



P10

Grabbers feast on railway hills



P8

'US visa policy alone cannot ensure fair election'



P7

US army chief, allies discuss Asia-Pacific in India



P6

Eshaan Akbar: The Bangladeshi actor from 'Sex Education'

Tamim dropped after drama

BCB announces WC squad; Mahmudullah returns

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speculation had been ripe since Monday night regarding the World Cup squad announcement. Following a dramatic midnight meeting between BCB president Nazmul Hassan, skipper Shakib Al Hasan and head coach Chandika Hathurusingha, speculations reached a new high and Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), for its part, kept that wait going for a while.

Speculation grew since Tuesday morning that Shakib Al Hasan communicated to the board that he would not lead the side in the upcoming global event, his reasoning being he was unable to carry an unfit player. From there on, the talk of Tamim Iqbal's imminent absence from the India-bound flight grew louder. The BCB kept up the wait till Tuesday evening before announcing the squad through various social media platforms. In the end, there was no Tamim in the squad, the biggest absence from the squad announcement.

The 34-year-old, with over 8,000 runs in ODI cricket, failed to make the cut and it appears that his recent troubles with injuries played a part in him being excluded as the team management went for younger faces for the opening slot. Tamim would have featured in his fifth ODI World Cup, having made his debut in the 2007 World Cup in the West Indies.

Youngster Tanzid Hasan Tamim, who made 34 runs in five innings so far since getting the opportunity to play in the Asia Cup, made the cut.



Traders use the edge of the Turag, along the Mirpur-Ashulia Beribandh road in Deuvel area of Ashulia, to bring in sand on bulk carriers and load them on to trucks using diggers. Part of the river, marked by the red-tipped pillars, also gets filled in the process. The photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

NATIONAL ELECTIONS EC to invite observers from Saarc countries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There are many countries in the world other than the ones in the European Union, and they may send observers for Bangladesh's national election, Election Commissioner Md Alamgir said yesterday.

The Election Commission will invite observers from the Saarc countries next month, he told reporters at his office.

The EU last week informed the EC that it would not send a fully-fledged mission to observe the national election here.

"Based on the recommendations of the exploratory mission -- and taking into consideration the budget for EU Election Observation Missions for 2023/2024 -- High Representative Josep Borrell has decided not to deploy a fully-fledged EU Election Observation Mission," reads a letter EU Ambassador to Bangladesh Charles Whiteley sent to the EC.

"The High Representative's decision reflects the fact that, at the present time, it is not sufficiently clear whether the necessary conditions will be met at the point in time when the elections take place."

Alamgir yesterday said the EU had informed that it would send a small team of observers.

"But it's not the final word. They may later change their mind and send a full mission," he added.

GUIDELINES FOR INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

As per the guidelines the EC issued yesterday, individuals or organisations must have work experience in good

SEE PAGE 2 COL

\$27b health budget in the works

The five-year health sector plan yet to be approved

REJIAUL KARIM BYRON and MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

The government is preparing a \$27 billion budget for the upcoming five-year health sector plan, up 52.5 percent from the ongoing programme that ends in June 2024.

The ambitious plan, centred on achieving universal health coverage with a special focus on urban primary health care and mitigating the impact of climate change on health, is slated for implementation in July 2024.

Tangible progress will remain elusive without a clear roadmap and effective coordination among different programmes within the health sector plan, according to experts.

"The upcoming health sector plan is crucial for achieving universal health coverage by 2030, but, like the current one, it lacks coordination among different components and a clear roadmap," said Syed Abdul Hamid, a health economics professor at the University of Dhaka.

The upcoming Health, Population and Nutrition Sector Programme (HPNSP), which would be the fifth of its kind, lacks a clear plan to tackle health emergencies like Covid-19 and the

dengue outbreak or emergencies due to natural calamities.

"Covid-19 and the current dengue outbreak have shown us the necessity of special allocation for health emergencies. There should have been a separate operational plan for this," Hamid added.

All health sector programmes, including the current one, failed to improve access to health care for the lowest quintile of society, said Be-nazir Ahmed, health system expert and former director of Disease Control Unit at the Directorate General of Health Services.

"This issue primarily stems from systemic gaps in our healthcare management. Consequently, funds are allocated and expended, yet discernible improvements in quality remain elusive."

He warned that without addressing the systematic gaps, the upcoming health sector programme will also fail to give any tangible outcome.

The proposal though is not final yet and is awaiting approval by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council by the first quarter of the following year, The Daily Star has learnt from officials informed

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



Country has been turned into Hirak Rajar Desh

Mirza Abbas

STAR REPORT

BNP standing committee member Mirza Abbas said the government has turned the country into "Hirak Rajar Desh", a fictional country run by an oppressive and erratic monarch in a Satyajit Ray film.

"But, my friends, we all know the consequences of Hirak Rajar Desh It is high time to challenge the government. Be united and organised. This regime will sustain no longer," he added.

He made the remarks while inaugurating the Khulna divisional road march at Jhenidah Bus Terminal yesterday.

"Bangladesh did not gain independence to establish the rule of one person. Bangladesh became independent for establishing democracy, sovereignty, freedom of speech, and the right to vote. Not to establish the reign of a king or queen. Not to turn the country into a Hirok Rajar Desh," he said.

The BNP leader said, "The amount of loan defaulted in the country was Tk 21,000 crore. Today, that amount has risen to Tk 1,09,000 crore. People want to know where this money went, who used this money, and who misappropriated it.

"Those of us who protest are arrested by the police Then, they send us to

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



BNP holds a brief rally at Muralimore in Jashore town yesterday while marching from Jhenidah to Khulna via Magura and Jashore. The road march was part of its one-point movement demanding the next election under a non-partisan administration.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

No visa policy, sanctions can stop Hasina

Quader says at AL rally