

Apply innovative ideas to build a smart Bangladesh

PM tells BCS officers

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the BCS officers to utilise their innovative power and talents in building a smart Bangladesh.

The premier was addressing the certificate-awarding and closing ceremony of the 74th foundation training course of BCS officers at her office in the city.

She said the country witnessed a radical change in a short period and asked the new officers to continue this development trend.

Hasina said they will build the country as a smart Bangladesh by 2041 through making the population, economy and all social systems smart.

She described the fresh officers as the soldiers in the implementation of the "2041 Smart Bangladesh" vision as they will go to higher posts in the government services gradually in future.

The premier reiterated her call to the countrymen to show austerity in using resources including electricity, water and gas as it is not known when the Russia-Ukraine war will stop.

The price of every commodity and transport cost went up throughout the world due to the sanctions and counter-sanctions, she said.

The PM asked the administration to promote austerity in the use of resources and raise food production in the country to offset the global crisis.



Despite repeated accidents, the situation at rail crossings stays the same. People continue to ignore rules just to save some time. While visiting Dhaka Airport Railway Station yesterday, this photojournalist witnessed the chaos firsthand. Clockwise from left, commuters cross a rail track at the station despite a train approaching from a distance. Even though pathways exist for passengers, time and again, they choose a shortcut by getting on the tracks to reach other platforms. Sometimes, they even stand beyond the rail crossing and dangerously close to moving trains.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

'Choosing control over protection'

Speakers tell webinar on draft Personal Data Protection Act

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The draft Personal Data Protection Act will lead more towards the control of citizens' data as opposed to its protection, said speakers at an online discussion yesterday.

"The draft law can be a threat to people's right to privacy," said Saimum Reza Talukder, senior lecturer at the School of Law, Brac University, adding that there is a risk of this law being used against critics of the government and those expressing difference of opinion.

The discussion was organised by the Forum for Bangladesh Studies.

He also commented that the law can threaten the cyber security of the state because it does not clearly define how it will ensure which of the different government organisations will have access to what category of data.

Talukder also commented on how the law promises the officers charged with implementing the law indemnity and protection from prosecution, stating, "In the eyes of law, everybody is the same."

Senior journalist Kamal Ahmed commented that the law is more about protecting the interests of the state and the government, protecting the state's sovereignty and cracking down on crime.

"It is less about the protection of personal data. While trying to prioritise security, the law overlooked the rights of the citizens," added Kamal.

"Where is the guarantee that power will not be abused?" he asked.



The law can threaten the cyber security of the state because it does not clearly define how it will ensure which of the different government organisations will have access to what category of data.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Ensure anyone can file case to save environment

Recommends JS body

RASHIDUL HASAN

A parliamentary body yesterday recommended bringing an amendment to the "Environment Court Act" so that any citizen of the country can file a case over environmental damage, pollution, and different forms of irregularities.

The parliamentary standing committee on the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change also recommended adjusting the amount of fine to the gravity of environmental harm.

"Under the existing law, aggrieved citizens cannot just file cases over environmental damage, pollution or irregularities on their own. They need to do so through the Department of Environment, after getting permission of its director general," Saber Hossain Chowdhury, chief of the parliamentary body, told The Daily Star after emerging from the meeting.

The meeting was held at the DoE office in the capital's Agargaon. Saber, also an Awami League lawmaker, said the parliamentary watchdog has recommended dropping the provision of taking permission from the DoE's director general before filing a case.

About increasing fines, Saber said at present, the amount of fine is not proportional to the gravity of polluting the environment. Therefore, polluters prefer just paying the fine rather than addressing the issue.

For example, the committee chief said an owner of a tannery industry used to save Tk 5 to 10 lakh by shutting down the effluent treatment plant of his factory, as he only had to pay around Tk 20,000 for this crime.

ISSUES

Citizens need to go through DoE to file case

Fine not proportional to gravity of harm

Amount of compensation doesn't reflect damage

PROPOSALS

Dropping provision of taking DoE permission

Determining protocol, rule to fix compensation

"We have recommended the adjustment so that the fine can be in line with the intensity of the crime of polluting the environment," he said.

The parliamentary standing committee also recommended imposing compensation relative to the harm done to the environment. "At present, there is no clear cut instruction about how to fix the amount of compensation. We have recommended determining a protocol and rule in this regard."

The meeting was also informed that in the last 13 years, the Directorate of Enforcement has imposed compensation of Tk 484.75 crore from 11,883 organisations.

Environment Minister Md Shahab Uddin and State Minister for Environment Habibun Nahar were present at the meeting among others.

HC blasts govt for failing to curb air pollution

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday blasted all departments concerned of the government for their failure to curb air pollution in Dhaka despite its repeated directives.

The HC bench of Justice KM Kamrul Kader and Justice Mohammad Ali, while hearing a writ petition, said water is not spread sufficiently to reduce air pollution, and the mosquito menace continues.

"The two city corporations in Dhaka must look into this situation. The police will also have to take proper and adequate action to stop the emission of black smoke from vehicles and plying old vehicles expiring tenure," the court said.

The bench ordered the Department of Environment (DoE) to immediately shut down all the illegal brick kilns in Dhaka and surrounding five districts - Gazipur, Narayanganj, Munshiganj, Gazipur and Manikganj.

It recommended legal action against the kiln owners and ordered DoE to submit a report after complying with the directives in two weeks.

Lawyer Manzill Murshid appeared for the petitioner, while DAG Abdullah Al Mahmud Bashir and lawyer Amatul Karim Swarna represented the government and DoE, respectively, and lawyer Zobair Hossain Sajib stood for DSCC during the hearing.

Khaleda seriously ill: physician

She will do politics when time comes, says Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia is seriously ill, said her physician AZM Zahid Hossain yesterday.



Hossain, also vice chairman of the party, said the medical board will get the reports today and then the next course of action would be taken.

He came up with the remarks while talking to reporters in front of Khaleda's house after the BNP chief reached home from the city's Evercare Hospital.

Amid the controversy surrounding whether she will be able to engage in active politics, she went to the hospital for health check-up. The former premier reached the hospital at 5:30pm as

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

'We want global focus on Rohingyas'

Says Canadian Minister Harjit Sajjan; Momen invites Trudeau to Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Canada wants to bring the global focus back on the Rohingyas so that Myanmar takes the right measures to create conducive conditions so that the Rohingyas sheltered in Bangladesh can return to Myanmar safely, said Canadian Minister for International Development Harjit S Sajjan.



"When it is safe, they [Rohingyas] can go back home. Canada will be a strong supporter of Bangladesh," he said.

The minister went on to say, "We have increased our pressure on the Myanmar military. We support the Rohingya genocide case at the International Court of Justice. We also sanctioned Myanmar and now exploring new opportunities to bring back the focus of the Myanmar military regime."

Sajjan made the remarks after holding a

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Three more hospitalised with dengue

UNB, Dhaka

Three more people were hospitalised with dengue in 24 hours till yesterday morning, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Twenty six dengue patients, including 10 in the capital, are now receiving treatment at hospitals across the country.

So far, the DGHS has recorded 730 dengue cases, 695 recoveries, and nine deaths this year.



Workers installing underground cables on Satmasjid Road in Lalmatia yesterday. Dhaka Power Distribution Company (DPDC) is conducting the work.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

TIPU MURDER

DB gets 10th date to submit probe report

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday again asked the Detective Branch (DB) of police to submit by April 16 the probe report in the murder case filed over the deaths of Awami League leader Jahidul Islam Tipu and college student Samia Afran Jamal Prity in Dhaka on March 24 last year.

Investigators have now taken 10 dates to complete the investigation into the murders.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Rajesh Chowdhury passed the order after Md Yasin Sikder, a DB inspector and also the investigation officer of the case, failed to submit any report yesterday.

Migration crucial for country's development

Bangladesh needs to look at it as 'thrust sector', speakers tell dialogue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh needs to closely examine the challenges and opportunities of migration, considering it as a thrust sector, and work to leverage them for a smooth transition from its status of a least developed country (LDC), said participants at a dialogue yesterday.

They said migration remains a key tool for the country's development, as remittance significantly contributes to the gross domestic product (GDP), which is crucial for the transition to the status of a middle income country by 2026.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) organised the daylong dialogue on "Migration in Bangladesh: Contribution Towards

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

PRAYER TIMING
FEBRUARY 28

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5-15 12-45 4-30 6-05 7-30
JAMAAT 5-50 1-15 4-45 6-10 8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION