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Spend money carefully

Says PM at Ecneec meeting; EVM purchase proposal not tabled



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked officials concerned to reduce spending, but not stop expenditure altogether, which would result in dire consequences.

Planning Minister MA Mannan briefed reporters after a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) held at the NEC conference room in the capital's Sher-e-Bangla Nagar area.

"If you stop all expenses, we will be destroyed. Don't spend any money on fruitless matter," the minister said, quoting Hasina, who chaired the Ecneec meeting.

State Minister for Planning Shamsul Alam said the PM asked all to remain cautious about expenditure and maintain austerity. She also urged all to ensure their participation in boosting the country's production

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Recycled materials are piled up on the bank of the Buriganga. Despite repeated warnings and even eviction by the BIWTA, recyclers keep using the bank, which leads to some of the materials ending up in the river, polluting the lifeline of Dhaka. The photo was taken in Kamrangirchar yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

US embassy clarifies home minister's comment

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Clarifying things over Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan's comments, the US embassy yesterday said Assistant Secretary Donald Lu, during his visit to Dhaka, did not indicate a time frame for lifting the sanctions on Rab.

Talking to reporters at the Secretariat on Monday, the home minister said the US sanctions on Rab would be lifted soon as Lu had expressed his satisfaction over the force's recent activities.

In response, Jeff Ridenour, spokesperson for the US embassy in Dhaka, yesterday told The Daily Star, "Lu praised the Bangladesh government for the dramatic reduction last year in the number of allegations of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances by the Rab."

"We applaud the government of

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BIJOY IN PHONES Criticism follows BTRC directive

Questions over conflict of interest raised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission's order to pre-install Bijoy app in all imported and locally manufactured android phones has drawn sharp criticism.

According to the directive, all imported and locally manufactured Android smart handsets must have the app pre-installed before receiving marketing permission. Otherwise, the commission will not certify them, the directive said.

The BTRC order was issued on Friday to the relevant stakeholders, including all mobile manufacturers and the president of the Bangladesh Mobile Phone Importers Association.

Since 1988, the Bangla typing software "Bijoy" and Bangla keyboard known as the "Bijoy Keyboard" is patented to Mostafa Jabbar, posts and telecommunications division minister.

The BTRC reports to this division. "The BTRC's directive to use Bijoy keyboard on all Android phones is another absurd, ridiculous and rights-violating decision," said Faiz Ahmad Taiyeb, a writer on ICT, in a Facebook post.

Asked about the decision, the minister, however, said Bijoy has already been recognised as a "standard" keyboard. He said, in 2017, Bangladesh Computer Council recommended Bijoy as a standard keyboard for smartphones and computers. Based on that recommendation, Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) recognised Bijoy. The recent decision came following those recommendations.

Besides, the app will be given free of cost, he added. "It is only mandatory for the local manufacturers and

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Our growing economy entices US

Says Momen



UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said the US wants to maintain good relations with Bangladesh and noted that Bangladesh is "becoming a big economy".

Momen said US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu came to Bangladesh to "help improve the relationship" between the two countries.

"We had a very good discussion. We had a very positive and constructive discussion. They are very happy with us. We are also very happy," he told reporters, adding that President Biden wants to improve relations with Bangladesh in the next 50 years.

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MISCONDUCT WITH B BARIA JUDGE High Court blasts three lawyers

Orders to remove video from social media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday blasted the president and two other lawyers of Brahmanbaria District Bar Association (BDBA) for misbehaving with the judge of Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Tribunal-I and creating chaos in the courtroom on January 2.

At the same time, the court ordered the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission to immediately remove the videos of the incident from social media.

The manner in which the lawyers scolded the judge of Brahmanbaria is very rare in the history of the world, and if such incident continues to take place, laws and courts will not survive, said the HC bench of Justice JBM Hassan and Justice Justice Razik-Al-Jalil.

The bench was holding a hearing of a contempt of court rule against BDBA President Md Tanbir Bhuiyan; Secretary (administration) Akkas Ali and lawyer Zubayer Islam.

"The court is not a place for showing powers. Don't boycott the court. Don't think of only votes..." the bench observed.

"After issuing the rule, we have gone through the precedents of different countries of the world. No incident like that of the Brahmanbaria court took place there. The incident is

beyond civilization. We must think of the issues."

The bench added that if the lawyers don't respect the court, they will not get respect from others.

Attorney General AM Amin Uddin represented the state while a section of Supreme Court lawyers including Supreme Court Bar Association President Md Momtaz Uddin Fakir and its Secretary Md Abdun Nur Dulal appeared for the three Brahmanbaria lawyers during the hearing.

Momtaz Uddin Fakir said the judge of Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Tribunal-I of Brahmanbaria has misbehaved with the lawyers, but the HC only held the lawyers in contempt of court.

He requested the HC to give them two months' time to place their explanations about the conduct in the courtroom.

But the HC asked the lawyers to appear before the court on February 14 and place their explanations.

Earlier on January 5, the same HC bench summoned the president of Brahmanbaria Bar Association and other two lawyers, directing them to appear before it on January 17 for shouting and creating chaos in the courtroom of Nari O Shishu Nirjaton Tribunal-I and for misbehaving and scolding its judge with abusive words on January 2.

Scientists use laser to guide lightning bolt

AFP, Paris

Scientists said Monday they have used a laser beam to guide lightning for the first time, hoping the technique will help protect against deadly bolts -- and one day maybe even trigger them.

Lightning strikes between 40-120 times a second worldwide, killing more than 4,000 people and causing billions of dollars worth of damage every year.

Yet the main protection against these bolts from above is still the humble lightning rod, which was first conceived by American polymath Benjamin Franklin in 1749.

A team of scientists from six research institutions have been working for years to use the same idea but replace the simple metal pole with a far more sophisticated and precise laser.

Now, in a study published in the journal Nature Photonics, they describe using a laser beam -- shot from the top of a Swiss mountain -- to guide a lightning bolt for more than 50 metres.

"We wanted to give the first demonstration that the laser can have an influence on lightning -- and it is simplest to guide it," said Aurelien Houard, a physicist at the applied optics laboratory of the ENSTA Paris institute and the study's lead author.

But for future applications "it would be even better if we could trigger lightning," Houard told AFP.

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Umrah now Tk 4,000 cheaper for Bangladeshis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladeshis will now be able to perform Umrah at a cheaper cost as the Saudi government has announced a 63 percent reduction in the price of comprehensive insurance for international pilgrims.

The Ministry of Hajj and Umrah of KSA has cut the cost from SR 235 to SR 87 with effect from January 10, reports Saudi Gazette.

Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh (HAAB), a platform of around 1,500 hajj agencies, welcomed the Saudi government's decision.

HAAB President M Shahadat Hossain Taslim yesterday said that Bangladeshi pilgrims would now pay over 4,000

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Despite space being there on the street, motorbikes take to the pavement in the capital's Bangla Motor area yesterday. Bikers often seen getting on the pavements putting pedestrians and even themselves at risk.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Rab finds militant's grave without body in hills

STAR REPORT

Militants of Jama'atul Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya have tortured and even killed the recruits who wanted to shun the path, said law enforcers after interrogating suspects.

On January 11, five members of the outfit were arrested in Thanchi and Boangchhori of Bandarban. The suspects told law enforcers that they buried the bodies of recruits who died in the remote hills.

On Sunday, a joint team of Army and Rab searched the now abandoned militant hideout and found clothes of Aminul Islam, a 23-year-old man from Cumilla. However, no corpse was found there.

Aminul's father Nurul Islam, who accompanied the law enforcers, identified his son's clothes. Shirts, pants, tracksuits, and kitchen utensils were found scattered.

The grieving father yesterday filed a case accusing the five arrestees and several unidentified militants of killing his son.

"I want the punishment of those who misguided my son and took him to the hills," said Nurul Islam.

On August 23 last year, Aminul left home saying he was going to his computer shop in Kandirpar, Cumilla. He never came back.

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CLASS-VII TEXTBOOK Allegations of copying NatGeo are true

Admit Prof Zafar Iqbal, Prof Haseena

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Professors Muhammed Zafar Iqbal and Haseena Khan yesterday admitted that the allegations of plagiarising content from the National Geographic website for a science textbook for class-VII were true.

The two eminent teachers, who were among five associated with the book, released the statement yesterday following an uproar in social media regarding the issue.

Other authors of the book are: Mohammad Mizanur Rahman Khan,

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