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SHAH CEMENT

European Commission pledges better ties with Dhaka

Its president congratulates Hasina for polls victory

UNB, Dhaka

Congratulating Sheikh Hasina on her recent re-appointment as Prime Minister of Bangladesh, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has said she looks forward to continuing working with PM Hasina towards further strengthening the relations between the EU and Bangladesh in the coming years.

"The European Union is committed to cooperating with Bangladesh on sustainable development, climate change, migration, and other issues of shared interest," said the head of the European Commission in a letter to PM Hasina.

The European Commission president said she had the pleasure of meeting Sheikh Hasina in Brussels in 2023 on the occasion of the Global Gateway Forum.

"This also marked the formal launch of negotiations on a new Partnership and Cooperation Agreement, which aims to broaden and modernise the framework for our

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A WINGED VISITOR ... A butterfly rests on the head of an oriental garden lizard, otherwise known as a "bloodsucker", spotted in Beel Pabla of Khulna's Dumuria upazila. Despite the threatening name, these changeable lizards are quite timid and shy in nature. The reason for the name, however, is due to the males turning red near the throat during the breeding season in order to attract mates. Though these insectivores are found in a wide range of habitats as they adapt well with humans, these prefer to spend most of their time in low shrubs and tree trunks to stay unnoticed. On hot days, they may come out of hiding to bask in the sun with their mouths wide open, while after rain, they sometimes come down to the ground for food such as larva or small insects that have fallen from trees.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

AHNAF'S DEATH

Take action against 3 doctors

DGHS asks medical council

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Directorate General of Health Services has asked the Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council to take necessary action against the doctors involved in the circumcision procedure on a boy at a diagnostic centre in the capital.

This move comes after a 10-year-old Ahnaf Tahmin Ayham died on Tuesday night during the circumcision at JS Diagnostic & Medical Checkup Centre at Malibagh.

This is the second such death in the capital since January 7, when five-year-old Ayaan Ahmed, a nursery student, died during the circumcision procedure at the United Medical College Hospital in Badda.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court on Wednesday sent two doctors - SM Muktadir and Mahbub Morshed - to jail in connection with a case filed over the death of Ahnaf.

DGHS officials say the authorities of JS Diagnostic & Medical Checkup Centre did not have any approval to operate at the hospital, but it has the licence for a diagnostic centre.

The organisation yesterday wrote to BMDC to take necessary steps, after investigation, against three physicians Ishtiaque Azad, Mahbub Morshed, and SM Moktadir involved in the circumcision procedure.

In a separate letter, it also directed all private hospitals, clinics, and diagnostic centres to display their copies of

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DISPUTES OVER PROPERTIES

Five officials of Transcom held in three cases

PBI arrested them in cases filed with Gulshan Police Station

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police Bureau of Investigation arrested five officials of Transcom Group yesterday in cases filed over property disputes.

They were arrested at their homes and offices.

The arrested officials are Transcom Group's Executive Director (corporate affairs and law) Md Fakhruzzaman Bhuiyan, Director (corporate finance) Kamrul Hasan, Director (corporate finance) Abdullah Al Mamun, Assistant Company Secretary Mohammed Mossadeq and Manager (company secretary) Abu Yusuf Md Siddik.

Officer-in-Charge (investigation) of Gulshan Police Station Shahanur Rahman yesterday said Shahzreh Huq, the daughter of Transcom Group's late chairman Latifur Rahman, filed three cases yesterday.

She filed the cases in connection with fraud and breach of trust with regard to the company's shares and properties, said the police.

Gulshan police said the cases were filed against eight people and the PBI arrested five of them.

The other accused are complainant Shahzreh Huq's elder sister and Transcom Group's Chief Executive Officer Simeen Rahman, their mother and the group's Chairman Shahnaz Rahman, and Simeen's son and Transcom's

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ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES

Govt move fails to stop price hike ahead of Ramadan

SUKANTA HALDER

The government's promise of containing the prices of essentials ahead of Ramadan seems to be only on paper as the prices of key items instead rose over the last month.

According to the data from Trading Corporation of Bangladesh, the costs of chickpeas, lentils, onions, broiler chicken, and farm eggs saw a spike over the past month.

Meanwhile, though the commerce ministry's data showed that the imports of chickpeas, dates, soyabean oil, palm oil, pulses, and yellow peas increased, market insiders allege that a section of businesspeople have already stockpiled the commodities, taking advantage of the lax market monitoring, for higher profits.

They claimed this was the reason behind the prices of the essentials going up.

Amid such a situation, people from the low and limited-income groups, who are already compromising their standard of living due to inflation, are in a tighter spot.

Arman Hossain, a job holder in the capital, said, "The prices of almost all the items have remained high for quite some time. If the situation doesn't change in the coming days, we'll have no other option than to stop buying some essential items [for Ramadan]."

He said he has been in a constant battle to balance all the expenses of a three-

member family.

"My income has not increased in the last two years at the pace at which the prices of daily necessities are rising."

He said the price of local varieties of onions is now Tk 120 a kg, up from Tk 70-80 a month ago.

During a visit to the capital's Mirpur-1 and Kawran Bazar kitchen markets, this correspondent found the prices of lentils, rice, fish, meat, eggs, edible oil and flour still considerably high.

The price of lentils, which was Tk 130 per kg a month ago, was now Tk 140, while



"So, I bought one kg instead of two."

The price of broiler chicken was Tk 180-185 per kg a month ago and it is now being sold for Tk 200-210.

"So, I didn't buy chicken."

chickpeas cost Tk 110 a kg, up from last month's Tk 95.

Monwar Hossain, owner of Yasin General Store in Karwan Bazar, one of the

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India allows export of 50,000 tonnes of onions

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India yesterday permitted the export of 50,000 tonnes of onions to Bangladesh ahead of Ramadan, relaxing the vegetable's export ban.

"We have allowed export of 50,000 tonnes of onion to Bangladesh, 1,200 tonnes to Mauritius, 3,000 tonnes of Bahrain and 560 tonnes to Bhutan with immediate effect," Consumer Affairs Department Secretary Rohit Kumar Singh told reporters in New Delhi yesterday.

Traders are allowed to export this quantity till March 31. The modalities of transactions are being worked out, he said.

Singh said the decision to permit the exports to Bangladesh and the three other countries has been taken following a recommendation from the External Affairs Ministry.

Currently, there is a ban on India's onion exports till March 31. The ban was imposed on December 8, 2023, to boost the domestic supply and check price rise.

State Minister for Commerce Ahasanul Islam Titu on Sunday told reporters that the government had written a formal letter to India to allow the export of 50,000 metric tonnes of onions to bring down their prices in the domestic market during the holy month of Ramadan.

Israel hits Gaza's Rafah

Mosque flattened, several homes destroyed

AGENCIES

Israeli bombs on Rafah flattened a mosque and destroyed homes in what residents called one of their worst nights yet, while the Hamas chief was in Cairo for talks Gazans hope could bring a truce in time to head off a full-blown assault on the city.

Mourners wept over at least seven corpses in body bags, laid out on cobbles outside a morgue in the city hard against the Egyptian border, where over half of the Palestinian enclave's 2.3 million people are now huddling, mostly in tents.

"They took the people I love, they took a piece of my heart," wailed Dina al-Shaer, whose brother and his family were killed in a strike that relatives said hit their home shortly after midnight.

Gaza health authorities said 97 people were confirmed killed and 130 wounded in the last 24 hours of Israeli assaults, but most victims were still under rubble or in areas rescuers could not reach.

A total of 29,410 Palestinians have been killed and 69,465 injured in Israeli strikes on Gaza since October 7, the health ministry said in a statement yesterday.

The al-Farouk mosque in the centre of Rafah was flattened into slabs of concrete, the facades of adjacent buildings blasted away. Authorities said four houses had been struck in the south of the

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A general view shows destroyed building and the rubble of the al-Farouk mosque following an overnight Israeli air strike in Rafah refugee camp in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Govt backtracks on decision to hike sugar price

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The industries ministry has backtracked on its decision to hike the price of sugar produced by state-run sugar mills.

The government has changed the decision considering the suffering of people, said a statement.

The announcement came hours after Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation (BSFIC), which runs state-owned sugar mills, increased the retail price of its sweetener by 14 percent to Tk 160 a kg.

At present, people in Dhaka city buy sugar at Tk 135-Tk 140 per kg, according to the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh.

The corporation said it had increased the price in line with the rates of sugar in both domestic and international markets.

The BSFIC produced nearly 11,000 tonnes of sugar between July and December of the current financial year, up 20 percent from 9,066 tonnes a year ago.

The corporation said it will sell sugar for Tk 140 per kg.