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## MYMENSINGH PM to open 23 projects today

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is set to inaugurate 23 projects worth Tk 570 crore during her visit to Mymensingh today.



The projects, among others, include four-storey academic buildings in 21 schools and colleges, sanitation in 32 municipalities, Sheikh Kamal indoor stadium, and five bridges.

The premier will also lay the foundation stones of 14 more development projects in the district.

The projects worth Tk 2,762 crore include the development of the road and drainage network of Mymensingh, and the construction of seven regional offices for Bangladesh Public Service Commission.

Meanwhile, leaders and activists of the Awami League and its associate bodies in Mymensingh are preparing for the PM's visit.

The city's streets and alleys have already been decorated with banners, festoons, and billboards to receive Hasina, also the AL president.

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A private organisation had filled this part of the Turag river near Birulia bridge in Savar. The BIWTA excavator is removing the soil from there to recover the area. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## No robber held yet over looting of Tk 11.25cr Tk 3.89cr recovered so far

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The heist of Tk 11.25 crore in Turag area on Thursday is still shrouded in mystery as none of the robbers has been arrested or identified yet.

Police are yet to recover the full amount as they only found about Tk 3.89 crore after seizing three out of four trunks used for carrying the money to ATMs.

On Thursday evening, without opening the trunks, Detective Branch chief Harun or Rashid told reporters that the majority of the looted money was recovered and he assumed it could be about Tk 9 crore.

"We have recovered most of the money, which could be over Tk 9 crore, though we haven't opened the trunks yet. Because, we will bring those who got the keys and then open the trunks. Since three of the four trunks are here, we hope around Tk 9 crore could be inside those," he said at press briefing in front of the Le Méridien hotel in Khilkhet.

But when the trunks were opened at Turag Police Station, officials found Tk 3,89,50,000. Turag Police Station

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## NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS Xi handed third term as China's president

AFP, Beijing

Xi Jinping was handed a third term as Chinese president yesterday, capping a rise that has seen him become the country's most powerful leader in generations.



His appointment by China's parliament comes after Xi locked in another five years as head of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in October.

Since then, the 69-year-old has weathered widespread protests over his zero-Covid policy and the deaths of countless people after its abandonment.

But those issues have been avoided at this week's National People's Congress (NPC), a carefully choreographed event that is also set to appoint Xi ally Li Qiang as the new premier.

Yesterday, delegates handed Xi a third term as president and re-appointed him head of the country's Central Military Commission in a unanimous vote.

Beijing's Great Hall of the People, a cavernous state building on the edge of Tiananmen Square, was adorned with crimson carpets and banners for the landmark vote, with a military band providing background music.

A digital monitor on the edge of the stage proclaimed the final tally -- all 2,952 votes had been cast in favour of giving Xi another term in office.

The announcement was followed by delegates' fervent declarations of allegiance to the Chinese constitution, in a demonstration of loyalty and unanimity.

Xi held up his right fist and placed his left hand on a

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## GOVT'S AMAN PROCUREMENT

# Only 28pc of target achieved in Pabna

Officials blame syndicate of millers, traders

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

The government's Aman procurement drive in Pabna did not go ahead as planned as it achieved only 28 percent of its procurement target.

A syndicate of mill owners and traders is behind the poor result of the drive, said food department sources.

Millers claimed that they could not sign contracts with the government because of poor price. On top of that, many millers who signed contracts did not supply rice.

The food department, however, has achieved 80 percent of its procurement target across the country, said officials.

The office of the food controller in Pabna already issued show-cause notices to 469 husking mills and 14 auto rice mills for not supplying rice.

There are 575 licenced husking mills and 19 auto rice mills in the district. Only 92 mills -- 87 husking mills and five auto rice mills -- have inked contacts with the government.

The Aman paddy and rice procurement drive started on November 17 and ended on March 7.

The government had a target of procuring 12,786 tonnes of rice and 3,914 tonnes of paddy through 11

depots in Pabna.

The government fixed the purchase price of paddy at Tk 28 per kg, and that of rice at Tk 42 per kg, said officials at the food controller's office in Pabna.

"We have collected only 3,629 tonnes of rice, which is 28 percent of the target amount of 12,786 tonnes. Even after sending notices repeatedly, some millers did not supply rice," said Muhammad Tanvir Rahman, district food controlling officer.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Idris Ali Bishwas, president of Husking Millers Association in Pabna, said millers refused to enter contracts with the government because of pricing issues.

"The production cost of each kg rice is Tk 43. It is impossible to supply rice to the government at Tk 42 per kg. If we supply rice at the government-fixed price, we will have to incur huge losses."

Idris, a major rice trader in Pabna, himself didn't enter a contract with the government.

Food Controller Muhammad Tanvir Rahman, however, said they could not meet the procurement target because of the millers' negligence.

"We are preparing to take legal actions against the rice millers and

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## It's up to court to decide

Says Quader about whether Khaleda can do politics

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It is up to the court to decide whether BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will be able to take part in politics and polls, said Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday.

"Using executive power, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has suspended Khaleda Zia's sentence on humanitarian grounds. It does not mean her sentence has been cancelled. She is still a convict," he said.

Quader made the statements while talking to journalists after attending an event organised by Haji Muhammad Mohsin Hall Alumni Association at Dhaka University.

The event was organised on the occasion of the golden jubilee of DU's Haji Muhammad Mohsin Hall and the reunion of the hall's alumni.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges

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## Seoul is building biggest spokeless Ferris wheel

CNN ONLINE

South Korea's capital is adding another feature to its skyline in 2027 -- the "Seoul Ring," a 180-metre (591-foot) spokeless Ferris wheel.



The Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) announced the attraction would be located in Haneul Park in the city's northeast.

Spokeless Ferris wheels are a relatively new development. Normally, Ferris wheels have cables running through the middle, but over the last few years, technology has evolved to enable the cars to rotate without them.

In addition to being close to the World Cup stadium, the wheel will be set near the Han River in a spot known for its beautiful views of the city.

In a press release announcing the wheel project, the Seoul government stated the wheel's location in Haneul (Korean for "sky") Park was chosen for various reasons, namely its proximity to the country's northern border.

"Since the park is geographically close to North Korea, the SMG will concentrate its desire and wishes for a unified Korea and national unity on the Ring."

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## INDO-BANGLA PIPELINE Transportation cost to be cut by almost half

Says Nasrul Hamid; now it costs \$11.5 per barrel to bring fuel from India

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Once operational, the Bangladesh-India Friendship Pipeline will effectively ensure power and energy security in the country's northern region, said State Minister for Power, Energy, and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid.

"It [the pipeline] will be a milestone in providing quick and uninterrupted fuel supply to the northern region of the country in a cost-effective manner," the state minister said yesterday while inspecting the progress of the pipeline under construction in Dinajpur's Parbatipur.

Bangladesh has so far been importing diesel from India through railway carriages and wagons.

Nasrul said now diesel imports through the pipeline will bring the per-barrel price down from the current \$11.50 to \$6.

"One of the main conditions of

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PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Farmers using a self-made tool to water their watermelon plants in Gangarampur village of Khulna's Batiaghata upazila. Due to the high salinity of the soil in the coastal region, the farmers go to the nearest deep tube wells -- sometimes kilometres away from their farmland -- from where they get fresh water through pipes. They then attach the pipes to small wicker baskets, and the water flows from the gaps in those. Farmers have been using this method to ensure the equal spread of water over each spot. The photo was taken yesterday.

## ROHINGYA RETURN

# Myanmar steps up verification amid global pressure

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Amid global pressure on the Myanmar junta, their authorities are now showing a positive attitude towards the Rohingya repatriation as they have stepped up the verification of their citizens in recent weeks, say officials at the Bangladesh foreign ministry.

Also, the junta government on March 8 arranged a visit for ambassadors from ASEAN countries and Bangladesh, India, and China to Maundaw region of Rakhine to assess the situation for Rohingya repatriation.

The group of diplomats was led by U Ko Ko Hlaing, deputy chairman of the Rakhine State Stability and Development Coordination Committee-1 and also the union minister of the Ministry of International Cooperation, reports Burma News International from Myanmar.

The diplomats reportedly inspected the Nga Khu Ra reception centre and the Hla Pho Khaung transit camp in

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