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Make Nagad lone option for receiving it

Proposes DPE

MAHUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

The Directorate of Primary Education has proposed that stipends for school students be disbursed only through Nagad, a mobile-banking service.

Currently, users of all the mobile banking services can get the stipends.

If the proposal is approved by the primary and mass education ministry, officials concerned across the country as well as the beneficiaries will be required to have Nagad accounts.

In a letter on January 1, DPE Director General Shah Rezwon Hayat requested the secretary of the ministry to revise the Primary Education Stipend Programme Implementation Guideline 2021, and the operational manual for primary education stipend implementation 2021.

The existing guideline says the stipends will be distributed to the active mobile banking accounts of students' parents or legal guardians.

The DPE proposal says the money should be given through active Nagad accounts.

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Police try to force kidney patients and their relatives off the road in front of Chattogram Medical College Hospital during a demonstration yesterday protesting the recent hike in dialysis fees. Cops later used batons to drive away the demonstrators. Story on page 2.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

EC's Tk 8,711cr EVM project to get nod soon

Says planning minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Planning Minister MA Mannan yesterday said the Planning Commission will soon approve the Election Commission's proposal to purchase new EVMs.

According to the ECs development project proposal, it needs Tk 8,711 crore for the purchase and management of two lakh electronic voting machines.

Mannan said the Planning Commission has been in touch with the EC in this regard.

"We will do everything in line with law. The EC will get the highest priority. We will give approval to the project proposal as soon as possible," he told reporters after a meeting with Swiss Ambassador Nathalie Chuard at the Planning Ministry.

The Planning Commission is now scrutinising the proposal, sent in by the EC in late October.

Late last August, the EC decided that EVMs would be used in a maximum of 150 parliamentary constituencies in the next general election, which is slated to be held in early January 2024.

In line with the decision, they prepared the project proposal, as the EC currently has 1.5 lakh EVMs that can only be used in 70-80 constituencies at one go during the polls.

Election Commissioners Md Alamgir and Anisur Rahman on several occasions said that if the proposal to buy another two lakh EVMs is not approved by January 15, the commission will not be able to use the machines in the way they had planned to.

The EC will then use the EVMs they have in hand, they said.

Asked about the EC's January 15 "deadline", Mannan said, "Talks are ongoing between the EC secretary and our

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Fierce fighting rages on in Ukraine's east

Zelensky says no walls left standing in Soledar as Russia pushes to capture the salt mining town

AGENCIES

Ukrainian forces are facing waves of assaults by Russian forces on the small salt-mining town of Soledar, Kyiv officials said yesterday, as Moscow strives to make its first breakthrough in the east in months.

Britain's Defence Ministry said Russian troops and mercenaries of the Wagner group were probably now in control of most of the town after advances in the last four days.

Seizing Soledar would be advantageous to Russian forces as they fight for control of the city of Bakhmut, a few kilometres (miles) to the southwest, where troops from both sides have been taking heavy losses in some of the most intense trench warfare since Russia invaded Ukraine nearly 11 months ago.

It would also give Russia a welcome battlefield victory after a series of setbacks in recent months.

"Russia's Soledar axis is highly likely an effort to envelop Bakhmut from the north, and to disrupt Ukrainian lines of communication," Britain's Defence Ministry said in an

intelligence briefly.

Serhiy Cherevaty, spokesman for Ukraine's eastern forces, told Ukrainian television Russian forces were deploying their best Wagner fighters at Soledar, which had been struck 86 times by artillery over the

"We must continue to strengthen the partnership between Nato and the European Union. And we must further strengthen our support to Ukraine."

Nato chief **Jens Stoltenberg**

past 24 hours.

He said Russia was using World War One-style tactics, throwing large numbers of men into battle and absorbing heavy losses. "This is basically not a 21st-century war," he said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in his nightly video address on Monday that Bakhmut and Soledar were holding on despite widespread destruction.

'Challenging' Says Momen about balancing act in keeping good ties with US, China

STAR REPORT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said Bangladesh was maintaining good relations with global powers the US and China through its balanced foreign policy, though it was a "challenging" task.

"That is a challenging thing. They [US, China] might have their own problems. That is their headache, not ours. We want to maintain good relations with both," he told reporters in reply to a query about the government's relations with the US and China, reports UNB.

The minister referred to the historic quote of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman -- "Friendship to all, malice towards none" -- which has recently been incorporated in a UN General Assembly resolution. "We believe in this policy."

Momen received newly appointed Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang during the latter's brief stopover at Hazrat Shahjalal International

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LAUNDERED MONEY

Recovery lengthy, complicated

Finance minister tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Legal proceedings based on specific information are underway to recover the money laundered out of the country, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal told parliament yesterday.

But due to different procedural and legal complications, recovery of laundered money takes a long time, he said in response to a question from Jatiya Party MP Mashiur Rahman Ranga.

It is also very difficult to determine the amount of money laundered, he added.

Different development and research organisations use various methods to estimate the amount of laundered money, he said.

The reports of those organisations show conflicting information about the amounts, said Mustafa.

"But regardless of the scale or amount of money laundered from the country, the government is determined to stop the possible sources of money laundering, prevent money laundering and bring back the laundered money," he said.

"All the government agencies are working together for this."

Money laundering will be greatly reduced because of the government action, he said, adding that the ongoing legal efforts for recovery are

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Record-breaking wind turbine can power 40K homes

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

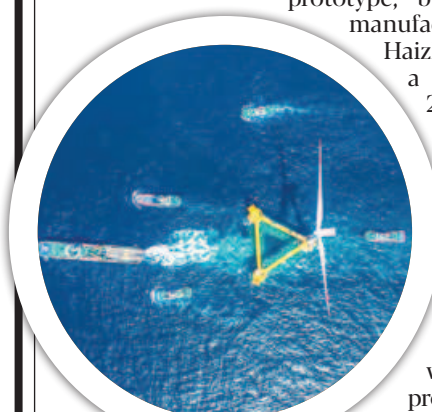
Engineers in China have unveiled the world's most powerful wind turbine, capable of powering up to 40,000 homes for an entire year.

The 18 megawatt (MW) offshore wind turbine prototype, built by Chinese manufacturer CSSC Haizhuang, features a rotor measuring 260 metres in diameter -- equivalent to the height of world's current most powerful wind turbine.

The H260-18MW turbine will be able to produce 44.8 kilowatt hours of electricity per revolution, and up to 74,000 MWh of electricity annually when operational. In a news release, CSSC said it marked a "new milestone" for renewable energy.

"The H260 18MW turbine will make a great contribution to the improvement of turbine capacity and efficiency, as well as reducing the LCOE [levelized cost of energy] of offshore wind farms, and has market prospects in high-speed wind and deep-sea areas," the firm said in a statement.

CSSC Haizhuang said its latest wind turbine would also reduce coal consumption by 25,000 tonnes per year, eliminating an estimated 61,000



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'Report on my 14 houses in US is false'

Claims Wasa MD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Wasa Managing Director Taqsem A Khan yesterday claimed the media report of him buying houses in the US was false.

Talking to a group of selected journalists, he said, "My wife, my son, and I were US citizens even before I took up the responsibility of Wasa MD. They [wife and children] work in the US and they are paid well. My wife bought an apartment in the US with her salary. Apart from this, we don't have any other properties."

The Daily Star spoke to several journalists who met Taqsem yesterday.

He came up with the claim just a day after a media report said Dhaka Wasa MD bought 14 homes in the US.

He said, "I don't have any property in Bangladesh. Allah has given me a lot, that's why I don't need to buy any



Taqsem A Khan

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A bus was set ablaze by locals in Gazipur's Hariken area last night, after rumours spread that a woman and her grandson were killed in a road accident there. At least 20 vehicles were vandalised and six set on fire.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

CRASH DEATH RUMOUR

Mob torches six buses in Gazipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

At least 20 vehicles were vandalised and six buses set on fire by a mob on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in Gachha area of Gazipur city last evening following a rumour of road crash deaths.

Vehicular movement on both lanes of the highway remained closed for about two hours as a result of the attack, according to police.

Alamgir Hossain, the deputy commissioner (traffic) of Gazipur Metropolitan Police, said police and fire service personnel brought the situation under control around 9:45pm.

Police and locals said a bus of Anabil Paribahan hit a man and his granddaughter, who were crossing the highway in Gachha area around 7:00pm, leaving both injured.

Locals rushed them to Tairunessa Memorial Medical College and Hospital. The identities of the two could not be known immediately.

After the accident, a rumour spread that the two were killed in the road crash, which triggered the mob attack.

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