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# Power shortage more acute in rural areas

Some districts see 25pc supply shortfall due to gas crisis

ASIFUR RAHMAN

With the weather getting warmer, power crisis is growing across the country and some rural areas have been experiencing prolonged loadshedding since last week.

Residents of different divisional cities are facing at least an hour of power cuts every day. It is six to seven hours in some rural areas as the mercury hovers around 36 to 38 degrees Celsius in some districts.

The power shortages have also started to affect businesses and irrigation.

As of 3:00pm yesterday, Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) generated around 12,700MW electricity against the demand for 14,300MW, which is about 1,600MW shy of the demand.

The situation was similar last week, with highest 1,826MW loadshedding reported on Tuesday, PDB data show.

PDB officials said they are prioritising Dhaka and other divisional cities to supply electricity.

"Except for the two distribution companies in Dhaka [DPDC and DESCO], all five distributors are getting less electricity compared to their demand," a top PDB official told The Daily Star, wishing anonymity.

Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board (REB), the largest power distributor which supplies electricity in rural areas, is getting around 25 percent less than its demand.

More than half the country's consumers are under REB coverage.

The 25 percent supply shortfall means rural areas are facing five to

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Palestinian father Ashraf mourns over the bodies of his two daughters Aysal and Rashel, who were killed in an overnight Israeli air strike, at al-Najar hospital in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. Story on page 7.

PHOTO: AFP

# PM likely to visit 3 nations from April 24

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is likely to visit three countries from April 24, sources said.



According to the sources, the premier will fly to Bangkok on April 24 evening to attend the 18th session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The event will be held on April 22-26 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok.

She will then join a special meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF), to be held in Riyadh of Saudi Arabia on April 28-29. The meeting will focus

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# EMBEZZLEMENT ACC sues 8 ex-members of NSU board of trustees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) sued eight former North South University (NSU) trustee board members for misappropriating funds and causing financial losses of Tk 10.47 crore for the university.

ACC Deputy Director Anwarul Haque filed the case on Tuesday with its integrated district office in Dhaka-1 under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

ACC Public Relations Officer Akhtarul Islam confirmed the matter to The Daily Star yesterday.

The accused are -- Benajir Ahmed, 70, MA Kashem, 84, Rehana Rahman, 75, Azim Uddin Ahmed, 83, Md Shajahan, 70, Yasmin Kamal, 70, Fawzia Naz, 61, and Tanver Harun, 54.

According to the case statement, the accused purchased ten luxury cars

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# RIGHTS VIOLATIONS Home ministry snubs two-thirds of NHRC enquiry requests Commission seeks power to probe disciplined forces

ZYMA ISLAM

Nearly two-thirds of the enquiry requests made by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to the home ministry regarding cases of human rights violations by law enforcement agencies have gone unheeded.

The commission now seeks the power to investigate the disciplined forces itself and has proposed that the law be amended to that end.

The founding law of the organisation, National Human Rights Commission Act-2009, restricts the commission from investigating any disciplined forces, including police and Rab.

The law only allows the NHRC to request reports and information from the home ministry, or recommend that the ministry conduct investigations.

Since 2012, the NHRC had made 122 such requests to the home ministry for reports, of which only 44 were adequately responded to, shows the commission's annual report.

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**The founding law of the organisation, National Human Rights Commission Act-2009, restricts the commission from investigating any disciplined forces, including police and Rab.**

# 8-year-old boy crushed to death between two buses

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An eight-year-old boy died after he got crushed between two buses in Dhaka's Gulistan area this afternoon.

The victim, Md Sumon, used to sell books on the streets.

The accident took place around 4:00pm near Sergeant Ahad Police Box.

The child was standing behind a bus of Jainpur Express when a recklessly driven BRTC double decker hit him and crushed him against the rear of the Jainpur Express bus, leaving him critically injured, said Md Babu, a witness.

Babu and some others rushed him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where doctors declared him dead around 4:45pm.

Sumon's stepfather Abdu Samad said he used to sell various books, including prayer education books, on buses and streets.

"In the afternoon, we got the news that he was crushed between two buses," he said.

# Jamaat leaders gearing up for upazila election

To join 1st phase of polls as independents; campaigns on in several districts

RASHIDUL HASAN

Many leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami are going to take part in the upcoming upazila polls as independents.

The leaders have already started campaigning in advance in different districts where the polls will be held on May 8, the first phase.

Many printed posters which have been circulated in their upazilas. The leaders are seeking votes, report our correspondents in the districts, including Khulna and Satkhira.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Jamaat Assistant Secretary General Abdul Halim yesterday said, "Jamaat-e-Islami will not contest the upazila election as a political party. However, some grassroots leaders have decided that they will run."

Asked whether the party will take any action against those participating in the polls, Halim said they will decide on this later after discussing the matter in the party forums.

Sources in Jamaat said party leaders will contest the elections particularly in those upazilas where there is a strong possibility of

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**Jamaat-e-Islami is not registered with the Election Commission as a political party. That is why its candidates will take part in the upazila polls as independents.**

# MV ABDULLAH Negotiations with pirates 'almost at final stage'

Says Mercantile Marine Office official

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Negotiations with the Somali pirates, who have hijacked a Bangladeshi ship and held the crew hostage, are now almost at the final stage, claimed an official of Mercantile Marine Office.

MMO Principal Officer Captain Sabbir Mahmood told The Daily Star yesterday that the next step would be finding a convenient way to send the ransom to the pirates for the release of 23 crew members, who are all Bangladeshis.

He added that the seafarers may not be freed before Eid.

MMO supervises issues like registration, survey, fitness and others for Bangladesh-flagged merchant vessels and also gives port clearance to all foreign vessels that enter Bangladesh maritime territory.

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**Dhaka airport: Third terminal to be handed over to CAAB tomorrow**

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**PRAYER TIMING**  
 APRIL 5

Fajr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
4:29	12:30	4:45	6:20	7:45

JAMAAT 4:39 1:15 5:00 6:30 8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

**SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING**

RAMADAN	APRIL	SEHRI	IFTAR
25	5		6:20
26	6	4:24	6:20
27	7	4:23	6:21



# JEWELS OF THE JUNGLE

A male Kalij pheasant spotted roaming the grounds at Chittagong University recently. These hen-sized birds can be found in forests and thickets in the Himalayan foothills, from Nepal and Pakistan to Western Thailand. They prefer mostly forested areas in hilly or mountainous regions, which is why they can be seen often in Sylhet and Chattogram hill tracts. While the males are considered strikingly beautiful due to the navy blue-black plumage and a glaring red around the eyes, the females are more mundane brownish-grey. Like most pheasants, the Kalij pheasant is also omnivorous, with a diverse menu of plants and small insects or reptiles. Considered generally sedentary, these birds are known to perform only seasonal movements for food or mating and roost on trees. However, if frightened, not only can they fly but can scurry away on foot from danger. Though the Kalij pheasant is in the "Least Concern" category of the IUCN, there have been reports of decline in their populations in many areas due to hunting and habitat loss.

PHOTO: NOBLE CHAKMA

# NBR wants to slap 15pc VAT on Metro fare from July 1

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Metro rail users will probably have to pay more as the National Board of Revenue is going to impose 15 percent VAT on the fare from July 1.

The NRB yesterday wrote to the metro rail authorities, saying that they will not extend the exemption of 15 percent VAT, supposed to be imposed on December 28, 2022, when the metro rail launched.

The metro authorities said once VAT is imposed, it is going to affect the commuters. They said they will request the NBR to reconsider its decision.

The country's first metro rail service was opened to public partially in December 2022 and fully from November last year.

Around 2.95 lakh people used the trains daily before Ramadan and the metro rail authorities earned around Tk 1.5 crore daily, according to officials of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL).

The fare from Uttara to Motijheel is Tk 100 and the minimum fare is Tk 20.

The NBR, in a letter to the DMTCL, said various development projects are underway to attain the goal of becoming a developed nation by 2041.

The government must ensure funds to implement the projects, which are mainly coming from direct and indirect taxes.

The revenue administration said tax benefits are given to various sectors on different occasions to promote the development of domestic industries, reduce import dependency, and support small

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