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JS to go into budget session May 31

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 11th Jatiya Sangsad will go into its budget session on May 31.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin convened the budget session yesterday, said a press release of Jatiya Sangsad secretariat.

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal is scheduled to present the national budget for 2023-24 fiscal year on June 1.

The budget of the 2023-24 financial year will be around Tk 7.5 lakh crore, which will be the highest-ever in Bangladesh's history.

The National Economic Council announced the new annual development programme of Tk 2.74 lakh crore on May 11.

This will be the fifth and last budget of the Awami League government formed through the December 30 national election in 2018.

The budget session also will be the 23rd session of 11th parliament.



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

This run-down four-wheeler with a missing bumper and cracks all over its body is a disaster waiting to happen. Yet, it ferries passengers every day from Gulistan to Keraniganj, risking their safety. Concern has long been raised about outdated automobiles plying on Dhaka's roads, however, the authorities concerned seemed to turn a blind eye to the situation. This photo was taken in Gulistan yesterday.

HINDU WOMEN HC issues rule over marriage, inheritance rights

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday questioned the government's inaction and failure to ensure Hindu women's right to divorce, marriage registration, maintenance, guardianship, adoption, and equal inheritance.

The court ordered the respondents to explain why their inaction and failure to formulate a guideline or policy or take appropriate steps to address these issues of Hindu women and thereby protect their fundamental rights to life and liberty and repeal the Hindu Marriage Registration Act, 2012 should not be declared illegal and why they should not be directed to take such measures.

The cabinet division, ministries of law, justice, and parliamentary affairs; children and women affairs, religious affairs, parliament secretariat, and the Supreme Court registrar general are respondents to the four-week returnable rule.

The HC bench of Justice Farah Mahbub and Justice Muhammad Mahbub Ul Islam issued the rule following a petition filed seeking necessary orders on the issue.

Rights organisations -- Ain O Salish Kendra; Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust; Naripokkho; Bangladesh Mahila Parishad; and Manusher Jonno Foundation; Supreme Court lawyer Ujjal Paul; Poli Benarjee, a resident from Dhaka's Keraniganj area, Bithisha Bagchi, a resident from Natore Sadar; and AVIJAN, an NGO at Shekhertek in Dhaka, collectively submitted the petition as a public interest litigation to the HC on May 2.

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President's Pabna visit starts today

BSS, Dhaka

President Mohammed Shahabuddin will go to his hometown Pabna today on a four-day visit to attend several programmes, including a reception to be accorded to him on May 16.

"He will address several gatherings and hold views-exchange meetings with a cross section of people and different professional bodies in the town," President's Press Secretary Md Joyal Abedin told BSS yesterday.

This will be his maiden visit to Pabna district after taking oath of office on April 24, 2023 as the 22nd president of Bangladesh.

Vehicle registration declines to 8-year low

Insiders point at price hike, higher import costs

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Vehicle registration in Bangladesh has declined to an eight-year low in the first four months of this year, owing to consumer tightening their belts and escalated prices fueled by higher import costs.

On average, a total of 29,694 vehicles got registered with Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) every month this year, which is the lowest after 2015, shows BRTA data.

The high price of vehicles due to a sharp rise in the dollar exchange rate and an increase in people's living costs due to commodity inflation caused a decline in vehicle sales, which was reflected in registration numbers, said people in the industry.

Car sales declined by 50 to 60 percent while sales of motorcycles declined by 35 to 50 percent in the last seven-eight months, they said. Bikes and cars amounted to 90.5 percent of total registered vehicles last year, shows BRTA data.

According to BRTA data, a total

of 1,18,777 vehicles got registered in the first four months of this year, meaning 29,694 vehicles got registered every month.

VEHICLES' REGISTRATION

Year	Average monthly registration
2023	29,694
2022	48,179
2021	37,085
2020	31,471
2019	41,452
2018	41,265
2017	34,944
2016	33,163
2015	25,661

On average, 48,179 vehicles were registered in 2022, 37,085 in 2021, and 31,471 in 2020. Normal lives were hammered largely in 2021 and 2020 due to the pandemic.

Average vehicle registration per month in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 was higher than this year.

The average vehicle registration per month in 2015 was 25,661.

"Hike in vehicle price due to hike in the dollar exchange rate and bad economic condition led to a sharp decline in vehicle registration. There is no other reason," a top official of BRTA told The Daily Star.

A total of 5,06,912 bikes (42,242 bikes per month) got registered in 2022, which was 87.67 percent of the total registered vehicles last year, shows BRTA data.

On the other hand, 1,02,558 bikes got registered in the first four months this year, meaning 25,639 bikes got registered every month.

Contacted, Biplob Kumar Roy, CEO of TVS Auto Bangladesh Limited, the local distributor of India's TVS Motor Company, cited four major reasons behind the poor bike registration number.

Potential customers, in many cases, defer their decision to buy bikes due to commodity inflation, he told this correspondent yesterday.

Although bikes price

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LANPAC CONFCE Army chief leaves for US

UNB, Dhaka

Chief of Bangladesh Army General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed left Dhaka yesterday for the United States on an official visit at the invitation of the US Army.

The army chief will participate in The Land Forces Pacific (LANPAC) Conference to be held in Hawaii from May 16-18, says a media release of ISPR.

The aim of the conference is to create an environment of mutual trust, develop professional relations and strengthen regional security arrangements by improving relations between land forces in the Indo-Pacific region.

The army chief will also hold meetings with army chiefs and other high-ranking military officials from different countries.

He is expected to return on May 21.



Gas supply to improve in 2 days

Says Nasrul Hamid

STAR REPORT

State Minister for Power, Energy and Mineral Resources Nasrul Hamid said one of the two LNG terminals in Moheshkhali was shifted to the deep sea as a precautionary measure of Cyclone Mocha.

While talking to a press briefing at the Secretariat yesterday, he said it will take 10-12 days for the gas supply to be normal.

The state minister said the other terminal will be able to start its operation within two days and then the situation will improve.

The terminals are being used for regasification and supply to the pipeline of the Imported Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG). Since last Friday, gas supply has been suspended from both of the terminals which impacted the country's gas supply and power production.

In Dhaka, residents in many areas are facing electricity outage for around two to three hours and outside Dhaka, the duration of load shedding is over three to five hours. Almost half of the gas-fired power generation capacity is being unutilised due to gas shortage.

According to the latest data from the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh, the country has faced around 2,500 MW of load shedding yesterday, which is almost double from the pre-cyclone period.

Nasrul said, "The impact [of the load shedding] will be there, but it will reduce. It's not going to be as unusual as the last three days."

Not your regular meat sellers

A group of butchers in cahoots with thieves stole over 3,000 cows in 10 years, say police

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Md Mamun is a butcher by profession who runs a meat shop in the Kadamtali area of the capital.

On the surface, he appears to be a legitimate businessman selling meat to the locals. However, lurking behind his shop are cowsheds where he keeps cows.

But here's the catch: Mamun doesn't raise cows or buy them from the market. Instead, he shelters and patronises a gang of thieves who steal cows from farmers in different parts of the country and hand them over to Mamun.

And Mamun is not alone.

Other meat sellers, including Jubair and Al-Amin, also have similar stories. This cow theft syndicate, led by a thief named Jakir Hossain, has been stealing cows for over a decade and has managed to build a network across the country.

The law enforcers have been after them for a long time. Police recently made a breakthrough in their investigation when they recovered a stolen cow from Jakir's gang at the Gabtoli animal market in the capital.

Following this, the Lalbagh division of the Detective Branch (DB) conducted a

successful operation and arrested Jakir and eight other members of the gang, including two butchers recently. During the operation, the police also recovered five stolen cows from the gang's Kadamtali cowshed.

The investigation revealed that the gang had a widespread network and conducted

They also had syndicate members in the big cattle markets. Butchers like Mamun paid an advance amount of Tk 50,000 to Tk 75,000 to the gang for stealing cows. The price of the stolen cow was then fixed, depending on its size and weight, with the gang charging Tk 20,000 to Tk 40,000 less than the market price.

operations using their own intelligence team. They also had syndicate members in the big cattle markets across the country. Butchers like Mamun paid an advance amount of Tk 50,000 to Tk 75,000 to the

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After a devastating fire last month, the Bangabazar traders lost everything just before Eid. Now they are trying to rebuild their businesses from scratch. These make-shift, single floored bamboo structures, with plastic covers may not be ideal, but it's a start. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN