

Huge sums of money being laundered abroad

Says agri minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A huge amount of money is being laundered from Bangladesh to different countries, including Canada's Begumpara and the UAE's Dubai, said Agriculture Minister Muhammad Abdur Razzaque.

"Anyone now can easily launder money abroad in various ways, including under- and over-invoicing. It should be stopped strictly," he said while addressing a seminar in Dhaka yesterday.

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) organised the seminar titled "Bangladesh Customs: Chariot of Smart Bangladesh Building" at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre on the occasion of "Revenue Conference 2023".

The minister said NBR officials should take decisive action to prevent money laundering from the country.

Razzaque, however, said although revenue has increased a lot in the

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ZERO-LINE CAMP Another 273 Rohingyas relocated to Kutupalong

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 273 more refugees from 53 families were transferred to the Kutupalong transit camp in Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar yesterday, on the second day of relocating the stranded Rohingyas who fled into Bangladesh territory from a zero-line refugee camp amid violence.

With this, a total of 457 Rohingyas from 88 families were relocated from Tambru to the transit camp in two days, confirmed Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) Mohammad Mizanur Rahman.



Palestinian protesters burn tyres to block a road leading into Jericho in the occupied West Bank, yesterday, following a raid in the town by Israeli forces. Israeli troops killed five alleged Palestinian gunmen in the raid, an Israeli official said, after a days-long search for suspects in a shooting near Jericho.

PHOTO: AFP

Russia applies more pressure in Donetsk

Says Zelensky; Ukraine's defence ministry in turmoil

AGENCIES

Fierce battles are raging in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk region as Russia intensifies pressure before the first anniversary of its invasion of Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelensky said.

"Things are very difficult in Donetsk region - fierce battles," Zelenskiy said in his nightly video address on Sunday. "But however difficult it is and however much pressure there is, we must endure ... We have no alternative to defending ourselves and winning."

Russia, he said, was applying increased pressure to "make up for its defeats last year. We see that on various sectors of the front and also pressure in terms of information."

Meanwhile, Ukraine sent mixed messages over the fate of its defence

minister yesterday, leaving a key post in its war effort in doubt even as it braces for a new Russian offensive.

A day after announcing that Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov would be replaced, a top ally of Zelensky appeared to row back for now, saying no personnel changes in the defence sector would be made this week.

David Arakhania, chief of the parliamentary bloc of Zelensky's party, had said Reznikov would be made minister of strategic industries, while the head of military intelligence, Kyrylo Budanov, would take over the defence ministry.

But Zelensky remained silent on the issue, while Reznikov himself said on Sunday he had not been informed of any move, and would reject the strategic industry job if offered it.

The doubt over the minister's fate comes

as Russian forces have been advancing for the first time in half a year in relentless battles in the east. A regional governor said Moscow was pouring reinforcements into eastern Ukraine for a new offensive that could come as soon as next week.

Two senior lawmakers yesterday noted that rules require Ukraine's defence minister to be a civilian, which would appear to put an obstacle in the way of the immediate appointment of Budanov, a 37-year-old military officer.

Removing Reznikov, who has been warmly received in Western capitals including Paris just last week, would be the highest profile reshuffle in a slew of resignations and sackings in recent weeks, some of which followed corruption scandals, reports Reuters.

FARDIN'S DEATH Bushra cleared of all charges

DB submits final report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch of police yesterday submitted the final report of the case filed over the death of Buet student Fardin Noor Parash, clearing Amatullah Bushra of all charges.

DB Inspector Yasin Shikder, also the investigating officer of the case, submitted the report before the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka.

On November 10 last year, Rampura police arrested Bushra, a friend of Fardin, from Banasree area soon after a murder case was filed against her.

She was released from Kashimpur Women's Central Jail on December 10.

Fardin, a third-year student of civil engineering, was found dead in the Shitalakkhya in Narayanganj on November 7, three days after he went missing.

After investigating the incident for over a month, the DB and Rab in December last year said Fardin died by suicide after jumping off a bridge into the river.

UP member arrested for raping garment worker

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday arrested a union parishad member for raping a garment worker in front of her husband in the port city's Sitakunda upazila.

Following a tip-off, a police team conducted a raid in Lalanagar area and arrested Zahed Sultan Chowdhury Robin, 40, a member of Sonaichari union Ward-8, said Sudipta Sarkar, additional superintendent of Chattogram police.

Robin and his two cohorts picked up the 30-year-old and her husband while they were returning home from work around 10:00pm on Saturday. They took the couple to a nearby house and raped the woman several times while her husband was tied to a pole, said Tofayel Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Sitakunda Police Station.

They also took the couple's mobile phones and gold ornaments before fleeing. Police rescued the couple after they called the National Emergency Service around 3:00am.

The woman was sent to the One Stop Crisis Centre of Chattogram Medical College Hospital while her husband filed a case with the station accusing the three.

BPDB seeks

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the Adani Power spokesman said in his written response to The Daily Star.

It is not possible to make any revision to the PPA, said a BPDB official involved in the proceedings, who spoke on the condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter.

"We are getting a discount on the pricing for all the coal-fired plants in our country. But in the deal with Adani, there is no such option. That's why we sought the discount - we want to negotiate," he said.

Contacted, Nasrul Hamid, the state minister for power, energy and mineral resources, said: "Energy will be purchased as per contract."

He declined to elaborate further.

A day earlier, at a media briefing held at the secretariat, Hamid said the coal for the Adani plant will be priced as per the Newcastle Index, the main reference point for physical coal contracts in Asia.

The thermal power plant is expected to be fired by coal imported from the Adani-owned Carmichael coal mine in Australia.

Australian coal at Newcastle Port with an energy value of 5,500 kilocalories per kg (kcal/kg), as assessed by commodity price reporting agency Argus, shipped to \$129.87 a tonne in the week to January 27, the lowest since the week to January 21, 2022, reports Reuters.

The Godda plant would be running on lesser quality coal with an energy value of 4,600 kcal/kg, so its price is expected to be lower.

BPDB is not willing to pay more than what it pays to Payra and Rampal plants for coal, said another official familiar with the discussions.

At present, it pays \$245 per metric tonne for the coal used in the Payra power plant in Patuakhali, \$254.38 for the S Alam power plant in Chattogram's Banskhali and the Rampal power plant in Bagerhat, and \$270 for the Barishal 307MW coal-fired power plant.

A Power Cell estimate in January put the Adani plant's coal price at \$346 per metric tonne.

The PPA signed with Adani Power stipulates that Bangladesh will pay the market price for the coal used to fire the power plant, reports The Washington Post, which got three industry experts to review the confidential 163-page agreement.

Other agreements with foreign power suppliers, also seen by The Post, include clauses that would put a cap on the prices Bangladesh pays if the cost of coal skyrockets.

"Industry analysts say the coal will probably come on Adani ships to an Adani-owned port in eastern India, then arrive at the plant on a stretch of Adani-built rail. The electricity generated will be sent to the border over an Adani-built high-voltage line. Under the contract, shipping and transmission costs will be passed on to Bangladesh," the report added.

Turkey-Syria quake kills 3,000

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He declared seven days of national mourning for the victims of the earthquake. "Our flag will be hoisted at half-mast until sunset on Sunday, February 12, 2023, in all our national and foreign representative offices," Erdogan said in a tweet.

Erdogan also said 45 countries and aid agencies had offered to help the search and rescue efforts. US President Joe Biden yesterday said his administration has been working closely with Turkey, authorising an immediate Washington response to the devastating earthquake there.

The US Geological Survey said the quake struck at a depth of 17.9 km. It reported a series of earthquakes, one of 6.7 magnitude. The region straddles seismic fault lines.

Turkish state broadcaster TRT showed a building collapse in the southern province of Adana after the second quake. It was not immediately clear if it was evacuated.

In Syria, already wrecked by more than 11 years of civil war, the health ministry said more than 1,326 people had been injured. In the Syrian rebel-held northwest, emergency workers said 390 people had died.

The Norwegian Refugee Council said the earthquake would only add to the suffering of millions of Syrians already enduring a humanitarian crisis due to the civil war.

In the Turkish city of Diyarbakir, Reuters journalists saw dozens of rescue workers searching through a mound of debris, all that was left of a big building, and hauling off bits of wreckage as they looked for survivors. Occasionally they raised their hands and called for quiet, listening for sounds of life.

Men carried a girl wrapped in blankets from a collapsed building in the city.

In the Syrian rebel-held town of Jandarisi in Aleppo province, a mound of concrete, steel rods and bundles of clothes lay where a multi-storey building once stood.

"There were 12 families under there. Not a single one came out. Not one," said a thin young man, his eyes wide open in shock and his hand bandaged.

The casualty toll in northwestern Syria was expected to increase, a spokesperson for the UN office for coordinating humanitarian affairs in northwestern Syria said.

Life term for manufacturers

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Replying to a question, Mahubb said the Cabinet Division will issue orders in this regard.

There were five agendas for discussions in yesterday's cabinet meeting.

Mahubb said the issues of clinical trials and side effects of medicines have been incorporated in the draft of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act 2023. "If a medicine is found to be harmful, its registration will be cancelled."

An accused will be handed a maximum punishment of life term for hoarding medicines and creating artificial crisis in the market to make an extra profit, and manufacturing, hoarding and marketing counterfeit medicines, he added.

The cabinet secretary said an accused will be awarded a maximum 10-year rigorous imprisonment or fined up to Tk 10 lakh for manufacturing, marketing, selling and displaying medicines without licence or violating conditions of the licence.

"In the current law, there is no

provision for quality testing for the lot release of vaccines. This has been incorporated in the [proposed] act."

Mahubb said the matters of monitoring and controlling the use of antibiotics were included in the proposed law as the prevention of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has emerged as a big challenge.

He said the proposed law stipulates that if medicines, including antibiotics, are sold without prescriptions, the seller would be fined a maximum of Tk 20,000. "There is a list of medicines for sale over the counter."

The cabinet secretary said as per the proposed act, "medical devices" will be considered medicine.

He said there are now two drug-related laws - Drugs Act-1940 and Drugs (Control) Ordinance-1982 - and those deal only with medicines. "Cosmetics have been covered in the proposed law."

The meeting also gave the final nod to the draft of the Copyright Act-2023, keeping provisions for punishment to check piracy.

Researcher predicted it 3 days back

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jolts of the earthquake.

He predicted that the earthquake would occur with a magnitude of 7.5 in the region.

The quake, felt as far away as Cairo, was centred north of the city of Gaziantep in an about 90 kilometres (60 miles) from the Syrian border.

According to Google Maps, Gaziantep is located approximately 11 hours away from the Aegean Sea region, and 12 hours from Marmara, where a massive earthquake was predicted in December 2022 by an

earthquake expert, according to Turkish newspaper The Daily Sabah.

Tremors were also felt as far away as Greenland, the Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland said. "The large earthquakes in Turkey were clearly registered on the seismographs in Denmark and Greenland," seismologist Tine Larsen told AFP.

"The waves from the earthquake reached the seismograph on the Danish island of Bornholm approximately five minutes after the shaking started," Larsen said.

"Eight minutes after the

earthquake, the shaking reached the east coast of Greenland, propagating further through all of Greenland," she added.

Later, another 7.5-magnitude quake struck southeastern Turkey.

"We have registered both earthquakes - and a lot of aftershocks - in Denmark and Greenland," she said.

Yesterday's quake is the deadliest in Turkey since a 7.4-magnitude one in 1999 when more than 17,000 people died, including about 1,000 in Istanbul.

Population now nearly 17 crore

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rate was 3.97 percent whereas it was 4.98 percent in 2001.

The error rate in rural areas is 2.54 percent and in urban areas is 3.19 percent, said Mohammad Yunus, a senior research fellow at BIDS.

The error rate in urban places is higher than in rural areas because most urban population are not at home during the day.

The country's total male population is 8.40 crore and the female population is 8.56 crore, according to the adjusted BIDS error rate.

This was the sixth population and housing census in the country after the independence, according to Shahanaaz Arefin, secretary of the statistics and informatics division of the planning ministry.

The project related to the census is still ongoing and it will continue until 2024. BBS will publish a total of 133 different reports on the census, she said.

Only two of the reports have so far been published including the one shared yesterday.

Next week BBS will disclose the

final data of the 2022 census based on the BIDS enumeration check, she added.

Shamsul Alam, the state minister for planning, urged BBS to publish its different reports on time so that the government can use those for various purposes.

According to the preliminary report of the Population and Housing Census 2022, the growth rate came down to 1.22 percent from 1.46 percent in 2011.

The rate was 2.84 percent when the second census was conducted in 1981.

Hell was breaking loose

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He is one of the 26 Bangladeshi students residing in Gaziantep, a town in southern Turkey, 50 miles off the earthquake's epicentre in Kahramanmaraş and 150 miles from the Syrian border.

Gaziantep is one of the worst-affected Turkish cities.

"I have experienced earthquakes before, but this one was absolutely terrifying. We are still experiencing aftershocks. After an interval of 15-20 minutes, aftershocks are happening. I have experienced at least 80 aftershocks so far. Even right now, the ceiling is shaking as I am talking to you," Faysal said, sounding frightened.

"It was like the hell was breaking loose. Turkish people were saying Qayamat [doomsday] has begun or Qayamat will be like this."

Faysal said he communicated with other Bangladeshi students living in the city and all of them were safe.

"However, we are not at home. Almost all the buildings in the city have developed some cracks. So,

nobody can predict when a building will collapse. People sought shelter in mosques, city corporation libraries, sports centres, and other buildings for that reason."

Bad weather made things even worse for them.

"Outside, it's bitterly cold, snowing heavily, and it's raining too. It is difficult to stay outside in such a bad weather. I have no idea when I can go back to the dorm," he said.

According to Faysal, people can only reenter apartments after a city corporation inspection.

Food was being served by the city corporation. Besides, school authorities, owners of restaurants, and managers of hotels were providing free food and other necessities. "All are cooperating from their positions and as per their abilities," he added.

BANGLADESHI STUDENT GOES MISSING

A Bangladeshi student went missing in Turkey's Kahramanmaraş province following yesterday's

earthquake.

Mohammed Nore-Alam, consul general of Bangladesh Consulate General in Istanbul, confirmed the matter to The Daily Star in the early hours of today.

He said they received information regarding a university student, Md Rinku, going missing, from another Bangladeshi student.

There are five Bangladeshi students in the Kahramanmaraş province and four of them are safe now, he told this newspaper over the phone.

The consul general added that Nur-e-Alam, also a Bangladeshi student, was with Rinku at a building that was damaged when the earthquake hit.

Although Nur could come out of the building safely, Rinku went missing, he further said.

He also said there are about 30 to 35 Bangladeshis in the Gaziantep province, which is near Kahramanmaraş, but all of them are safe now.