



**P5** The journey goes on, but with risks



**P6** There is an unseemly pressure on 'Beauty Circus'



**P7** S Korea, US fire missiles into Yellow Sea



**B1** Roaring dollar hits local producers

## Rice import plan receives tepid response

REJAU KARIM BYRON and MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The government initiative to import rice from different sources to beef up the stock and keep the prices stable is yet to see any significant progress.

Since June, the food ministry has given permission to 320 private entities to import 13.40 lakh tonnes of rice at a reduced duty to rein in the prices in the local market.

Importers, however, opened Letters of Credit for bringing around three lakh tonnes of rice till September 29, the deadline for opening LCs, Md Ismiel Hossain, secretary at the food ministry, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Private firms imported only 1.39 lakh tonnes of rice till October 2, shows the food ministry data.

Those who have opened LCs must bring the consignments of rice from abroad and supply those to the local market by December 31, according to the conditions set by the ministry.

The process of importing around 5.30 lakh tonnes of rice from India, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand through government-to-government (G2G) arrangements is still underway.

According to a food ministry official, only 30,000 tonnes of rice from India have so far arrived at the Chattogram port.

The government decided to allow private firms to import rice in June at a reduced duty after the prices of different varieties of the staple rose by 5-15 percent in the local market since May.

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The idol of Durga surrounded by devotees on Bijoya Dashami at Chattogram's Patenga yesterday. All across the country, worshippers immersed idols of the goddess, signalling the end of Durga Puja, the biggest Hindu festival. PHOTO: RABI RAIHAN

## Durga Puja ends with immersion of idols

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The five-day Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of the Hindus, ended yesterday with the immersion of the idols of goddess Durga and her children amid festivity.

According to the Hindu mythology, Durga has returned to her husband Lord Shiva's house at Kailash through immersion.

Earlier, mother deity Durga was bidden farewell by Darpan Bisharjan in temples at 8:50am.

Amid tight security, idols from puja mandaps in and around the capital were immersed into the Buriganga and the Turag. In Chattogram, idols were immersed into the Bay in the port city's Patenga and Khalurghat areas.

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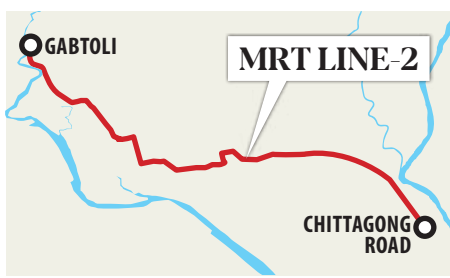
## MRT-2 PHYSICAL WORK Funding setback may delay the start

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Mass Rapid Transit Line-2 project, another metro rail line to be laid out from Gabtoli to Chattogram Road on Dhaka-Chattogram Highway, faces a setback with the authorities now seeking to change the way it would be financed and implemented.

The project was supposed to be implemented under the Government to Government (G2G) PPP (Public Private Partnership) model with Japan.

But the metro rail authorities now look to implement it under a government initiative, as it finds unacceptable the options Japan has lately given under the PPP model.



Meantime, between the original plan and the latest development, five years have gone by.

The PPP authorities will place the fresh stance before the ongoing fifth

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## BANGLADESH LABOUR RULES Workers' interests 'mostly ignored'

ZYMA ISLAM

The recent amendments to the Bangladesh Labour Rules have curtailed workers rights and the changes have largely been made ignoring recommendations of workers' bodies, said labour leaders.

Worker representatives and labour leaders last December made 56 recommendations for the amendment to Bangladesh Labour Rules 2015, but the government has turned a deaf ear to most of them, say worker leaders.

The amended Bangladesh Labour Rules were published by the labour and employment ministry in a gazette on September 1, 2022, and 101 amendments were made.

But of them, several crucial additions -- and more importantly, omissions -- will result in the curtailing of worker rights, including maternity leave rights.

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## POWER GRID FAILURE Result of neglect, lessons not learnt

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Experts blame poor electricity transmission equipment, the lack of a smart grid, and the ill-equipped National Load Dispatch Centre for Tuesday's national grid failure that caused power blackouts in half the country.

The risk of such failures will persist if the problems are not addressed, they added.

According to data from the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh (PGCB), 71 incidents of power interruptions were reported due to problems in the transmission lines from fiscal year 2016-17 to 2020-21.

Officials said Tuesday's outage



happened when a substation in Ghorashal tripped.

It happened when the demand for electricity suddenly dropped, causing a power surge. This resulted in power stations tripping one after another.

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A bus stop has the rod beams in place for benches to be set, but the seating arrangement is conspicuously absent, compelling waiting passengers to either stand. The photo was taken from the capital's Kalabagan area yesterday. PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## MAHSA AMINI DEATH

### Iran schoolgirls lead protests

Tehran summons British envoy, alleging UK meddling in unrest; Swedish MEP cuts hair during speech in solidarity with Iranian women

AGENCIES

Iranian schoolgirls have come to the fore in protests over the death of Mahsa Amini, removing their hijabs and staging sporadic rallies in defiance of a lethal crackdown by the security forces.

Amini, 22, was pronounced dead days after the notorious morality police detained the Iranian Kurd last month for allegedly breaching the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women.

Anger flared at her funeral and spread to become the biggest wave of protests to rock Iran in almost three years, despite the backlash by the security forces that has killed scores and seen hundreds arrested.

Students rallied at the weekend before being confronted by riot police who cornered them in an underground car park of Tehran's prestigious Sharif University of Technology before hauling them away.

Schoolgirls have since taken

up the baton around the country, removing their hijabs, shouting anti-regime slogans and defacing images of the clerical state's leaders. "Death to the dictator," a group of bare-headed girls is seen chanting in reference to supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as they force a man, reportedly the principal, out of a school in Karaj, west of Tehran, on Monday in a video verified by AFP.

Another group of girls is seen

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## 3 PEACEKEEPERS

### Families' wait now shorter, yet harder

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, PABNA and MASUK HRIDOY, Brahmanbaria

Three Bangladeshi UN peacekeepers, who died in the Central African Republic, were supposed to return home in December.

Their family members had been eagerly waiting for their homecoming, but the scenario has changed in no time.

The family members are now waiting with heavy hearts only to receive their bodies.

Jashim Uddin, 31, Jahangir Alam, 26, and Sharif Hossain, 26, were killed as an improvised explosive device went off in Kaita area of the Central African Republic on Monday. Major Ashraf Haque was injured in the explosion.

The trio died of their injuries at a hospital in Bouar town while the major was undergoing treatment there, said a statement of the Inter Service Public Relations Directorate (ISPR).

"Before joining the peacekeeping mission last year, my brother got married. He wanted to spend time with his family next December. Now we are waiting for his body," said Kawsar Talukdar, younger brother of Sharif.

"When my brother got the job in Bangladesh Army in 2017, our father became happy thinking this would end our hardships. We felt

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