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SECOND EDITION

THE DAILY

Star

ON FRIDAY

DHAKA FRIDAY JANUARY 20, 2023

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXIII No. 7

MAGH 6, 1429 BS

www.thedailystar.net

JAMADIUS SANI 26, 1444 HIJRI

16 PAGES PLUS TOGGLE : Tk 15.00



135 illegal brick kilns in Lalmonirhat, Kurigram



New Zealand PM Ardern announces shock resignation



'Netflix curse' hits Australian Open



\$8.37b injected into market so far in FY23

"We are right now in Davos where (there are) basically the people who are mostly fuelling the destruction of the planet."

Climate activist Greta Thunberg slams attendees of WEF in Davos



EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Anti-bullying policy in sight

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government is at the final stage of introducing a policy to stop bullying and aggressive ragging at educational institutions to ensure that students learn in a safe environment without fear.

A draft prepared by the education ministry will soon be finalised with provisions to form a bullying prevention committee at public and private secondary schools, colleges, universities, madrasas, and technical educational institutions. Qawmi madrasas and English medium schools are not included in the policy.

The draft contains definitions of verbal, physical, and cyber bullying with a proposal for punishing students, teachers, and members of the governing body for indulging in any form of aggressive behaviour that leaves a negative impact on the victims.

Considering the degree of bullying and ragging, criminal cases can be filed against the individuals responsible, according to the draft.

Prof Nehal Ahmed, director general of Directorate of Secondary and Higher

Education, said officials discussed the draft yesterday and will need one or two more meetings to finalise it.

The draft needs some language-related changes, he told The Daily Star after yesterday's meeting at the education ministry.

Several officials proposed at the meeting that English medium schools and Qawmi madrasas should also be included in the policy, two officials told this correspondent.

Educationists say bullying is prevalent at schools, but it goes unreported due to stigma and fear that the victim would not get remedy from authorities. It often leads to devastating consequences that include trouble concentrating on the study, absenteeism, or even dropout.

A Unicef study in 2019 said one in every four students were bullied by their peers in Bangladesh.

Children who are frequently bullied are nearly three times more likely to feel like an outsider at schools, and twice more likely to miss classes compared to those who are not frequently bullied, said the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Residents of many areas in the capital are suffering an acute gas crisis due to an inadequate supply of piped gas. In poor homes where up to 50 families share a single kitchen and must get in line to cook their meals, waiting for gas pressure to rise in the evening is agonising. The photo was taken yesterday at a slum in the capital's Begunbari.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

EQUIPMENT FOR ROOPPUR Russian ship sailing back

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant project faces a fresh setback as the Russian ship carrying equipment for it is now sailing back instead of offloading the tools at West Bengal's Haldia Port.

"The Russian embassy in Dhaka has informed the authorities that the ship is returning to Russia after being unable to offload equipment at Haldia Port," a foreign ministry official told The Daily Star yesterday.

Russian flag carrier URSA MAJOR was supposed to reach Mongla Port on December 24. However, the US embassy in Dhaka informed Bangladesh on December 20 that the vessel was not URSA MAJOR, but Sparta 3, a ship on which the US slapped sanctions over Russian invasion of Ukraine.

After confirming the matter, the Bangladesh authorities refused to let the ship anchor at Mongla Port. The authorities cooperated fully with the shipping agent concerned to make sure that the goods are offloaded in West Bengal and then transported to the power plant in Pabna.

Officials could not say why Sparta 3 could not offload equipment at Haldia Port after waiting there for two weeks till January 16.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

AL abuzz with names for country's next president

Hasina yet to discuss the matter with party high-ups



MASHUR RAHMAN



SHIRIN SHARMIN CHAUDHURY



ABM KHAIRUL HAQUE



AKM MOZAMMEL HUQ



MOSHARRAF HOSSAIN



OBaidul QUADER

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

The most discussed question within the ruling Awami League at the moment is -- who will be the 22nd president of Bangladesh?

This is because a general election is slated for January next year, and the AL rank and file believe someone trustworthy should be holding the president's office during that crucial period.

Though the post of the president is mostly ceremonial -- they are to act as per the advice of the prime minister, except when appointing the premier and the chief justice -- it takes on some significance during polls-time given his say in issuing directives to help the Election

Commission function effectively.

According to section 5 (2) of the Representation of the People's Order, 1972, all executive authorities of the government shall assist the EC in the performance of its functions, and for this purpose, the president may, after consultation with the commission, issue such directions as they may deem necessary.

As of now, there has been no indication from the AL high command about who might succeed Abdul Hamid. Party President Sheikh Hasina is yet to discuss the issue with her colleagues.

This is why several names have come up in the discussions among the AL leaders, activists and beyond. That the matter will have to be

settled during the current session of parliament, set to conclude on February 9, only accelerated the discussion.

An AL candidate will be elected as Hamid's successor, as the party holds the absolute majority in parliament, whose members elect the president.

Out of 350 parliamentary seats, the AL currently has 302, while main opposition Jatiya Party has 26. The Workers Party has four seats; Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh and Gono Forum have two each; Bangladesh Tarikat Federation and Jatiya Party (Manju) have a single seat each; and three remaining seats are occupied by independents.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Humanity was all she believed in

First organ transplantation from brain-dead patient makes history

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-year-old Sara Islam's consent to donate her organs after her death has given new life to four, two with completely damaged kidneys and two without eyesight, in the country's first successful transplantation of organs from a brain-dead patient.

The transplants took place at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, National Kidney Foundation and Sandhani Eye Hospital.

Sara Islam, a rare tumour patient, was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit at BSMMU on Monday as her health deteriorated after undergoing a surgery on her brain tumour in India recently.

Sara had been suffering from tuberous sclerosis, a rare genetic condition that causes mainly non-cancerous tumours to develop in different parts of a patient's body since early childhood.

As her mother consented to donate Sara's organs, surgeons started the transplantation surgeries, known as cadaveric transplantation, after she was declared clinically dead on Wednesday.

"It is a milestone in the medical history of our country. We honour the sacrifice of Sara and her family," Prof Sharfuddin Ahmed, vice-chancellor of BSMMU, told journalists while briefing them on the transplantation yesterday.

The kidney and eye receivers were selected from the databases of eligible patients at BSMMU, the National Kidney Foundation and Sandhani Eye Hospital in Dhaka, authorities said.

Surgeons transplanted the kidneys into Shamima Akter and Hasina Akter at the BSMMU and National Kidney Foundation. Both patients were in their 30s.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Sara Islam

Padma Bridge to get costlier Bridges Division seeks Tk 2,682.13cr more

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The long-cherished Padma bridge is set to cost more after the bridges division sought more funds and time to complete the structure even though it is open to the public since June last year.

At the time of inauguration on June 25 last year, some works, especially river training, a major component of the project, were incomplete.

Now, the bridges division has sought Tk 2,682.13 crore more and an additional year, according to the revision proposal sent yesterday to the Planning Commission for approval.

If the proposal is approved, the bridge, which established a direct connection between the capital and the country's southwest, will end up costing Tk 32,875.51 crore -- more than three times the original estimate.

Project Director Shafiqul Islam cited the increase in the cost of construction materials, depreciation of taka against the dollar, the need for additional money to build power transmission towers and increase in value-added tax and income tax rates due to changes in legislation as the main reasons for the latest round of cost escalation.

The project authorities would need Tk 3,444.89 crore extra but they are clawing back Tk 762.76 crore from several components, including Tk 368.09 crore allocated for resettlement.

Of the sum, Tk 1,665.60 crore would be required for the main bridge, Tk 877.53 crore for river training and Tk 450.29 for consultancy services.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



A mahout makes his elephant stop a three-wheeler in the middle of the Dhaka-Aricha highway in Savar to extort money from the driver and passenger. Using elephants for extortion is common and has been known to be a traffic nuisance for long. However, it is the elephants that suffer the most. Due to their ability to train fast and their friendly nature, people use them for illegal acts and often torture them during training.

Tambru tense as Rohingya groups clash

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Tension has been high along Tambru border in Bandarban as gun battle between two Rohingya militant groups resumed yesterday morning at a refugee camp on the no-man's-land.

Some of the Rohingya people and intelligence officials said a fierce gun battle took place on Wednesday morning between the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO), both of which were trying to take control of Konarpara Rohingya Camp.

The violence has caused the entry of at least 500 Rohingyas to enter Bangladesh and take refuge at a school in Tambru area of Naikhongchhari upazila, said Muhammad Alam, a member of Ghumdhum Union Parishad.

Panicked Rohingyas also entered Myanmar during the gunfight, he added.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN