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NBR reduces duty on sugar imports

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Argentina get Messi boost

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400,000 trapped in northern Gaza: UN

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10 die so far in Sherpur, Mymensingh floods

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ROADS AND HIGHWAYS PROJECTS

Up to Tk 50,835cr lost to graft in 15yrs

TIB finds collusion between politicians, top bureaucrats, contractors led to monopolisation of dev activities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country lost up to Tk 50,835 crore in the last 15 years due to corruption in development projects implemented by the Roads and Highways Department, according to a Transparency International Bangladesh estimate.

Between 23 and 40 percent of the total work order value were lost because of corruption in fiscal year 2009-10 to 2023-24, said TIB presenting its research at its office in the capital's Dhanmondi yesterday. Considering the size of allocation, the country lost Tk 29,230 to 50,835 crores, finds the research.

"In the roads and highways sector, development activities have been monopolised through tripartite collusion among politicians, high-ranking bureaucrats, and contractors," reads its summary.

The colluders influenced policies, procurement, and projects. "Irregularities and corruption in the implementation of roads and highways development projects have been institutionalised through this collusion, creating ample opportunities for some corrupt politicians, officials, and contractors to illicitly earn large sums of money."

On the one hand, the projects are implemented at high costs due to irregularities. On the other hand, the roads and bridges that have been built are of poor quality, it added.

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People gather at the Fulbaria bus stand, ready to leave the capital as the four-day Durga Puja holiday begins today. The photo was taken around noon yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

BUSINESS

Exports grow 5% in Jul-Sep

Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) yesterday unveiled the export data for July-September period of fiscal 2024-25 and officially acknowledged that there was a \$3.16 billion export data mismatch in the same quarter of the previous fiscal year.

The EPB mentioned the National Board of Revenue's role in the data mismatch, an awkward revelation which came to light in July this year and led to a three-month suspension of regular export data publication.

STORY ON B1

FALL OF HASINA REGIME

Over 92,000 accused, 1,474 cases, 51 days

Police HQ says those were filed till Sept 25 over July-August violence

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

At least 1,474 cases have been filed nationwide in connection with the violence that occurred in July-August. These lawsuits were filed between August 6 and September 25 after the fall of Sheikh Hasina's government amid a mass uprising.

According to sources at the Police Headquarters (PHQ), a total of 92,486 people, including former prime minister Hasina, ex-ministers, political leaders, and police personnel, have been implicated in these cases, mostly involving murder charges.

PHQ data shows that only 779 people were arrested between August 5 and September 25 in the July-August violence cases. Of them, 246 were held as suspects.

However, arrests have surged this month, with 7,018 individuals apprehended in the first week alone. Among the arrestees are accused of different crimes, including narcotics trade, murder, and robbery, and also those accused in the July-August violence cases, said PHQ sources.

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Kazi brothers' capital abroad without BB nod

ZYMA ISLAM

Financial statements of former MP Kazi Nabil Ahmed and his brothers' famed British tea enterprise offer a rare glance into how powerful people in Bangladesh take their money to the UK via Asia's business hubs.

On April 12, 2024, Nabil and his brothers Kazi Anis Ahmed and Kazi Inam Ahmed, who control Gemcon Group which owns Kazi & Kazi Tea, told a hearing in the Royal Courts of Justice in London that they were the sole investors of a UK company.

Yet the company's bank statements from 2020 to 2021 show something striking, there was not a single transfer from Bangladesh to the UK company.

Instead, the money invested in the UK company came from firms in Singapore and Dubai, with the Dubai firm being owned by Anis.

Nabil's affidavit, submitted to the Election Commission before the polls, does not mention his foreign businesses. But he told the UK court he invested in the UK company.

Several incidents of capital flight out of Bangladesh to offshore tax havens amidst strict controls on money movement have been reported recently.

Now, transcripts of the UK court hearing obtained by The Daily Star show that Nabil and his two brothers fought for an injunction against a UK-based business partner so that

» Kazi brothers obtained an injunction from UK High Court 'to prevent info on capital flight from being disclosed'

» Offshore tax havens Dubai and Singapore used as transit cities to send money to UK

» Total offshore investments amount to Tk 254.5 crore

he does not reveal if Bangladeshi money-laundering laws were breached to set up their business.

The Daily Star has obtained a list of companies the Bangladesh Bank approved between 1971 and 2023 for sending money abroad, but Gemcon Group was not on the list.

The Anti-Corruption Commission here is currently investigating Nabil's wealth. According to his affidavit filed before the 2024 national elections, Nabil's income increased by over 1,000 percent since the 2018 elections.

He also has Tk 900 crore in loans from different banks, placing him among the top

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Racing buses end the tale of two sisters

One killed, the other injured after being run over

RAFIUL ISLAM

Like any other day, Tasnim Jahan Irene and her sister Nusrat Jahan Zerin were heading to their office - Next Venture - in the capital's Uttar Badda in an auto-rickshaw from Mirpur.

They reached the area around 9:15am and were about to cross Pragati Sarani, one of Dhaka's busiest thoroughfares.

Notably, there were no footbridges nearby.

Around the same time, two Akash Paribahan buses were racing in their desperation to overtake each other to get more passengers.

Suddenly, one bus slammed into the other and then ran over both the sisters, witnesses said.

Irene, a business development executive, died on the spot. Her life, full of promise, was cruelly snatched away in the blink of an eye.

Zerin, a staffer of the same institution, survived narrowly with injuries to her legs. She was taken to a nearby hospital.

"The two sisters lived and worked together... But one reckless driver tore them apart," said Saima Sultana, the victims' sister-in-law, her voice heavy with grief as she spoke to The Daily Star.

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ATTACKS ON HINDUS

BNP to ensure justice if voted back to power

Says Mirza Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

Stating that Bangladesh is an example of communal harmony, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said their party, if returns to power, will ensure justice through proper investigations and trials for all incidents of attacks on Hindus.

During a visit to the Dhakeshwari temple puja mandap on the first day of Durga Puja, he also expressed the BNP's sympathy for the eight-point demand of the Hindu community.

"We're considering the eight-point that you mentioned... we have our full sympathy for the core issue of the eight-point demand. We can tell you this, just as we have supported you in every problem in the past, we'll continue to stand by you in the future as well," Fakhrul said.

In an oblique reference to the Awami League, the BNP leader said this is

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The authorities have placed a sign prohibiting the use of polythene and plastic-made products on the premises of the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Jamaat churns out 81 reform proposals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Jamaat-e-Islami yesterday placed 81 proposals for state reforms, including key changes to the judiciary, legislature, election system and constitution.

The Islamist party proposed the nomination of a deputy speaker from the opposition in parliament and the introduction of proportional representation in the national election.

It also wants the abolition of electronic voting machines (EVMs), and the national election on different dates instead of a single day.

Jamaat Naye-e-Ameer Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher unveiled the proposals on behalf of the party's Ameer Shafiqur Rahman at a city hotel.

Asked about the elections and reforms, Shafiqur said that there would be two roadmaps - one for the reforms and the other for elections.

He emphasised that neither process should be excessively long or rushed.

"There are many political parties in the country. For a vibrant parliament, the public must vote for the right candidates, not just the party," he said about the election.

The Jamaat recommended reforms in 10 sectors, including the judiciary, legislature, electoral system, police and Rab, public administration, Anti-Corruption Commission, constitution, education, culture, and religion.

At the outset of his speech, Taher accused the Awami League of establishing authoritarian control over the country. "The party entrenched its power through

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