

## HAJJ PACKAGE Pvt agencies cut cost by Tk 82,200

Registration begins today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Bangladeshi will have to spend a minimum of Tk 5.89 lakh to perform hajj next year under private management, Tk 82,200 less from this year.

M Shahadat Hossain Taslim, president of the Hajj Agencies Association of Bangladesh, yesterday came up with the package during a press conference at a city hotel.

He also announced a special package that will cost Tk 7 lakh.

The HAAB president urged potential pilgrims to be clear about the facilities offered before signing up to any hajj agency.

Registration of potential pilgrims for 2024 under government and private hajj management starts today.

On November 2, Faridul Haque Khan, state minister for religious affairs ministry, unveiled the hajj package under government management.

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## Hospitals doing business in name of treating patients Says HC, hands over doctor, hospital officials to police

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday said many hospitals and clinics are making money in the name of treating patients.

It is being noted that patients die due to wrong treatment and negligence at those healthcare facilities, and such offences cannot be spared, said the bench of Justice Abu Taher Md Saifur Rahman and Justice Md Bashir Ullah.

The bench said this while hearing a bail petition submitted by four people, including a doctor of Japan Bangladesh Hospital in Habiganj. The petition sought anticipatory bail in a case filed over wrong treatment of Rahima Aktar and negligence, which caused her death.

The HC rejected the petition and asked the Supreme Court Registrar General Office staffers to hand over the four to the police, Deputy Attorney General KM Masud Runy told The Daily Star.

The four are doctor SK Ghosh, hospital directors Ariful Islam and AK Abedin, and manager Johnny Ahmed, he said.

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The Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury CDA Expressway in Chattogram city. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the 16.5km expressway yesterday. The photo was taken in the port city's Chowmuhani area.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## CHATTOGRAM ELEVATED EXPRESSWAY Port city to see new era in connectivity, trade

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday virtually inaugurated the port city's first elevated expressway, which is expected to usher in a new era in connectivity and trade.

As the expressway will create a route in addition to the city's main thoroughfare, it is expected to speed up the transport of goods and passengers while also reducing travel time and cost, said both traders and commuters.

This new route would come as an advantage for both northbound and southbound traffic, which would in turn boost business activities.

Additionally, the expressway will lead to newer investment opportunities in the port city as road connectivity would become more efficient.

Omar Hazzaz, president of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI), said the newly built elevated expressway will add a new dimension to the city's communication system and be an asset for the city dwellers and the business community alike.

He said the city would earlier depend

on the single main thoroughfare, which would often create gridlocks at several commercially important points. "This used to discourage foreign buyers and investors to visit."

The 16.5km expressway will ease traffic congestions from the airport to Lalkhan Bazar area and cut travel time significantly.

**Though inaugurated, the expressway is not yet open to the public as all facilities to support vehicular movement have not been completed.**

Earlier, it took around two hours to commute between the two points.

The entire expressway runs through the city from Patenga to Lalkhan Bazar.

Mahmud Ullah, a resident of the Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ), said, "The expressway will help us commute from the airport to Tiger Pass area [around 500 metres from Lalkhan Bazar] in just 15-20 minutes, finally bringing an end to being stuck in traffic jams."

The CCCI president, however, stressed the need for the quick construction of the

expressway ramps to ensure the actual benefit of the megastructure.

The Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) yesterday organised the expressway's inauguration, which was attended by hundreds of people from the port city amid much fanfare and festivity.

Tofazzel Hossain, 50, who came to the programme from Agrabad area, said, "I came here to see the megastructure, which will change the whole appearance of our city!"

Project Director Mahfuzur Rahman said the toll rates for the expressway have not been fixed yet as the booths are yet to be built.

Though inaugurated, the expressway is not yet open to the public as all facilities to support vehicular movement have not been completed.

Asked when it would be open for traffic, he said, "We can't give a specific date as there is much work left to be done, which may take months."

The project, taken up by the CDA, was initiated to facilitate smooth communication in Chattogram city – the country's prime seaport.

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## Bangladeshis should decide on 'future of their govt'

Says US state dept

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US State Department has said, "The future of the Bangladeshi government should be determined by its people, full stop".

"Let me just say what I have said many times, which is [that] we support free and fair elections in Bangladesh," said US State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller at a regular briefing in Washington on Monday.

He made the comment in response to a question about the US and Indian ministers' discussion on the Bangladesh election during the 2+2 meeting in New Delhi on November 10.

Miller was also asked about US Assistant Secretary for Central and South Asia Donald Lu's November 13 letters to the three major political parties calling for dialogue without preconditions.

The letter was handed over when there was a deadlock over the polls-time administration. The Awami League wants the polls under the current government and the BNP is enforcing blockades demanding resignation of the government and polls under a caretaker government.

## Woman, daughters found dead at home

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A woman and her two children were found dead at their residence in Basur Char village of Hossainpur upazila in Kishoreganj yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Taslima Akter, 42, wife of Manjil Mia, an expatriate working in Saudi Arabia, and her two schoolgoing daughters, Mohona Akter, 11, and Bonnya Akter, 7.

Quoting locals, police said Manjil Mia went to Saudi Arabia in 2017 and since then, his wife and her daughters have been living at their house by themselves. Mohammad Rasel Sheikh, superintendent of police in Kishoreganj, said teams from the Criminal Investigation Department, Police Bureau of Investigation, and Detective Branch of police collected necessary evidence from the spot.

"The deaths of three members of a family could not be unnatural, and primarily, we are suspecting the incident as murder," the SP added.

## CAAB driver stabbed to death by muggers

UNB, Dhaka

A driver of the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) was stabbed to death by muggers in Dhaka's Kawla area near Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

The deceased was identified as Arman Ali, 26, of Dhanarpar village in Phulchari upazila of Gaibandha.

The incident happened Monday evening, said Inspector Md Bachchu Mia, in charge of Dhaka Medical College Hospital police outpost.

His colleague Zahidul Islam said Arman used to live in the civil aviation staff quarters.

"He (Arman) was returning home from work in the afternoon when a group of muggers stopped him near the Kawla railway crossing and tried to snatch his mobile phone," said Zahidul.

"At one point, the muggers stabbed him in the stomach and in the back," he added.

Arman was brought to the Emergency Department of DMCH, where doctors declared him dead at 8:10 pm, said Inspector Bachchu Mia.

## Polls schedule likely today

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he said the letter would have no bearing on the EC announcing the schedule.

"The commission is not aware whether it is a letter urging dialogue because the commission did not get the letter," he told reporters at his office.

The EC is going to announce the schedule amid political turmoil in which the ruling party seems adamant about having the election with the AL government in power while the BNP and Jamaat are enforcing blockades demanding the government's resignation, reconstitution of the EC, and polls under a caretaker government.

While speaking to this newspaper, two commissioners said they were likely to decide that the ballot papers would be sent to the polling centres on the morning of the election day, except hard-to-reach polling stations.

Citing a lack of manpower, top law enforcement officials during a meeting on October 30 spoke in favour of sending the ballot papers a day ahead.

Election officials told this paper that Border Guard Bangladesh and Rab personnel could be employed to send the ballots on election day. The personnel in two or three groups

would be able to carry the ballots to the polling centres before the voting opens, they said.

Election Commissioner Anisur Rahman said, "Once the polls schedule is announced, it'll be known when exactly the ballots will be delivered to the polling stations."

Election officials said the chances of appointing EC officials as returning officers, as the EC had planned before, were slim as the BNP and Jamaat-enforced blockades have changed the political scenario with which deputy and divisional commissioners should be more experienced.

The EC officials said that following the announcement of the schedule, they would issue a public notification and appoint returning officers and assistant returning officers. The ROs with the assistance of the AROs will do all the necessary work to conduct the election. They will have the legal powers, under the electoral laws, to ensure a free and fair election.

The EC would also send a demi-official letter to the cabinet division, seeking assistance in conducting the election and asking that field-level government officers are not transferred until the results are published.

With the announcement of the polls

schedule, the electoral code of conduct would take effect, EC officials said.

Campaigning will start only after the deadline for withdrawal of candidature expires.

Ministers and lawmakers would not be able to use government vehicles or enjoy other facilities while carrying out campaign-related work. They are also not allowed to make any donations to any institutions from public funds.

The government would not be allowed to approve or inaugurate any development project to woo voters.

The EC would issue directives, with a deadline, to potential candidates to remove their posters, placards, banners, and billboards from public spaces.

As part of the preparations for the announcement of the schedule, the commission met President Mohammed Shahabuddin on November 9. It also held meetings with Chief Justice Obaidul Hassan and the heads of the law enforcement agencies and ministries.

The commission last week updated the voter list with 11,96,91,633 voters. It primarily estimated that about Tk 1,445 crore would be needed to hold the polls.

The election could be held on any day between January 6 and 9, EC sources said.

## Election-time government anyone's guess

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four technocrat ministers to resign a day before the polls schedule was announced.

The technocrat ministers were Nurul Islam of the expatriate welfare ministry, Yeafesh Osman of science and technology, Motiur Rahman of religious affairs, and Mustafa Jabbar of post and telecommunication.

Barrister Shafique Ahmed and Dilip Barua were the technocrat ministers in the 9th parliament. They resigned before the general election in 2014. However, the PM kept them as her advisers.

Contacted, Dilip Barua, general secretary of Bangladesh Shamyabadi Dal, said, "As there is no specific constitutional provision about an

election-time government. The prime minister can make changes to the cabinet. But if she doesn't, there is no problem."

**PM ON POLLS-TIME GOVT**

"If members of parliament express their interest in joining the election-time government, we are ready to accept them. We can show this generosity," Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said on May 15.

That comment came several months after BNP MPs resigned from parliament in December last year.

However, on October 31, Hasina said, "We will do the routine tasks, daily activities as the polls time government, so that the government does not become dysfunctional

[during the election]."

She added, "In 2014, we appointed some ministers from other parties. We did not do that in the 2018 election. What happens in other countries will happen here this time as well."

Mustafa Jabbar, a technocrat minister of the post and telecommunications ministry, told The Daily Star, "I have not received any instruction from the prime minister about resigning. The premier's decision is final in this matter."

Usually, polls-time government means the government that remains in office during the period between announcement of the polls schedule and the day the new government takes oath.

## BNP may lay siege to EC Secretariat

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across the country welcoming the election schedule.

BNP sources said its top brass has met the leaders from different levels to discuss the movement strategy and decided that the party rank and file will take to the streets soon after the announcement of the polls schedule.

They also discussed laying siege to the EC secretariat a day after the announcement of the schedule.

Top leaders of the BNP's front and associate bodies have been instructed to observe the ongoing blockade strictly and to come out of hideouts.

"Even if the top leaders of the front and associate bodies are at risk of being arrested, they must be on the streets," said a senior leader wishing not to be named.

He said the party's movement may see some changes soon after the

declaration of the polls schedule.

"People will take to the streets soon after the announcement of the election schedule like the way they are responding to our movement now," Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku, standing committee member of the BNP, told The Daily Star.

Discussing Lu's letter among themselves, BNP leaders observed that it would put pressure on the AL regarding talks, but the government seemed to be heading in the wrong direction as the initiative for declaring the polls schedule was made.

Lu, the US assistant secretary of state for the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, has written to the AL, the BNP, and Jatiya Party, urging them to engage in talks without any conditions to unlock the political stalemate, JP Chairman

GM Quader said on Monday after a meeting with US Ambassador Peter Haas.

AL sources, however, said the party was yet to receive any letter of Lu.

In a press statement yesterday, Islami Andolon Bangladesh warned that the party would march towards the EC Secretariat if the polls schedule was announced today.

The party leaders and activists will gather at the north gate of the Baitul Mukarram national mosque at 3:00pm and will march towards the EC from there, it added.

## Can Black Caps derail the Indian juggernaut?

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There was an uneasy situation against Australia when they were reduced to 3-2 chasing 199 before a Kohli masterclass bailed them out. However, the Aussies would never know what could have happened had Kohli not been dropped when he was on 12.

India were also in a similar situation against their today's semifinal opponents, also in the semifinals four years ago in England. They were reduced to 3-5 from where they had not recovered and made their exit from the World Cup.

India were chasing a not-so-daunting 239 in that 2019 World Cup semifinal. Still, with Rohit and Kohli out cheaply, they were eventually bundled out for 221.

For a team that have lost four of their seven World Cup semifinals, India will certainly look not to budge this time around with all the confidence behind them for a final push to glory.

The Black Caps, on the other hand, will bank on their experienced captain Kane Williamson and a star in the making, Rachin Ravindra, to upset the Indian juggernaut.