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Dhaka to host Indian Ocean Conference

PM to inaugurate two-day event tomorrow

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka will host the sixth edition of the Indian Ocean Conference on May 12-13 that will bring high-level government delegations and think tanks from at least 25 countries to discuss cooperation among the regional countries.

Mauritius President Prithvirajsing Roopun, Maldives Vice President Faisal Naseem, Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, among others, will attend the conference that will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at a city hotel.

Apart from them, foreign ministers of Bhutan, Nepal, Bahrain and Singapore; ministers of other portfolios from Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Madagascar; state ministers from Japan, Cambodia, Australia and the United Arab Emirates; deputy ministers from Somalia, Vietnam and high-level delegations from the Philippines, the US, Iran, Kuwait, Oman, Thailand and Germany and representatives from D-8, Saarc and BIMSTEC will also participate in it.

Hasina will also host a dinner in honour of the guests of the conference

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PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Activists form a human chain near Abahani field yesterday night to protest the recent tree felling on Saat Masjid Road. Holding up banners and posters that highlighted the importance of preserving nature, they sent a strong message that development cannot come at the cost of nature.

SAAT MASJID ROAD DSCC mayor 'apologises' for tree felling

Says they had no other option; protesters say 'sorry' not enough

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Termining the felling of trees on Saat Masjid Road unfortunate, DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh yesterday said at times, trees have to be felled for development.

"We are sorry if people are hurt," he said while speaking to reporters at an event in Lalbagh. "We only cut trees when there are no alternatives. More trees will be planted in places where trees were felled," he added. The mayor continued, "I've been in the office for three years. Two lakh trees have already been planted by us during the tenure."

Environmental activists have been continuing their protest against the felling of trees by DSCC for road development work on Saat Masjid Road in Dhanmondi. They allege that 600 trees have already been cut in the area.

Denouncing the mayor's statement, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, said, "We demand a declaration from the mayor that no more trees will be felled, not only on Saat Masjid Road, but everywhere in the city."

Coordinator of Saat Masjid Road Tree Protection Movement Amirul Rajiv said, "We heard the mayor said sorry for the tree cutting. But sorry isn't enough after cutting over 600 trees."

"It won't bring back the trees. We don't accept his apology," he added.

Transition to 'electric mobility' a timely need

Experts tell workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh should accelerate the transition to electric mobility in public transport as electric vehicles present a viable solution to significantly reduce vehicle emissions in cities and reduce reliance on fossil fuel imports for transport, said experts at an event yesterday.

With the transport sector responsible for approximately 25 percent of global CO2 emissions, decarbonisation is crucial to achieving the Paris Agreement's objectives to limit global warming to well below 2°C compared to pre-industrial levels, they added.

They were speaking at a sub-regional meeting and capacity workshop on accelerating the transition to electric mobility in Asia and the Pacific at a city hotel.

Electric mobility uses one or more electric motors to generate transportation. Currently, this type of mobility offers solutions for small trips and low weight (with bicycles, scooters and electric motorcycles) as well as long trips and heavy weight (with electric public transport vehicles).

Electric vehicles do not emit any greenhouse gases, so there is no atmospheric pollution. In addition, they make virtually no noise, eliminating noise pollution as well, said speakers.

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for

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“ We believe that the most significant opportunities lie in the 2/3-wheeler and public transport sectors, as they make economic sense and serve the majority. ”

DANDAN CHEN
World Bank Operations
Manager

BRTC to expand its fleet

To procure 440 new buses including 100 electric ones

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) is set to buy 440 new buses, including 100 electric buses for the first time in the country, to enhance and upgrade its services in Dhaka, Chattogram and different inter-district routes.

The state-run transport agency has initiated two projects worth Tk 2,287.7 crore to purchase the new buses, with all the buses scheduled to be operational by June 2024.

BRTC currently owns a fleet of 1,350 buses, with 1,250 in operation and the remaining under repair works. BRTC offers city and inter-district bus services in Bangladesh.

In 2019, the government procured 600 buses and 500 trucks from India, with loans from the Indian government, to assist BRTC in improving its service and reviving its financial condition.

BRTC had received negative publicity for the early demise of its buses due to a lack of skilled mechanics, spare parts, and inadequate maintenance.

BRTC officials have stated that the agency has submitted a proposal to the Road Transport and Bridges Ministry to purchase 100 double-decker electric buses, along with necessary charging stations and 15 percent spare parts.

The project is expected to cost Tk



80 electric buses to ply Dhaka roads, 20 in Ctg

Project worth Tk 1,154.25cr

BRTC owns 1,350 buses

Currently 1,250 in operation

1154.25 crore, with the duration being July 2023 to June 2025. The Indian government will provide a loan for the project.

However, the Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday stated that the country's first electric buses will be introduced in November this year, with 80 buses being operated in the capital and 20 in Chattogram.

But sources mentioned that it would be difficult to launch the service by November, as several preparatory works, including project approval,

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STEEL MILL BLAST

All 7 injured workers die of their wounds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One more worker who suffered burn injuries in an explosion at a steel mill in Narayanganj's Rupganj upazila on May 4, died in a hospital in Dhaka yesterday.

With 28 percent burns on his body, Ibrahim Hawlader, 34, breathed his last around 9:00am while being treated at the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery, said Inspector Bachchu Miah, in charge of DMCH police outpost.

With him, all the seven injured workers of Rahima Industrial Complex Limited Steel Mill died. On May 4, the incident took place around 4:00pm when around 15 workers were working.

Suddenly, the explosion took place in the furnace, spilling molten iron on the bodies of at least seven workers, said Shafiqul Islam, factory supervisor.

They were rushed to the burn institute, where Shankar, one of the injured workers, was declared dead.

Others succumbed to their injuries at different times. They are: Jewel, 25, Golan Rabbi, 35, Elias alias Yeasin, 35, Niyon, 20, Alamgir, 33 and Ibrahim.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES 'We must advance their rights'

Say speakers; USAID, MJF launch 'Project Ekota'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To empower persons with disabilities by increasing their ability to fight for their rights and end stigma and discrimination, the Ekota (unity) project was launched by USAID and Manusher Jonno Foundation yesterday in the capital's Brac Centre Inn.

Speakers said this project will escalate access for persons with disabilities to legal assistance, education, and other public services, particularly for women and girls.



Ashraf Ali Khan Khasru, state minister for social welfare, said, "The government is particularly keen on advancing the rights of people with disabilities. Their causes are given special attention by the prime minister."

"All new infrastructure is being constructed with their unique requirements. The laws and regulations associated with persons with disabilities must be followed and put into practice," he added.

"Ekota" is a cooperative agreement between USAID and MJF, awarded in November 2022. The

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Stop financing fossil fuel

CPD urges G7 countries ahead of 49th summit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) yesterday called for global initiatives to stop financing fossil fuel-based power projects immediately and to emphasise the investment in renewable energy.

The think tank also urged global leaders to support Bangladesh technically and financially to meet the ambitious target to convert 40 percent of its total energy sources into renewables by 2040.

CPD organised a dialogue at a city hotel ahead of the 49th G7 Summit, which is scheduled to be held on May 19 to 21 in Japan's Hiroshima. The US, UK, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan are the members of G7.

"G7 countries should stop investment in coal and LNG (liquefied natural gas) based

“ G7 countries should stop investment in coal and LNG based projects in developing countries like Bangladesh. LNG should not be used as a long-term transitional fuel. LNG should not be used as a long-term transitional fuel. ”

KHONDAKER GOLAM MOAZZEM
Research director, CPD

projects in developing countries like Bangladesh. LNG should not be used as a long-term transitional fuel," said Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director at CPD. In the keynote paper, he said, "The commitments [to phasing out the fossil fuel] from the leading

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NGOs' role in dev should be recognised

Speakers tell event marking Oxfam's 50 years in Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government should not neglect the contribution of non-government organisations as they are an important partner in the country's socio-economic progress, economists and development practitioners said yesterday.

They made the remarks at the celebration of "50 Years of Oxfam in Bangladesh" at a city hotel, recalling Oxfam's role in different crises and disasters, including its relief programme during Bangladesh's Liberation War and post-independence rehabilitation efforts.

Speaking at the programme, eminent economist and Distinguished Fellow at Centre for Policy Dialogue Debapriya Bhattacharya said NGOs are gainful partners of what Bangladesh has achieved in the past 50 years in poverty alleviation, women empowerment, child healthcare, universal education, social safety, infrastructural development, and food security.

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Distinguished guests unveil the cover of a publication on Oxfam's 50 years of operation in Bangladesh at a programme yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR