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70% listed firms see profit drop, losses



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Record subsidy allocation not enough

Another Tk 27,360cr to be made available

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The record subsidy allocation of Tk 82,745 crore is set to be topped up with another Tk 27,360 crore in the revised budget in the face of demands from ministries even after the notable price hike of gas, electricity and fuel.

There has been additional subsidy demand of Tk 105,105 crore this fiscal year, shows finance ministry documents prepared for a high-level government meeting in December last year.

But the government is willing to allocate less than a third of the amount sought, according to finance ministry officials with knowledge of the situation.

"We will not entertain all demands," said one of the officials.

So the total subsidy allocation for this fiscal year will end up being a staggering Tk 110,105 crore -- at a time when the government committed to the

International Monetary Fund to bring down subsidy expenditure as part of the \$4.7 billion loan programme.

"We plan to contain spending on subsidies to safeguard priority spending," said Bangladesh Bank Governor Abdur Rouf Talukder and Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal in their letter of intent to the IMF.

In the original budget for this fiscal year, Tk 17,000 crore has been allocated to subsidise electricity generation. Another Tk 32,500 crore was demanded.

Some Tk 6,000 crore has been allocated for liquefied natural gas import in the budget. Petrobangla has sought another Tk 5,000 crore.

The Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, which got no subsidy this fiscal year, has put in a demand for Tk 19,358 crore in fuel subsidies even after the record fuel price hike in August last year.

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Abdulalim Muaini lies under the rubble of his home next to the body of his wife Esra, in the aftermath of a deadly earthquake in Hatay, Turkey. Muaini was rescued yesterday after 48 hours of unimaginable horror. The bodies of his wife and two daughters were also recovered.

PHOTO: REUTERS

No scope to question polls under AL govt PM tells JS



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said no one would get a chance to raise any question about elections under the Awami League government after the recent by-polls to six constituencies and the Rangpur City Corporation election.

Touting those elections as free and fair, Hasina, also the leader of the House, said Jatiya Party has won a

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HSC pass rate falls

Girls fare better than boys

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and ARAFAT RAHAMAN

The rate of success in the HSC examinations dropped to 84.31 percent last year from a record 95.57 percent in 2021.

The dip in pass rate happened because the students had to sit for six more tests this time and they generally performed poorly in English, experts said.

Many students could not access online classes amid pandemic restrictions in 2020 and 2021 and that learning loss was reflected in the results, they added.

The 2021's record high pass rate was possible because the students took tests on an abridged syllabus on three subjects. The following year, they took 12 tests on six subjects.

The latest batch of HSC examinees got less time to prepare for the exams, according to education board officials.

The number of students achieving Grade Point Average 5 fell by 18,767.

All students passed in 1,330 institutions, down from 1,934 the previous year, while no students passed in 50 institutions, up from just 5.

Girls have outperformed boys in terms of pass rate. This has happened for 12 years in a row. Girls also did well in achieving the highest GPA for the second consecutive year.

After receiving the results at her office yesterday morning, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina advised boys to be more attentive to their studies.

Education Minister Dipu Moni unveiled the detailed results at a press conference in

the afternoon.

Last year, 9,69,338 students took the HSC exams between November 6 and December 13.

A total of 1,59,755 students got GPA 5 in 2022, down from 1,78,522 the previous year.

Prof Gazi Ahsan Kamal, chairman of

BOARD	PASS RATE	GPA-5
Dhaka	87.83%	62,421
Rajshahi	81.60%	21,855
Cumilla	90.72%	14,991
Jashore	83.95%	18,703
Chattogram	80.50%	12,670
Barishal	86.95%	7,386
Sylhet	81.40%	4,871
Dinajpur	79.08%	11,830
Mymensingh	80.32%	5,028
Pass Rate: 84.31% GPA-5: 1,59,755		
Girls 86.34% Girls 87,236		
Boys 82.19% Boys 72,519		

Mymensingh Education Board, said, "Many students of remote areas did not have full access to online education. Because of the Covid situation, they were out of the normal education process."

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TURKEY, SYRIA EARTHQUAKE

Anger grows over rescue effort

Rescuers launch appeal for help

AFP, Antakya

Rescuers were still pulling survivors yesterday from the rubble of the earthquake that killed over 12,000 people in Turkey and Syria, even as rescue chances dwindled and victims clamoured for help.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday conceded "shortcomings" after criticism of his government's response to the massive earthquake.

The sprawling scale of the disaster that flattened thousands of buildings, trapping an unknown number of people, has swamped relief operations already hampered by freezing weather.

Survivors have been left to scramble for food and shelter -- and in some cases watch helplessly as their relatives called for rescue, and eventually went silent under the debris.

"My nephew, my sister-in-law and my sister-in-law's sister are in the ruins. They are trapped under

the ruins and there is no sign of life," said Semire Coban, a kindergarten teacher, in Turkey's Hatay.

"We can't reach them. We are trying to talk to them, but they are not responding... We are waiting for help. It has been 48 hours now," she said.

DEATH TOLL 12,049

Still, searchers kept pulling survivors from the debris three days after the 7.8 magnitude quake that is already one of the deadliest this century, even as the death toll continues to rise.

As criticism mounted online, Erdogan visited one of the hardest-hit spots, quake epicentre Kahramanmaraş, and acknowledged problems in the response.

"Of course, there are shortcomings. The conditions are clear to see. It's not possible to be ready for a disaster like this," he said.

Twitter was also not working on Turkish mobile networks, according to AFP journalists and NetBlocks web monitoring group.

The window for rescuers to find survivors is narrowing as the effort nears the 72-hour mark that disaster experts consider the most likely period to save lives.

Yet rescuers pulled children from under a collapsed building yesterday in the hard-hit Turkish province of Hatay, where whole stretches of towns have been levelled.

"All of a sudden we heard voices and thanks to the excavator... immediately we heard the voices of three people at the same time," said rescuer Alperen Cetinkaya.

"We are expecting more of them... the chances of getting

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RESCUE EFFORTS

Bangladesh sends team to Turkey Observes state mourning today

STAR REPORT

A 46 member rescue team left Dhaka last night for Turkey to join the search and rescue operation in the aftermath of Monday's earthquake.

The team includes 24 members from the Bangladesh Army, 10 medical professionals, and 12 personnel from the Fire Service and Civil Defence.

Lt Col Md Ruhul Amin, of the Bangladesh Army, will be in charge of the team, read a press release of the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR).

The team will return to Dhaka on February 15, added the release.

Earlier, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has given instructions to Bangladesh Armed Forces to send a team to Turkey.

A 7.8 magnitude quake claimed over 11,700 lives till yesterday.

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DSA CASE

Poritosh gets 5 years in jail

Convicted of 'hurting religions sentiment thru Facebook post'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Hindu teenager was convicted yesterday under the Digital Security Act in a case filed after the violence that left an entire Hindu fishing village burned to the ground in Rangpur's Pirganj in October 2021.

Poritosh Sarkar, who was a 10th grader at the time, was sentenced to five years in prison for "hurting the religious sentiments" through a derogatory social media post.

However, as of now, no evidence has been found that Poritosh had made any such derogatory post as his phone was broken beyond repair and the Criminal Investigation Department of police was unable to conduct forensic tests on it.

This is the first conviction concerning the communal violence that left over 60 Hindu homes razed.

Not only has nobody else been convicted, but most of those accused in another case of attacking the village are out on bail, while the rest are on the run, according to the Pirganj Police Station.

Poritosh was sentenced under section 31(l) of the DSA which criminalises the publication of anything that "creates enmity, hatred or hostility among different

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Girls have outperformed boys in terms of getting the best grades and passing the last year's HSC exams. The photo of girls celebrating their stellar results was taken at Rajuk Uttara Model College in the capital after the results were published yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

LPG sellers indulging in profiteering

Says consumer rights body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A number of companies involved in importing liquefied petroleum gas and selling it to distributors are making profits illegally by selling at a rate higher than the one fixed by the energy regulator, found the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection (DNCRP).

"We found a chaotic situation in the LPG market," AHM Shafiquzzaman, director general of the Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection, told a meeting of the importers, dealers and retailers.

The Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) has fixed the price of the 12-kg LPG cylinder, the most common form of marketing the fuel, at Tk 1,498 for February.

"We found the 12-kg cylinder selling for

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12KG LPG CYLINDER
BERC-fixed price Tk 1,498
SELLING PRICE
Importers Tk 1,520-1,532
Dealers Tk 1,550-1,600
Retailers Tk 1,700-1,800