirapul.

A large number of police, prison buses, armoured personnel carriers and water cannons were kept in the areas during the rally.

Fakhrul said whenever the BNP activists tried to organise rallies in different parts of the country, the ruling party men attacked them.

"Don't do this. You cannot stop the movement by doing this. You will be defeated by the movement," he said, addressing the government.

Fakhrul also demanded immediate and unconditional

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2