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4-yr-old Roja
fighting for
life



Ukraine claims
gains on south-
eastern front



Tanzid relishing
'freedom' of
continuing
natural game



Products
with highest
import costs

UNIVERSAL PENSION SCHEME 6,100 sign up within 6 hours of launch

PM rolls out four packages

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

At least 6,100 people signed up for the universal pension scheme as of 5:00pm yesterday, the first day.

At least 463 people also deposited their first instalment.

The much-anticipated scheme was launched yesterday by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

Many people from Gopalganj, Bagerhat and Rangpur as well as the Bangladesh embassy in Saudi Arabia joined the inaugural ceremony virtually.

"We are receiving good response already -- hopefully it will increase further in the coming days," Golam Mostofa, member (additional charge) of the National Pension Authority, told The Daily Star.

Citizens above the age of 18 can register for the scheme at the dedicated portal www.upension.gov.bd.

While the PM yesterday inaugurated four packages, she said there will be a total of six packages under the scheme.

However, details about the two other schemes were not disclosed at the ceremony.

The beneficiaries will start receiving monthly pension after 60 years of age and until their death. If a beneficiary dies, their nominee will get the monthly pension.

A finance ministry official said the other two schemes would be designed for the public servants and officials of state-owned enterprises. The official said the government has a plan to reform to the existing pension system for public servants.

At present, save for government and semi-government organisation officials, anyone aged 18 and above can enrol in one of the four packages under the universal pension scheme: Progoti, Shurokha, Samata and Probash.

They will have to submit an application through the online portal of the pension authority.

The individual has to provide various details such as parents' names, mobile phone number, email, national identity (NID) card number, date of birth, bank account number, and details of a nominee.

Later, the beneficiary will receive a unique identification number through SMS or email. This completes the registration.

Upon successful registration, the beneficiaries will be able to pay instalments at a bank branch or through the mobile financial service platform, online bank transfer or a bank card.

The pension authority will confirm the beneficiary regarding instalment payment through SMS.

Using the unique number and password, the beneficiary will be able to know about how much deposit they have made in total.

Housewives, students and unemployed persons can register for the Shurokha package, which is designed for the self-employed and the informal sector workers like farmers, rickshaw pullers and day labourers.

They can put in Tk 1,000, Tk 2,000, Tk 3,000 or Tk 5,000 a month. If the students and unemployed persons enter into government services, they will have to withdraw from the Shurokha scheme.

The Samata package is designed for the ultra-poor, with the monthly instalment being Tk 1,000. The government will pay Tk 500 and the other Tk 500 will be paid by the beneficiary.

The Probash scheme is for expatriate Bangladeshis, with the monthly instalment options being Tk 5,000, Tk 7,500 and Tk 10,000. They will have to furnish the instalment in foreign currency.

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HSC examinees brush up on their lessons before entering the exam hall at Siddheswari Girls College on New Bailey Road in the capital yesterday, the first day of this year's HSC exams.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

POLLS GUIDELINE

EC to review
it for foreign
observers,
journalists

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The Election Commission will soon review the 2018 guidelines on foreign election observers and journalists.

The commission will hold a meeting with officials from the ministries of foreign affairs, home, information, and the National Board of Revenue on August 23 and decide whether the guidelines need amendment, said Additional Secretary Ashok Kumar Debnath of the EC secretariat.

EC officials said Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Kazi Habibul Awal met Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen on August 10 and discussed making the guideline up-to-date.

Officials are reviewing the guidelines at a time when foreign diplomats are showing interest in the

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Deception in Dhaka north

DNCC gave mosquito lervicide importing
job to a company that does not have
importing licence

DIPAN NANDY and MD ABBAS

The company that imported the much-hyped BTI pesticide to destroy Aedes mosquito larvae for the Dhaka North City Corporation does not have the importing licence. Despite this, the company took part in the open tender and came out as the lowest bidder.

It has now emerged that the company did not import the pesticide, known as Bacillus Thuringiensis Israelensis (BTI), from Singapore as it had claimed.

Instead, it imported the product from a Chinese company called Shandong Ganon Agrochemical, according to customs documents, although tender documents clearly say the BTI must be imported either from the US, EU countries, Singapore, India, and Malaysia.

The Plant Protection Wing (PPW)

of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), the authority responsible for issuing licence for pesticide imports, has confirmed that the company in question, Marshal Agrovet Chemical Industries Ltd, never took the licence.

In documents seen by The Daily Star, Marshal claimed that it imported 5 tonnes of BTI worth over Tk 53 lakh from a Singaporean company called Best Chemical Co. (S) Pte Ltd (Bestchem).

But Johnny Wong, the managing director of Bestchem, told The Daily Star on Wednesday that his company did not sell any larvicide to Marshal.

Earlier this week, Best Chemical went on Facebook to refute Marshal's claim that the product was procured from it.

After media reports on the alleged scam, the Dhaka North City

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'PLOT TO KILL JOY'
Shafik, Mahmudur,
three others jailed
for seven years



Shafik Rehman



Mahmudur Rahman

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced senior journalist Shafik Rehman and four others to seven years in prison for plotting to abduct and kill Sajeeb Wazed Joy, ICT affairs adviser to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The four others are Mahmudur Rahman, acting editor of now-defunct daily Amar Desh; Mohammad Ullah Mamun, vice-president of Jatiyatabadi Samajik Sangskritik Sangstha; his son Rizvi Ahmed Caesar; and Mizanur Rahman Bhuiyan, a businessman in the US.

Dhaka Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Muhammad Asaduzzaman Nur delivered the verdict.

The punishment will be effective from the day the fugitives surrender

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BUSINESS

Big pharmas in herbal medicine market

Big pharmaceutical companies in Bangladesh are gradually taking hold of the country's growing market for herbal medicines as people are opting for high quality natural remedies with recognisable brand value.

The demand for herbal medicine is rising fast as they have no side effects and are clinically proven to be effective in treating various ailments, according to industry insiders.

The market for herbal medicine generates an annual revenue of about Tk 2,500 crore, which is one-tenth of that earned by the overall pharmaceutical sector.

STORY ON B1



A nurse helps Tahim Taj, 11, adjust his cannula, used to administer IV fluids. He travelled all the way from Noakhali's Laxmipur to be admitted to Shishu Hospital after being diagnosed with dengue four days ago. Like him, many children from all over the country are seeking admission to various city hospitals, as dengue cases continue to soar. Meanwhile, nine more patients died yesterday. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

SEIZURE OF S\$1B ASSETS S'pore charges 10 foreigners 8 more still wanted as authorities declare war on illegal money transfer

STAR REPORT

The Singapore authorities yesterday pressed charges against the 10 foreign nationals who were arrested on Tuesday in one of Singapore's biggest anti-money laundering operations, reports The Straits Times.

The charges include money laundering, forgery and resisting arrest.

The foreigners, aged between 31 and 44, were arrested following an island-wide raid by more than 400 officers from the Criminal Investigation Department, Commercial Affairs Department, Special Operations Command and Police Intelligence Department.

The suspects are believed to be connected to one another. None of them is a Singaporean or permanent resident.

Of the 10, three are Chinese nationals, three Cambodians, two Cypriots, one Turkish, and one Ni-Vanuatu national.

Including these 10, a total of 30 foreign nationals are currently being investigated under the operations. Eight more are wanted by the police, while 12 are assisting with the investigation.

"We take the most serious stance against criminals laundering their criminal proceeds through our financial system. We will continue to work with law enforcement

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