

Prepare to reap benefits of LDC graduation

PM asks all concerned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has asked all concerned for all-out preparations to reap the benefits of Bangladesh graduating from the least developed countries to a developing nation.



She made the call during yesterday's meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council at the National Economic Council auditorium in the capital's Agargaon.

After the meeting, Planning Secretary Satyajit Karmaker told reporters that the PM reaffirmed that Bangladesh is going to be a developing country in 2026.

"She has directed to work on the benefits expected to get from the graduation. Besides, she also asked for initiatives to tackle the challenges that may come after graduation."

After 45 years of being an LDC country, the United Nations Committee for Development Policy recommended Bangladesh's graduation in its final evaluation on February 26, 2021.

Bangladesh is scheduled to officially become a developing country in 2026 as the UN committee recommended that the country should get five years, instead of three, to prepare for the transition due to the impact of the Covid-19 on its economy.

Until 2026, the country will continue to enjoy the trade benefits as an LDC.

At that time, Bangladesh met, for the second time, all the three eligibility criteria for the graduation involving per capita income, human assets index, and economic and environmental vulnerability index.

Myanmar and Lao PDR also met the graduation criteria for the second consecutive time. Nepal met the criteria in 2018. The UN CDP, however, deferred the decision on Myanmar and Timor-Leste to the 2024 triennial review.

Although the concept of the LDCs originated in the late 1960s, the first group of LDCs was listed by the United Nations back in 1971. LDCs are usually low-income countries confronting severe structural impediments to sustainable development. While there were 25 countries in the list of LDCs in 1971, the number is 47 now.

Bangladesh was first listed as an LDC in 1975. So far, five countries have graduated from the LDC status. These are - Botswana (1994), Cape Verde (2007), The Maldives (2011), Samoa (2011), and Equatorial Guinea (2017).



Dhaka Night Market 2024 AN ADVENTURE AWAITS!

RBR

Night-time shopping has a certain charm to it, almost a like starry-eyed rebellion. Come Ramadan, staying out late into the wee hours has almost become a trend for Dhakaites. Added with the option of eating out for sehri, "Dhaka Night Market 2024" is underway from 2:00 PM to 3:00 AM at Aloki Convention Hall on Gulshan-Tejgaon Link Road in the capital.

Nibedita Community Organization is arranging the grand night expo for the first time. The open-for-all exhibition started yesterday, March 28, 2024, and will end tomorrow, March 30.

Festive and fun, the exposition has over 80 upscale local brands and a few international labels showcasing their products and catering to the needs of men, women, and children.

Anika Islam, founder and chief executive of Nibedita, said, "There is also a dedicated food court where everyone can have iftar, dinner, or sehri as they please. There is a play zone for children and interesting activities like magic show, stand-up comedy, interactive sessions, fire spinning, and special puppet shows."

Nibedita is a community-based organisation committed to fostering women's empowerment and development through impactful initiatives. It is actively working to guide

women in making their transition as entrepreneurs and improving their lifestyles.

Besides, Nibedita has been associated with several organisations, including the ICT Division, Hi-Tech Park Bangladesh, and Coursera, and has arranged various workshops, events, and trainings where young women have been able to participate for free.

"This time, I took ideas from my childhood Eid shopping days in Chattogram, when our mothers and aunts would go to the malls after completing all household chores and Taraweeh prayers. They would shop in peace and return home having snacks or sehri, enjoying themselves to the core," Anika said.

"Through the ongoing Dhaka Night Market 2024, we are bringing together fashion houses, boutiques, and accessory stores for Eid shoppers under one roof."

In this event, the title partner is Mastercard; the gold partners are Cake Stories and Hi by Sanjana; the finance company partner is IPDC; the kid's zone partner is Babuland; and the beverage partner is Mojo. The Daily Star is the media partner.

STALLS TO LOOK FOR

Bohu - a furniture manufacturer that fosters designs, produces, and sells unique pieces like sofas, armchairs, coffee tables, and more; all made with love

using sustainable materials.

Etérea is a stall that offers ethically sourced human hair extensions. These clip-ons blend seamlessly with your natural hair, regardless of its length or volume.

Begum Bahar is offering impressive collection of classic Jamdani and Manipuri sarees to elegant Tangail and Rajshahi silks. It also offers a range of designer sarees, including naturally dyed pieces, ones embellished with karchupi work, or embroidery fit for bridal ensembles.

The Hanger celebrates the rich heritage of Bangladesh with its exquisite collection of Jamdanis. These hand-woven wonders are each a unique work of art. They also sell beautiful babywear.

Artific, a brand that offers stylish and comfortable clothing for men women and children, has trendy designs for you to skim through.

Last but not least, the Food Court has stocked up on your favourite Korean snacks from Dhakaia Korean. Mitzu Bites has taken care of your savoury and sweet cravings and the Night Market is also offering vegan treats.

No Bangladeshi fair is complete without our favourite, handcrafted, fruitsicles. Rafsan the ChotoBhai with his electrolyte drink Blu is making sure shoppers have essential minerals while staying hydrated.

Robbers, posing as detectives, snatch Tk 35.75 lakh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A group of robbers impersonating officials of the Detective Branch of police have snatched Tk 35.75 lakh from a man in Brahmanbaria Sadar upazila.

The incident took place Wednesday morning in East Paikpara area of Brahmanbaria town.

Victim Fazlul Haque filed a case at Brahmanbaria Sadar Model Police Station the night of the incident.

He said the money belonged to him and his brother-in-law and it was acquired from selling land recently.

Fazlul was going to a bank on a rickshaw to deposit the money when a microbus stopped in his path, said Md Aslam Hossain, officer-in-charge of Brahmanbaria Sadar Model Police Station quoting the case statement.

There were three people in the vehicle, of whom one was in a police uniform, one was carrying a gun, and another was the driver, he added.

They introduced themselves as DB officials and told Fazlul he was carrying illegal items and had to go with them to the police station.

Fazlul, who said he doubted them, started shouting for help. But the trio forcibly picked him up in their vehicle and beat him, the OC further said.

Then the robbers snatched the money from Fazlul and dropped him near the Police Lines area along the Comilla Sylhet highway.

Police are investigating the matter, the OC said.

Four burnt in fishing boat fire

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

Four people suffered burn injuries as a small fishing boat caught fire after its engine exploded in the Karnaphuli river at Chattogram's Patenga yesterday.

The injured - Jamal Uddin, 55, Mahmudul Karim, 50, Mofizur Rahman alias Shah Alam, 45, and Imam Hossain, 28 - were admitted to the burn unit of Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Doctors at the CMCH said Mahmudul and Mofizur, both of whom suffered burns on 80 percent of their bodies, are in critical condition.

Kabirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Patenga Police Station, said the fire broke out at the wooden fishing boat after its engine exploded in the river around 12:10pm.

The incident happened when the boat was anchored near the jetty used by a cruise ship in Patenga, said the OC.

As the fire broke out after the explosion, locals cut the boat's rope. Later, the burning boat floated to Patenga Ghat 15.

The four people on the boat, who were injured in the fire, jumped into the river immediately, said the police official.

Later, locals rescued them and sent them to CMCH, said Kazi Enam Elahi, sub-inspector of Patenga Police Station, who visited the spot.

A coast guard team rushed to the spot immediately and started working to extinguish the blaze, said an official of Bangladesh Coast Guard East Zone.

Later, tugboats from Bangabandhu Tunnel Authority, the navy and firefighting units from different fire stations doused the blaze, said the OC.

The fire was brought under control at 2:00pm, added the police official.

Pollution claims 2.72 lakh lives in one year

FROM PAGE 1

The presence of PM2.5 was more than twelve times higher than WHO's annual air quality standard, mentions the report.

Particulate matter, especially PM2.5, is the fine particles that float in the air. It is linked to asthma, heart and lung diseases, cancer, respiratory illnesses, and premature deaths.

Lead poisoning is causing irreversible damage to children's brain development, resulting in an estimated annual loss of nearly 20 million IQ points.

Major rivers in Bangladesh experienced a severe decline in water quality due to industrial discharge

and unmanaged waste, including plastic and untreated sewage, the report states.

The rivers surrounding Dhaka receive about 60,000 cubic metres of toxic industrial waste every day from more than 7,000 industries mainly located mostly in Tongi, Hazaribagh, Tejgaon, Tarabo, Narayanganj, Savar, Gazipur, Ghorashal, and the Dhaka Export Processing Zone.

Untreated industrial waste and chemicals used for agriculture are significantly polluting the soil which ultimately affects the rivers through groundwater flows.

Abdoulaye Seck, World Bank country director for Bhutan and

Bangladesh, said, "We have seen around the world that when economic growth comes at the cost of the environment, it cannot sustain. But it is possible to grow cleaner and greener without growing slower."

"To sustain its strong growth path and improve the liveability of cities and the countryside, Bangladesh simply cannot afford to ignore the environment."

Timely and urgent interventions for air pollution control; improved water, sanitation, and hygiene; and control of lead exposure could prevent over 133,000 premature deaths per year, he said.

Other speakers said investments

in cleaner power generation, cleaner cooking fuel, and stricter control of industrial emissions could help reduce air pollution.

Enforcing environmental regulations coupled with investments and other incentives for clean cooking, scaling up green financing, setting up efficient carbon markets, and raising awareness to reduce pollution should be emphasised, they added.

Ana Luisa Gomes Lima, World Bank senior environmental specialist and co-author of the report, said, "With timely and right set of policies and actions, Bangladesh can reverse its environment degradation."

I will recoup

FROM PAGE 1

Azad, who won the election as an independent, was speaking at a programme, organised by Lalpur upazila administration, marking the Independence Day on Tuesday.

A video clip of his speech went viral on social media yesterday.

Azad, vice-president of Nature district Awami League, also said, "I have deposited Tk 25 lakh in the bank and bought a tax-free car for Tk 27 lakh. If I wanted, I could buy a car spending Tk 1 crore. But since I don't have enough money, I bought one with Tk 27 lakh. Now I'm going to buy it with that money. I'll recoup that money. I won't do anything else. I will recoup only that Tk 1.26 crore."

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Sharmin Akter, among others, was present.

Sharmin said, "I don't know how the lawmaker made such comments in front of us all. I felt embarrassed." Asked about his speech, Azad told The Daily Star on Wednesday night, "I said it jokingly. It is nothing serious."



Abul Kalam Azad

ICB Islamic Bank in dire straits

FROM PAGE 1

"The bank has no quality receivable (securities) and that is why the central bank rejected their application for liquidity support," said BB Spokesman Md. Mezbaul Haque, adding that ICB Islamic Bank's owner can also provide funds to the bank to run its operations.

Contacted, Muhammad Shafiq Bin Abdullah, managing director of ICB Islamic Bank, said: "We appealed against the central bank decision. Some banks are continuing to get the central bank liquidity support but we were turned away."

The majority of the banks are facing a liquidity crisis and it is not just ICB Islamic Bank, he said, while denying paying the employees' salaries in phases.

"Most of the issues are legacy issues, including the Tk 425 crore liabilities with the central bank," Abdullah said, adding that all banking operations including lending are going on as normal.

However, three officials of ICB Islamic Bank told The Daily Star on the condition of anonymity that the bank is struggling to pay its employees in full at the end of the month.

The bank has as many as 350

employees in its 33 branches, they said.

The deteriorating financial health though took place despite having a central bank appointed observer in the Shariah-based bank from its onset.

Md Rajab Ali, a BB director, was dispatched to ICB Islamic Bank in 2022 and like his predecessors, he failed to bring in any positive changes.

Ali told The Daily Star that he joins the quarterly virtual meetings, where details of issues the bank is facing are not discussed.

He, however, acknowledged that the bank is facing different kinds of challenges including the liquidity crisis.

The bank has been in the losses in the last few years; in 2023, its losses stood at Tk 56.5 crore. It has failed to declare dividends for many years due to the losses.

At the end of 2022, which is the latest available data, the bank had Tk 1,212 crore as deposits, of which Tk 444 crore as frozen deposits.

Frozen deposits are deposits from Oriental Bank that were blocked by the central bank. The lender had Tk 2,000 crore as frozen deposits and has so far repaid

about Tk 1,500 crore to Oriental Bank's depositors.

The bank's origins can be traced back to 1987 when it was operating under the moniker Al Baraka Bank.

In 1994, it became a 'problematic bank' and the central bank introduced the practice of appointing an observer to errant banks to bring in discipline.

In 2004, it started operating as a scheduled commercial bank under a new name, Oriental Bank.

In June 2006, the central bank dissolved the board of directors of Oriental Bank after detecting massive irregularities. A total of 34 cases were registered in 2005 and 2006 for embezzling an estimated Tk 34 crore from Oriental Bank.

The banking regulator took full control of the bank and appointed a BB executive director as the bank's administrator to safeguard the depositor's money.

In August 2007, the BB floated a tender to sell the majority of the bank's shares. Two bidders participated in the tender, with Swiss ICB Group, which has banking business in Asia and Africa, walking away with the stake.

In 2008, the bank was renamed as ICB Islamic Bank.

Fewer deaths

FROM PAGE 1

Hasan Mahmud said during his recent visit to India, he urged the authorities to ensure that non-lethal weapons are used by the BSF.

Border Guard of Bangladesh (BGB) has protested against the recent killings of a Bangladeshi at the border in Lalmonirhat and another in Naogaon, he said.

Citing BSF's account of the incident in Lalmonirhat, he said some Bangladeshi cut the barbed wire fence to enter Indian territory around 10:00pm on March 25.

The Bangladeshi outnumbered the BSF men, he said, adding that as the Bangladeshi encircled the BSF men who tried to stop them, the latter opened fire injuring two.

"One of the injured came back to Bangladesh and the other one was admitted to a hospital in India. He died there."

In Naogaon, a man who entered India was shot dead on March 26, he said, adding that BGB already held a meeting with the BSF and protested the incident.

According to our correspondent in Lalmonirhat, the BSF on Wednesday night returned the body of Liton Mia, 18, who was shot dead by BSF.

Liton was buried at his village in Durgapur Union Parishad of Aditmari upazila.

Local Union Parishad Chairman Asaduzzaman Nannu told The Daily Star that BSF was supposed to return the body at Durgapur border of Aditmari upazila on Wednesday afternoon. But they handed over the body late at night.

Lt Colonel Mofazzal Hossain Akhand, commanding officer of BGB Battalion 15, said people living near the border should be aware of the dangers of illegally crossing the border.

UNB reports that the body of Bangladeshi farmer Al Amin, who was shot by the BSF along the Nitpur border in Porsha upazila of Naogaon on March 26, was also handed over to the BGB at Hapania area on Wednesday night, said Subedar Mahfuzur Rahman of the local BGB camp.

Number of students

FROM PAGE 1

September 12, 2021. The 543-day school closure in Bangladesh was one of the longest in the world.

Suleman Khan, secretary of the Secondary and Higher Education Division, at the programme said the report is prepared based on self-reporting by the heads of educational institutions.

"The report was not aimed at finding the reasons for the increase or decrease of students. We will need another study to find the reasons."

BANBEIS statistics chief Alamgir, in his keynote presentation, said there were 2,03,83,060 students and 6,40,639 teachers at the 39,788 post primary educational institutions.

Fifty-one percent of the students and 28 percent of the teachers were female.

The report shows that there were

28,013 students and 5,873 teachers at 123 English medium secondary schools.

DROPOUT RATES

The dropout rate at the secondary level in 2023 was 32.85 percent - 3.13 percent lower than the previous year.

The rate of girls dropping out was 34.87 percent, which was 40.78 in 2022.

Meanwhile, the dropout rate for the higher secondary level was 21.51 percent for all and 22.45 for girls.

There were 33 students per teacher in 2023 at the secondary schools. About 72 percent of teachers were trained.

The BANBEIS report shows there were 27,58,504 students and 1,18,280 teachers at 9,259 madrasas in 2023. Around 53 percent of all students and 20 percent of teachers are female.