

**4 YEARS OF AL GOVT  
PM to address  
nation today**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will address the nation today at 7:30pm on the occasion of the Awami League government completing four years in power in its current term.

An official of the press wing of PMO confirmed the development to The Daily Star yesterday.

The state-owned BTV, Bangladesh Betar, and private television channels will broadcast the speech of Hasina, also the president of Awami League.

**ATTACK ON COPS  
Two BNP men  
sent to jail, 41  
granted bail**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A Habiganj court yesterday sent two BNP leaders to jail and granted bail to 41 others in a case filed over a police-BNP clash on November 16 in Sylhet's Lakhai upazila.

Hasanul Islam, district and sessions judge of Habiganj, rejected the bail plea of Lakhai Upazila BNP General Secretary Shamsul Islam and Habiganj District Chhatra Dal President Emran Hossain, and sent them to jail.

Meanwhile, 41 others accused in the case, including Central BNP Cooperative Affairs Secretary GK Gaus, also former mayor of Habiganj municipality, were granted bail.

On November 16, the BNP organised a preparatory meeting at Bami Bazar on the occasion of its divisional mass meeting in Sylhet.

According to the case statement, the activists attacked police personnel when they tried to block them. About 50 men, including police officials, were injured in the clash.

Fazle Rabbi, sub-inspector of Lakhai Police Station, filed the case

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**Metro network unlikely by 2030**

FROM PAGE 1  
**MRT-6**

Approved in December 2012, the 20.10km line from Uttara to Motijheel was supposed to be done by June 2024.

It took six years and three months of physical work to open the 12km Uttara-Agargaon section. The Agargaon-Motijheel section is expected to be opened within this year.

The 1.16km Motijheel-Kamalapur section, which was added in 2020, is expected to open to commuters in December 2025, a year later than the original plan.

The project cost rose to Tk 33,472 crore, about 11,487 crore more than the original estimate.

**MRT-1**

According to this project's monthly progress report, the work for the country's first underground rail line is to begin in the last week of this month.

But the original plan was to begin physical work of the 31.24km line, the biggest infrastructure project in the transport sector involving Tk 52,561.43 crore, in December 2020. The delay was caused by coronavirus restrictions.

This project's 19.87km part from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport to Kamalapur will be underground. The other part, an 11.36km stretch from Notun Bazar to Purbachal, will be elevated. There will be 19 stations for the two parts.

The construction work will start with developing land for a depot at Pitalganj, Narayanganj. A Japan-Bangladesh joint venture company has been hired for building the depot.

Contracts for only one out of 12 packages, have been signed so far.

Transport expert Prof Moazzem Hossain said, "I don't think [MRT Line 1] will be complete by 2026. It usually takes five to seven years to build an MRT line."

If the authorities want to meet the 2026 deadline, they will have only four years to do it, he added.

A document from Japan International Cooperation Agency, which will provide 70 percent of the cost in soft loans, shows the line is expected to be opened in 2028.

**MRT-5 (NORTHERN)**

The line, from Savar's Hemayetpur to Bhatai via Gabtoli, Mirpur, and Gulshan, is to be built at an estimated



A delegation of the National Human Rights Commission visiting a vandalised hut of the Mro community in Lama, Bandarban, yesterday. The attackers vandalised 12 wooden huts of the Mro people early Monday.

PHOTO: MONG SING HAI MARMA

**UNDER-REPORTING OF COVID DEATHS  
China stands firm amid WHO, Biden concerns**

REUTERS, Beijing/Shanghai

China yesterday defended its handling of its raging Covid-19 outbreak after US President Joe Biden voiced concern and the World Health Organisation (WHO) said Beijing was under-reporting virus deaths.

The WHO's emergencies director, Mike Ryan, said on Wednesday in some of the UN health agency's most critical remarks to date, that Chinese officials were under-representing data on several fronts.

China scrapped its stringent Covid controls last month after protests against them, abandoning a policy that had shielded its 1.4 billion population from the virus for three years.

China's foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a regular press briefing in

Beijing that China had transparently and quickly shared Covid data with the WHO.

Mao said that China's "epidemic situation is controllable" and that it hoped the WHO would "uphold a scientific, objective, and impartial position".

"Facts have proved that China has always, in accordance with the principles of legality, timeliness, openness and transparency, maintained close communication and shared relevant information and data with the WHO in a timely manner," Mao said.

China reported one new Covid death in the mainland for Wednesday, compared with five a day earlier, bringing its official death toll to 5,259.

Ryan said on Wednesday the numbers China was publishing under-represented hospital admissions, intensive care unit

patients and deaths.

Hours later, US President Joe Biden also raised concern about China's handling of a Covid outbreak that is filling hospitals and overwhelming some funeral homes.

"They're very sensitive... when we suggest they haven't been that forthcoming," Biden told reporters while on a visit to Kentucky.

The French health minister voiced similar fears while German Health Minister Karl Lauterbach voiced concern about a new Covid subvariant linked to growing hospitalisations in the northeastern United States.

The United States is one of more than a dozen countries that have imposed restrictions on travellers from China, while Lauterbach also announced tighter rules for entry to Germany.

**Man sentenced to life imprisonment for killing father**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A Faridpur court yesterday sentenced a man to life term imprisonment for killing his father in Nagarkanda upazila in 2019.

He was also fined Tk 20,000 in default of which he will have to serve another four months in prison.

According to the case, Milon Chowdhury, 30, of Ramnagar village, on February 22, 2019, had hit his father Harun-r Rashid, 62, a farmer, on his head with a stick following a heated argument over property.

Critically injured, Harun was rushed to hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

Milon was arrested after his mother Halimon Begum filed a case with Nagarkanda Police Station the next day.

**5 get life in jail for killing DU student**

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced five people to life imprisonment for killing Dhaka University student Monirul Islam Bipu in the capital's Demra 18 years ago.

The convicts were also fined Tk 10,000 each, in default of which they will have to serve another three months in prison.

Judge Md Iqbal Hossain of the Special Judge's Court 5 pronounced the verdict. Of the convicts, Babu and Babul were present in the court while Toriqul Islam Millat, Khairul Bashar, and Suman are absconding.

The court also acquitted charges against five others accused in the case as their involvement in the murder was not proven.

A total of eight witnesses testified in court during the trial.

According to the case statements, BBA student Bipu was hacked near his Demra residence on July 26, 2004, for protesting extortion and terrorist activities in the locality.

**Peruvians clamor anew for president's removal**

AFP, Lima

After a fortnight-long break, Peruvians took to the streets again on Wednesday, blocking roads countrywide to demand the resignation of President Dina Boluarte, who took over from her ousted predecessor in December.

Protesters used stones and burning tires to barricade main routes in the southern regions of Puno, Cusco, Apurimac and Arequipa, as well as Junin in the center, chanting for Boluarte to leave.

**We're crossing a critical juncture**

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The president further said, "We are now crossing a critical juncture in our national life. The year 2022 was full of challenges for us. The whole world passed a difficult time."

"Although we tackled the pandemic quite successfully and maintained the dynamism of our economy, the war between Russia and Ukraine has slowed down this progress."

The government is constantly striving to attune the law enforcement agencies to the needs of the time in order to establish good governance, he said.

"In order to face the challenges of the fourth industrial revolution, the government has taken different initiatives, including preparation of master plans, laws, policies and strategies with the goal of transforming 'Digital Bangladesh' into 'Smart Bangladesh'."

He said the government is formulating laws, rules and policies for maintaining the trend of information

flow and creativity.

Highlighting the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the president said her robust leadership in extending humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya refugees, women empowerment, and tackling the challenges of climate change has been acclaimed globally.

Hamid also highlighted the government's development activities and progresses in different sectors.

Immediately after the House sat earlier, the Speaker nominated a five-member panel to chair the 21st session.

The panel members are Romesh Chandra Sen, AKM Shahjahan Kamal, Yusuf Abdullah Harun, Kazi Firoz Rashid and Salma Chowdhury.

They will chair the parliament session, according to seniority, in the absence of the Speaker and deputy speaker.

The 21st session of the current parliament will continue until February 9.

On January 10, a special discussion

will be held on the Homecoming Day of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The decisions came at a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee of parliament.

Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury presided over the meeting, where it was also decided that a special session will be held in April to observe the Golden Jubilee of Bangladesh Jatiya Sangsad.

President Hamid will address the session and a general discussion will be held on the thanksgiving motion in his speech.

In another development, the Speaker informed the House about the resignation of the seven BNP lawmakers.

They are Harunur Rashid from Chapainawabganj-3, Abdus Sattar from Brahmanbaria-2, Gulam Mohammad Siraj from Bogura-6, Zahidur Rahman from Thakurgaon-3, Mosharof Hosen from Bogura-4, Aminul Islam from Chapainawabganj-2 and reserved seat MP Rumeen Farhana.

During those years, Bangladesh lost an average 17.3 percent taxes and duties.

The exchange rate of the taka now stands around Tk 107 for a dollar, which was Tk 85.80 a year ago.

If the current exchange rate was

in place in January last year, money launderers would have had to pay more to buy dollars, he said.

"The higher price of the dollar could have discouraged the launderers. Adjusting the exchange rate in line with demand usually plays a great role in containing money laundering."

In November last year, Bangladesh Bank said it had identified cases of money laundering during a special audit.

Some entities inflated prices of their imported goods between 20 percent and 200 percent through a trick called over-invoicing, said GM Abul Kalam Azad, then spokesperson for Bangladesh Bank.

Over-invoicing is when importers here get suppliers abroad to submit a bill that exceeds the value of the shipped goods to launder money abroad.

Washington-based Global Financial Integrity (GFI) in December 2021 said Bangladesh lost \$8.27 billion every year on average between 2009 and 2018 due to mis-invoicing of values of imported and exported goods, which the traders indulged in to evade taxes and to illegally move money across borders.

"We are investigating the incident and trying to arrest those responsible," OC Arbinda said, adding that Mamun's family will file a case in this regard after completing his burial.

Anwar Hossain could not be contacted for comments.

**Two years after US Capitol attack, police still seeking 350 suspects**

AFP, Washington

Two years after the violent attack on the US Capitol by supporters of president Donald Trump, justice officials have arrested 950 suspects but are seeking some 350 more, the Justice Department said Wednesday.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation is also still trying to find out who planted two pipe bombs at political party offices near Congress on the eve of January 6, 2021.

Authorities increased their reward for information on those behind the pipe-bombs to \$500,000 from \$100,000, saying the bombs were "viable" and could have killed someone if they had exploded.

"Our work is far from over," said Attorney General Merrick Garland in a statement two days before the anniversary.

If the banks had enough liquidity, the government could have avoided borrowing heavily from BB, he said.

In addition, policymakers' failure to make time-befitting decisions helped money launderers, he said.

For instance, if the BB had depreciated the taka eight to 10

months ago, money laundering could have been controlled to some extent, Mansur said.

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