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## NUCLEAR FUSION US scientists make crucial breakthrough

CNN, ONLINE

For the first time ever, US scientists at the National Ignition Facility at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California successfully produced a nuclear fusion reaction resulting in a net energy gain, a source familiar with the project confirmed to CNN.

The US Department of Energy is expected to officially announce the breakthrough today.

The result of the experiment would be a massive step in a decades-long quest to unleash an infinite source of clean energy that could help end dependence on fossil fuels. Researchers for decades have attempted to recreate nuclear fusion – replicating the fusion that powers the sun.

US Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm will make an announcement today on a “major scientific breakthrough,” the department announced yesterday. The breakthrough was first reported by the Financial Times.

Nuclear fusion happens when two or more atoms are fused into one larger one, a process that generates a massive amount of energy as heat. Unlike nuclear fission which powers electricity all over the world, it doesn’t generate long-lived radioactive waste.

Scientists across the globe have been inching towards the breakthrough, using different methods to try to

SEE PAGE 7 COL 2



Frustrated and tired, three-year-old Reshma breaks into tears after having to stand in a crowd for hours in front of an OMS truck in the capital's Beribandh area. While the essentials, sold at subsidised rates, are handed out after 12:00pm, people queue up from early in the morning to ensure their spot in line. However, for children like Reshma, whose parents bring them along with no option at home, the situation becomes unbearable.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Fakhrul, Abbas denied bail again



COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday rejected bail petitions of BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir and standing committee member Mirza Abbas in a case filed over the December 7 clash between police and the party men in the capital's Nayapaltan area.

The court also rejected the bail petitions of 222 other BNP leaders and activists in the case. They include Abdus Salam, Khairul Kabir Khokon, Shahid Uddin Chowdhury Annie, Fazlul Haque Milon and Selim Reza Habib.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Md Shafiuddin passed the order after defence counsels submitted separate bail petitions on Sunday, said Fakhrul's lawyer Zaynal Abedin Mesbah.

During today's hearing, defence lawyers told the court that Mirza Fakhrul, Mirza Abbas and others were not involved in the incident. They were implicated in the case as harassment and they should be

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

## STUDY ABROAD Students suffer as banks reluctant to open files

MD ASADUZ ZAMAN and ARAFAT RAHAMAN

Mohammad Omar Faruque, 27, a graduate of Jahangirnagar University, was hoping to pursue his master's in the United Kingdom. He received an offer from the University of Suffolk, in the Strategic People Management programme, to start in January 2023. Everything was set for him, but he faced one last obstacle: opening an account to deposit his fees. But he couldn't manage as every bank refused to open a profile for him.

The university has now advised him to defer to the year after. “I am losing a year from my life. Who will take the responsibility?” said Faruque, frustratingly.

Like Faruque, many other students are having to suffer due to the dollar crisis the country's banks are facing.

In November this year, the then Bangladesh Bank spokesperson GM Abul Kalam Azad said, “This is a temporary problem, which will be resolved soon.”

The Daily Star interviewed at least seven students, who are still waiting for the issue to come to an end.

Faruque had tried every possible way. He went to several branches of Premier, UCB, Prime, The City, Brac, HSBC and Dhaka Bank in the capital, but all his efforts were in vain. He tried to send £3,000 admission fee to the university through

a Bangladeshi expat. But even that attempt failed, as the person who sends the money is required to bear a blood relation to the student.

Another student, Mashrafi Ahmed, 20, at the capital, also had already completed all the processes to pursue an honours programme in International Relations at Kodolanyi Janos University in Hungary. In November, he went to open a student file in Premier Bank at the Panthapath branch, but found no success.

“What can I do now,” Mashrafi said, “I don't have anyone in Hungary that could pay the money in any alternative way.”

Rifat Ahmed, 20, from the capital's Uttara area, who was prepared to start his university education in Canada this year, also couldn't pay the fees by the deadline, November 25. “The Mutual Trust Bank Limited informed me they wouldn't be able to pay the fee due to the dollar crisis,” he said.

On the other hand, Nishit Jaman, 20, a student from Rajshahi's Bagha upazila, had already opened a student file at Brac Bank, as the bank promised that they would be able to pay the tuition fee through their branch.

But Brac Bank has not yet been able to provide the fee, though the clock is ticking. His deadline is end of December.

“I went through a long journey to get admitted to the university,” said Nishit, who has

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

## VACANT SEATS EC to set by-polls dates soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The schedule for by-elections to parliamentary seats that are now vacant following the resignation of BNP MPs will be announced soon, Election Commissioner Md Alamgir said yesterday.

Although there is a 90-day window to hold the by-polls, the EC will try to hold the election as soon as possible as only a year remains before the 11th parliament's tenure.

“We've received the gazette announcing the seats left by BNP MPs as vacant. We'll soon arrange a meeting where we'll decide when to hold the by-polls,” said Alamgir.

On Sunday, seven BNP MPs – five in person and two via email – submitted their resignation to Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury at the parliament as part of their party's anti-government movement.

The five MPs who resigned in person are Md Zahidur Rahman of Thakurgaon-3, Md Mosharof Hosen of Bogura-4, Gulam Mohammad Siraj of

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## Quarter-final over, now time for semi-final: Quader

UNB, Chuadanga

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said that it was not possible for BNP to come to power by “burning people to death”.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, came up with the remark while addressing the Chuadanga district Awami League council at the town football ground.

“Quarter-final with BNP is over, now it's time for the semi-final, and the final game will be held during the national election,” said Quader.

Referring to the forex reserve issue, the Awami League leader said Tarique Rahman remained absconding after looting money from the country and sending it abroad. “How can they talk about the forex reserves? The country has sufficient reserves.”

After seven years, the triennial conference of the Chuadanga district Awami League was held yesterday with more than 50,000 people joining it.

Awami League presidium member Kazi Zafar Ullah announced the opening of the council around 11:00am.



SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

## Hearing aids can help prevent dementia

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The usage of hearing aids is linked to a decreased risk of subsequent cognitive decline and dementia, according to a new review of studies.

Previous studies have found hearing loss to be one of the biggest risk factors associated with cognitive decline and it has been unclear if devices like hearing aids and cochlear implants have had a beneficial impact on cognition, pointed out scientists from the National University of Singapore (NUS).

A growing number of studies are revealing that people with dementia begin showing signs of cognitive decline, sometimes several years before an official diagnosis.

While some of these signs are often subtle, researchers said spotting them can be a step towards screening those who are at the greatest risk and providing early interventions.

In the new research review, published recently in the journal JAMA Neurology, scientists analysed eight long-term studies of hard-of-hearing adults, that had over 126,000 participants, to find the long-term association between hearing aid use and cognitive decline.

Researchers like NUS's Brian Sheng Yeo Yeo found the use of these implants by the participants was linked to a nearly 20 percent reduction in



SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## AUTONOMOUS BODIES Finance Division to have a say in their expenses Cabinet also discusses need for stepping up cyber security

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cabinet yesterday approved a draft amendment to the Public Service Act- 2018, giving the Finance Division authority over the expenditures of autonomous, legislative and local government bodies.

The approval came at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the Prime Minister's Office.

Later, Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam said, “The Finance Division has the authority over the financial matters of the government entities, officials and employees in the existing Public Service Act-2018. But it was not clear what would be its role regarding the autonomous, legislative and local government bodies.”

The Finance Division raised the issue, as most of the expenditures of the organisations are borne by the government. Therefore, the division should have some kind of authority over them, he said while briefing journalists at the Secretariat.

“For example, if a corporation or a local government organisation fixes its pay structure on its own, it won't work ... The amendment has been made so that the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5



The Martyred Intellectuals' Memorial in the capital's Rayer Bazar being cleaned up yesterday as part of the preparation for the Martyred Intellectuals' Day (Shaheed Buddhijibi Dibosh) on December 14.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## RICE PRICE HIKE JS body for action against those responsible

RASHIDUL HASAN

Expressing resentment over the hike in rice prices despite high yields of paddy, the parliamentary standing committee on agriculture ministry yesterday asked senior officials of the agriculture ministry to identify and take action against those responsible.

Matia Chowdhury, ruling AL lawmaker and former agriculture minister, presided over the meeting at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, where the JS body criticised field-level agriculture officers for their inaction over the price hike of rice.

Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzaque, who is also a member of the parliamentary body, told the meeting that despite bumper production of paddy, price of rice is very high which is unacceptable, meeting sources told The Daily Star.

The minister also said there was no shortage of fertiliser or seeds during the production of paddy and questioned the illogical hike in rice prices.

“Instead of visiting the field, you

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1