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BRTA ADVISORY COUNCIL Maiden meeting comes 7 years after inception

Council was supposed to meet every four months

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

A section of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) Act-2017 specifies formation of an advisory council under the leadership of the road transport and bridges minister.

The law stipulates seven terms of actions for the advisory council, four of which are directly related to ensuring road safety and bringing discipline to the road transport sector.

The council, according to the act, is supposed to hold a meeting in every four months or anytime in case of an emergency. But it could not hold any meeting in the last seven years when the country saw a gradual and sharp rise in road crashes and deaths.

At long last, the 18-member council is going to hold its maiden meeting on May 15 to discuss several issues, including fixing the economic life of commercial vehicles.

Wishing anonymity, a top BRTA official said the

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Pilgrims arrive at the Hajj Camp in the capital's Ashkona yesterday. This year's first hajj flight is scheduled to depart from Dhaka for Saudi Arabia at 7:20am today.

PHOTO: STAR

Chicken price soars by up to Tk 50 a kg in a month

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

The price of chicken, a staple source of animal protein for many, has increased by Tk 40-50 per kg in a month, causing frustration to low-income families.

Traders have attributed the price hike to an unexpected number of chicken deaths during recent heatwaves across the country.

Visiting kitchen markets in Mirpur-II, Kazipara, Shewrapara, Ibrahimpur, Kochukhet, and Karwan Bazar, The Daily Star found that all types of chicken were selling at significantly higher prices in comparison to this time last month.

Milon Mia, a private sector employee, said, "I typically buy 10 sonali chickens per month for my six-member family. But due to the price hike, I could only afford to buy five hybrid sonali chickens five this month at Tk 380 per kg."

"I practically went to every shop looking for a cheaper price, but with no avail," Milon added while strolling

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Chances of hitting oil, gas in Bay high

Finds seismic survey

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The likelihood of Bangladesh striking oil and gas in the shallow and deep waters of the Bay of Bengal is high, according to a seismic survey.

The structure of Bangladesh's shallow sea is similar to that of Myanmar's offshore area where the neighbouring country discovered large amounts of gas, said the survey, conducted by TGS-Schlumberger.

Elisabeth Gillbard, senior geologist of the TGS, presented the survey findings at a promotional seminar at a hotel in Dhaka yesterday.

The survey findings were revealed at a time when Bangladesh floated an international tender for offshore exploration of oil and gas in the Bay.

Talking about the gas discoveries in Myanmar, Gillbard said that they found a very similar geology in the shallow waters of Bangladesh.

"We have also found thermogenic gas systems in the deep seas," she added. Analysing data of the seismic survey, Gillbard also said they have found huge oil and gas systems in the Bengal Fan, like the Mississippi Fan, and the Nile Delta Fan. "We see all of these systems within the Bengal Fan."

Prof Badrul Imam, an energy expert, told The Daily Star that there are two types of natural gas based on their generation and accumulation - biogenic and thermogenic.

"The presence of biogenic gas in our shallow seas is very encouraging," he said, adding that the presence of

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Foreign secy of India arrives in Dhaka

BSS, Dhaka

Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra arrived in Dhaka yesterday evening on a two-day official visit to "finalise the schedule of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's upcoming India visit".

Diplomatic sources said Kwatra will start his formal official engagements with a meeting with Hasina today.

Vinay Kwatra will also meet Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud and his Bangladeshi counterpart Masud Bin Momen.

During the meeting with Hasina, Kwatra will hand over an invitation letter of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Hasina regarding her Delhi visit.

Sources, however, said Hasina's India visit is likely to take place in July this year. It would be her first visit to the neighbouring country after the January 7 national election.

During the visit, Hasina and Modi are likely to discuss different bilateral and regional issues, sources added.



Vinay Kwatra

Battles rage around Rafah

55 more Palestinians killed; WHO warns south Gaza hospitals have only three days' fuel left

AGENCIES

Israel bombarded the overcrowded Gaza city of Rafah, as talks resumed yesterday in Cairo aimed at agreeing the terms of a truce in the seven-month offensive.

Hamas said its fighters were battling Israeli troops in the east of the city, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have sought refuge from combat elsewhere in the enclave.

Palestinians were on the move again, abandoning neighbourhoods of the southern Gaza city and leaving them as ghost towns. The World Health Organization said yesterday that there is only enough fuel to run health services in the south of Gaza for three more days.

A senior US official said President Joe Biden's administration paused a shipment of weapons to Israel last week in an apparent response to the expected Rafah offensive. This would be the first such delay since the Biden administration offered its full support to Israel after October 7 offensive, reports Reuters.

A senior Israeli official, asking not to be named, said "if we have to fight with our fingernails, then we'll do what we have to do."

Israeli forces on Tuesday seized the main border crossing between

Gaza and Egypt in Rafah, cutting off a vital route for aid. Residents said tanks, which had moved in to take control of the crossing, had not entered the built-up areas of the city and gun battles were still outside the city limits.

Palestinian territory in Israel's offensive in Gaza. The tally includes at least 55 deaths in the past 24 hours.

Despite the latest Israeli assault in Rafah, the United States said it believes a revised Hamas ceasefire proposal may lead to a breakthrough in the ceasefire impasse.

In Cairo, all five delegations participating in ceasefire talks - Hamas, Israel, the US, Egypt and Qatar - reacted positively to the resumption of negotiations, and meetings were continuing yesterday, two Egyptian sources said.

CIA Director Bill Burns was scheduled to travel from Cairo to Israel later yesterday to meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israeli officials, a source familiar with his travel said.

Israel army, meanwhile, said it reopened the Kerem Shalom border crossing to humanitarian aid for Gaza yesterday, four days after closing it in response to a rocket attack that killed four soldiers.

"Trucks from Egypt carrying humanitarian aid, including food, water, shelter equipment, medicine and medical equipment donated by the international community are already arriving at the crossing," the army said.

» US pauses a shipment of weapons to Israel

» All delegations participate in ceasefire talks in Cairo

» Death toll in enclave rises to 34,844

2 Bangladeshi men shot dead by BSF

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Thakurgaon

Two Bangladeshi men were shot dead by India's Border Security Force (BSF) in Panchagarh's Tetulia upazila early yesterday, said Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

The deceased were identified as Abdul Jalil, 24, son of Md Joinuddin of Magura village and Md Yasin Ali, 23, son of Ketab Ali of Tirnoihat Brommatal village under the same upazila.

The incident took place near the Khaykhatpara border in the upazila around 12:30am, said Lt Col Jubayed Hasan, commanding officer of BGB-18.

Local sources said BSF members opened fire on a group of people when they trespassed into Indian territory. At that time, two of them were shot and killed on the spot. After

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Displaced Palestinians arrive with their belongings to set up tents on a beach near Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip yesterday as Israel bombarded southern Gaza city of Rafah.

PHOTO: AFP

AstraZeneca to withdraw Covid vaccine globally

REUTERS

AstraZeneca said on Tuesday it had initiated the worldwide withdrawal of its Covid-19 vaccine due to a "surplus of available updated vaccines" since the pandemic.

The company also said it would proceed to withdraw the vaccine Vaxzevria's marketing authorisations within Europe.

"As multiple, variant Covid-19 vaccines have since been developed there is a surplus of available updated vaccines," the company said, adding that this had led to a decline in demand for Vaxzevria, which is no longer being manufactured or supplied.

According to media reports, the Anglo-Swedish drugmaker has previously admitted in court documents that the vaccine causes side effects such as blood clots and low blood platelet counts.

The firm's application to withdraw the vaccine was made on March 5 and came into effect on May 7, according to the Telegraph, which first reported the development.

The Serum Institute of India (SII), which produced AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine under the brand name Covishield, stopped manufacturing and supply of the doses in December 2021, an SII spokesperson said.

London-listed AstraZeneca began moving into respiratory syncytial virus vaccines and obesity drugs through several deals last year after a slowdown in growth as Covid-19 medicine sales declined.

