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## Continued democracy key factor in country's dev

### Says PM; hands over Swadhinata Padak

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said Bangladesh's unprecedented development has been possible due to unhindered democratic process since 2008.

"The democratic process in the country continued unhindered after the Awami League came to power through winning the 2008 national election. The development that is being seen now has been possible for this," she said.

The PM was addressing the handover ceremony of Swadhinata Padak 2023 at the capital's Osmani Memorial Auditorium yesterday.

Nine individuals and one institution were given the highest civilian award in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the country.

Hasina said that democracy in the

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina poses for a photo with this year's Swadhinata Padak (Independence Award) recipients at the capital's Osmani Memorial Auditorium yesterday. Nine individuals and one institution got the award in recognition of their contributions to the country.

PHOTO: BSS

## WHOLESALE MARKET

### 4 firms to sell chicken at Tk 190-195 a kg in Ramadan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four major chicken producers yesterday announced that they will sell broiler chicken for Tk 190-195 a kg at the gates of their farms during Ramadan.

The announcement came after the Directorate of National Consumers Right Protection (DNCRP) summoned representatives of the farms to explain why the prices of broiler chicken were "unreasonably high".

The four, Kazi Farms Ltd, CP Bangladesh, Aftab Bahumukhi Farms Ltd, and Paragon Poultry and Hatchery Ltd, have been selling broiler chicken at Tk 220 to Tk 230 a kg at the gates of their farms over the last two weeks.

At the kitchen markets of Dhaka over the last few days, each kg of broiler chicken was being sold for Tk 280-300.

AHM Shafiquzzaman, director general of DNCRP, said retail prices will fall by Tk 35-40 soon.

After attending a meeting at the DNCRP, Kazi Zahedul Hasan, managing director of the Kazi Farms, said broiler chicken will be sold at Tk 190-195 per kg at the gate of the farm during Ramadan.

According to a DNCRP report, the price of a kg of broiler chicken should

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## POWER GENERATION UP TO 100MW

### DoE eases curbs on coal, gas-run plants

#### Environmentalists slam the decision

MOSTAFA YOUSUF

The Department of Environment in its new Environmental Conservation Rules has exempted small coal and gas power plants from Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), raising concerns among environmentalists.

Under the Environmental Conservation Rules (ECR)-2023, gazetted on March 5, coal-fired power plants having a capacity of up to 50MW and gas-fired plants having a capacity of up to 100MW will no longer require EIA.

These two types of power plants have been put under the orange category.

In the previous ECR of 1997, all power plants were placed under the red category, meaning there was a legal binding for all electricity producers to prepare an EIA and an Environmental Management Plan (EMP).

With the introduction of the new ECR, plants will no longer require to put such mechanism in place to check pollution from their operations.

Under the previous ECR, any business placed under the red category must prepare a Terms of Reference for conducting an EIA, take stakeholders' opinion in preparing the EIA, assess the quality of air, water, and soil of its location, and fill up the form-06 for

declaration that it will stick to its plan to check pollution.

Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air, a Europe-based research platform which analysed pollution from coal based power plants in Bangladesh, found that coal combustion releases toxic substances like sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, mercury, and fly ash which can significantly harm the human respiratory system, trigger acid rain, and cause mercury deposition in the soil.

**"All power plants must be in the red category regardless of their production capacity."**

Syeda Rizwana Hasan  
Chief Executive of BELA

Bangladesh already been enduring the worst air quality which is responsible for the deaths of 200,000 people every year, shows World Bank data.

DoE Director (environment clearance) Masud Iqbal Md

Shameem, who was involved in preparing the ECR-2023 draft, said that there was no difference between the large and small power plants in the previous ECR.

"Though they [small plants] will not require an Environmental Impact Assessment, they will have to follow the emissions standard stipulated in the new Environmental Conservation Rules. The emission standards will remain unchanged, but they won't have to submit an Environmental Impact Assessment report," he added.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive

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## Holy month of Ramadan begins

BSS, Dhaka

The holy month of Ramadan of 1444 Hijri begins today in the country.

The decision was made at a meeting of the National Moon Sighting Committee at the conference room of Islamic Foundation at the Baitul Mukarram National Mosque yesterday, read an Islamic Foundation press release.

As per its decision, the holy Shabe-Qadr or Lailatul Qadr, the night when the first verses of the holy Quran were revealed to Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), will be observed on the night of April 18.

President M Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued separate messages greeting the countrymen and all Muslim Ummah across the world with the advent of the holy month of Ramadan.

President Abdul Hamid in his message said, "The holy month of Ramadan filled with blessings (Barkat) has come again after a year. This holy month brings a unique opportunity of getting closer to Allah and attaining taqwa (fear of Allah)".

Noting that the whole Muslim

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SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING			
RAMADAN	MARCH	SEHRI	IFTAR
1	24		6:14
2	25	4:38	6:15
3	26	4:36	6:15

## Bogura judge withdrawn after school incident

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Additional District and Sessions Judge Begum Rubaiya Yeasmin was withdrawn from Bogura yesterday and attached to the law ministry for forcing the mother of a student in the district to touch her feet and beg forgiveness.

The government took the step in consultation with Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique.

Law and Justice Division Secretary Md Golam Sarwar told The Daily Star that the ministry received an allegation against Rubaiya Yeasmin from its own capacity and media reports and took the decision.

He said Rubaiya Yeasmin now cannot carry out judicial functions or any work at the ministry though she will get her salary and other financial benefits. A notification has already been issued to this effect.

Supreme Court Registrar General Md Golam Rabbani told this correspondent that Rubaiya Yeasmin has been withdrawn from Bogura following an instruction from the chief justice.

The law ministry had sent a letter to the Supreme Court for a decision from the chief justice after receiving the allegation against the judge, he added.

Rubaiya Yeasmin's daughter is an eighth grader of Bogura Government Girls' High School.

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## Oldest known Hebrew Bible displayed in Israel



AFP, Tel Aviv

The oldest known near-complete Hebrew Bible was presented to the press on Wednesday in Tel Aviv, where it will be displayed for a week before going under the hammer in New York.

The Codex Sassoon is one of only two codices, or manuscripts, containing all 24 books of the Hebrew Bible -- the Christian Old Testament -- to have survived into the modern era and is estimated to be 1,100 years old.

Sharon Mintz, a specialist in Jewish texts at Sotheby's, the auction house selling the codex in May, said carbon dating and other forms of analysis showed the Codex Sassoon "was written around the year 900, either in the land of Israel or Syria".

A deed shows the book was sold in 1000 AD, and the codex was then held in a synagogue in what is now northeastern Syria until around 1400, she said.

"The manuscript then disappears for about 500 years, and re-emerges in 1929 when it was offered for sale to David Solomon Sassoon, one of the greatest collectors of Hebrew manuscripts."

## BHANGA-PAYRA PORT RAIL LINE

### Chinese firm keen to invest, build it

Sends proposal to railways ministry; its team to meet minister next week

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

A state-run Chinese company has proposed investing and constructing the Bhangra-Payra Port rail line on a public-private partnership model.

Power Construction Corporation of China, also known as Powerchina, expressed its interest in signing a memorandum of understanding immediately so that it can start the preparatory work for the over 214km line which may cost more than Tk 50,000 crore.

Gong Youchen, director (transportation, housing and urban development division) of Powerchina Bangladesh, wrote to Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan early this month in this regard, said sources.

The railways ministry on Wednesday sought opinion from Bangladesh Railway. A Powerchina delegation is expected to hold a meeting with the minister next week, they added.

Confirming the development, BR Director General Quamrul Ahsan told The Daily Star yesterday that they were preparing their opinion.

Over the last two-three years, several state-run Chinese companies proposed either the railways ministry or the BR about investing in over a dozen projects, including high-speed rail between Dhaka and Chattogram.

But those proposals are yet to make any visible progress and a top BR official termed those "futile attempts".

The new Chinese proposal comes at a time when the BR is implementing its biggest ever project, Padma Bridge Rail Link, at a cost of Tk 39,246 crore under a Bangladesh-China government-to-

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**THE CROWNED 'KING OF BIRDS' ...** A Eurasian Hoopoe, also known as Hudhud, rummaging the ground for some grubs and insects to eat in Gangarampur of Khulna's Batiaghata upazila. This exotic looking bird is native to Europe, Asia and much of Africa, and winters in the northern part of its range. Known for its bright colours and distinctive head crown, the hoopoe generally has prerequisites when choosing its habitat -- one is the need for vertical surfaces with cavities to nest in such as trees, cliffs, and even walls, and the second is the need for lightly vegetated grounds for them to forage. While many may think the hoopoe is just another attractive bird, it actually has historical significance in Islam. The word "Hudhud" is said to appear twice in the Holy Quran and is mentioned as the messenger and envoy of Hazrat Sulaiman (AS) in Surah Al-Naml. Known as an intelligent bird, it was also referred to in "The Conference of the Birds", a Persian poem by Attar of Nishapur, as the "king of birds", perhaps owing to its gorgeous crest.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## Rahul gets 2 yrs in jail for Modi remark

AGENCIES

A lower court in India yesterday sentenced opposition leader Rahul Gandhi to two years in jail on charges of defamation for a 2019 speech in which he referred to thieves as having the surname Modi.

Gandhi will appeal against the order in a higher court, but any jailing for him or his disqualification from parliament would be a blow to his Congress party ahead of the 2024 general election, which Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party is widely expected to win.

The judgment was passed by a magistrate's court in the city of Surat, located in Modi's home state of Gujarat. The case was brought by a Gujarat lawmaker from Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Gandhi, the 52-year-old scion of the Nehru-Gandhi political dynasty, was present at the Surat court,

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