



Shanto's cry for 'good wickets' brushed aside

P11



Cyclone survivors are not just numbers

P8



Vessel hit by missiles off Yemen's coast

P7



Dengue survey paints grim picture for 2024

P3



THE AFTERMATH ... Soldana and other neighbouring villages in Khulna's Paikgachha upazila have gone under water after Cyclone Remal breached a Shiba river embankment, washing away a large number of crab and shrimp farms. The water has also engulfed a part of a road that was vital for the villagers, further adding to their woes. Thousands of people have been affected by the flooding there. The photo was taken yesterday. More photos on P2.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Biman U-turns to buy Airbus planes

In 3 days, reconstituted evaluation body finds purchase viable after old committee gave the thumbs down

ZYMA ISLAM

In January this year, Biman found that it would be making massive losses if it bought two Airbus A350 planes.

On April 22, a new appraisal committee took over the evaluation and, in only three days, concluded that it would be a profitable venture.

The Biman board has even given the go-ahead for the procurement of four Airbus planes, each costing around \$180 million, based on the new calculations.

On multiple occasions throughout last year, Bangladesh gave its word that it would buy Airbus planes.



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The final memorandum of understanding, which comes with a hefty non-refundable \$5 million commitment fee per plane, was hinging on this techno-financial evaluation.

The national carrier would have to undergo an accumulated cash shortfall of up to \$463.08 million throughout the lifetime (25 years) of the planes, the previous committee found after studying a proposal for six months.

Five months later, the evaluating committee was reconstituted by the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

Coastal belt grapples with devastation

Cyclone Remal claims 26 lives; crops damaged, around 50,000 fish enclosures washed away

STAR REPORT

Scenes of destruction caused by Remal have begun to emerge in the country's coastal areas as people started to return home from shelters.

The death toll from the cyclone rose to 26 as 13 more deaths in seven districts over the last two days were reported yesterday.

The cyclone affected crops, uprooted trees, knocked down electricity poles, broke embankments and washed away fish enclosures, officials said.

The government agencies concerned could not complete the assessment of the loss of lives and damages to properties yesterday.

According to primary estimates, the damages to the fisheries sector is worth at least Tk 858 crore as nearly 50,000 fish

enclosures were flooded.

Remal hit the Bangladesh coast on Sunday evening and stayed on Bangladesh territories for 34 hours before heading towards Assam. It affected 37 lakh people across the coastal region.

Thousands of people either had to take refuge at their neighbour's homes or spend nights under the open sky as nearly 1.5 lakh houses were damaged, report our correspondents from coastal areas.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will visit Remal-hit areas in Patuakhali tomorrow, reports BSS.

The houses of Jennat Gazi and his son Sohrab Gazi were destroyed after a tree fell on those at Boro Auliapur village of Patuakhali Sadar upazila.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Why tidal surges were so high

ARUN DEVNATH and PINAKI ROY

Southern rivers in Bangladesh were already swelling with waters on May 23 due to the full moon's gravitational dance with the Earth.

Then, three days later, came Cyclone Remal with strong winds and heavy rains.

The arrival of two forces in a deadly coincidence upended coastal lives in the south, laying bare the communities' vulnerabilities to climate change.

The cyclone also left behind an arc of devastation across a region home to about 35 million people, but the worst peril stemmed from tidal surges.

Cyclones are a familiar threat to coastal residents. One of them is Mohammad Masum Hossain. He and his family live near water in Pirojpur's Kowkhali upazila, a marshy area known for meandering rivers and creeks.

But the afternoon of May 26 brought an unusual nightmare: the rivers burst their banks, sending a deluge of water over the roads into the neighbourhoods. Minutes later, the family's yard disappeared under water.

Masum hoped and prayed that the water would stop climbing and save the house as it was built on higher ground. He was wrong. After dark, water surged further, deluging the house and forcing its dwellers to move household equipment into their beds.

Other coastal residents have similar tales. "I have seen a lot of floods and cyclones. But I have never seen the water level this high," said 65-year-old Siddiqui Sheikh of Pirojpur Sadar upazila's Bhajjhora village.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Graft allegation Benazir summoned before ACC on June 6

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has summoned former IGP Benazir Ahmed to appear before it on June 6 on corruption allegations.

The graft watchdog yesterday also asked Benazir's wife Jissan Mirza and two of their daughters to appear before it on June 9 for questioning over graft allegations. Letters were sent to them in this regard, said sources in the ACC.

In another development, the Bangladesh Securities and Exchange Commission (BSEC) on Monday froze the beneficiary owners' (BO) accounts of Benazir, his wife, and two daughters.

On April 18, the graft watchdog decided to launch an enquiry into the allegations of amassing illegal wealth by the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

RELATED STORY ON PAGE 2

Wealth, awards piled up as he grew in power

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

Former police chief Benazir Ahmed kept receiving prestigious police awards even as he and his family continued to accumulate huge wealth, buying acre upon acre of land and other properties in different parts of the country.

In about 35 years of service, he was awarded the Bangladesh Police Medal (BPM), the highest medal of the force, five times.

Benazir, who also headed Rab, received the Best Taxpayer Award and the Integrity Award.

He was inspector general of police from 2020-2022. More than two years after his retirement, his name is appearing on headlines again after a Dhaka court earlier this month ordered the confiscation of his and his family members' assets in connection with an ongoing investigation into alleged corruption.

ACC documents show Benazir and his family bought at least 204.5 acres of land between 2009 and 2023.

Of these, 112 acres were purchased during his tenure as the IGP and Rab chief.

So far, investigators have located his land in Dhaka, Gopalganj, Madaripur and Cox's Bazar.

Of all his land, nearly 112 acres are in Gopalganj, his hometown.

Benazir was awarded the BPM in 2011, 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2019 for his courageous role

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

The kingpins may never be tracked down

Says official of Indian investigation agency; body parts possibly of the slain MP found in septic tank of Kolkata flat

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and RASHIDUL HASAN

Some members of a gold smuggling racket were likely behind the killing of Jhenaidah-4 MP Anwarul Azim Anar, but the assailants had contact with Aktaruzzaman only, said an officer of West Bengal CID.

Political leaders, business owners, and others might have been behind it, but it will be difficult to identify them unless Aktaruzzaman, known in his hometown Jhenaidah as Shaheen Mia, is caught, the officer told The Daily Star.

Investigators fear that the gold smugglers may remain untouched because none of the arrested know who they are.

"The investigation is now almost stuck...", said the officer.

Looking for clues, investigators from both Bangladesh and India are making profiles and analysing the activities of Azim's political rivals in Jhenaidah, Jashore, and different areas in the region, sources said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



MP AZIM MURDER

BUSINESS

FDI slips but stays above \$3b

Foreign direct investments to Bangladesh snapped its rising trend in 2023, highlighting the nervousness outside investors face in pumping money into a country whose foreign exchange regime is experiencing one of its worst periods in recent times.

Central bank data showed yesterday that Bangladesh received \$3.004 billion in FDI last year, a decrease of 14 percent from \$3.5 billion in 2022.

M Masrur Reaz, chairman of the Policy Exchange Bangladesh, a think-tank, said the drop is disappointing. "And it comes at a time when the country needs foreign currencies to ride out the macroeconomic challenges that have persisted for the past two years," he said.

STORY ON B1

Govt to take up two projects for Rohingyas

Tk 8,483cr to be needed; WB to provide 91pc of the funds

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MD ABBAS

After more than seven years of discussion, the government is set to finally undertake two projects involving Tk 8,483 crore for the Rohingya and host communities.

About 91 percent of the funds would be from the World Bank in loans and grants.

The projects were approved at yesterday's Ecnec meeting presided over by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Briefing journalists after the meeting, Planning Minister Abdus Salam said these projects are difficult and complex as seven ministries are involved.

He said the projects will be coordinated by the Economic Relations Division.

Of the money required, the WB will provide Tk 7,720 crore (\$700 million) – Tk 4,475 crore in loan and Tk 3,244 crore in grants.

The government will bear the rest.

The projects comprise 19 components, including addressing health, education and power issues,

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

World Bank to provide Tk 4,475cr as loan and Tk 3,244cr in grants

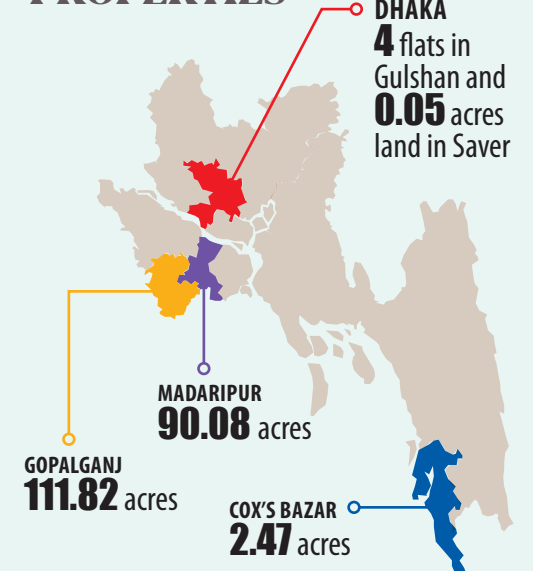
Benazir served as DMP commissioner during 2010-15. He was the director general of Rab during 2015-2020. He served as Inspector General of Police during 2020-22.

Between 2011 and 2019, he was awarded BPM, the highest medal of Bangladesh Police, five times. During this period, he and his family bought about 50 acres of land.

From 2020 to 2022, Benazir and his family bought at least 154 acres of land. During the period he got Best Taxpayer Award (2021) and Integrity Award (2021).



BENAZIR'S PROPERTIES



SOURCE: ACC INVESTIGATION