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Star INTERVIEW

# Graft was biggest hurdle in drawing FDI over last 15yrs

Says head of govt's key investment promotion agencies BIDA, BEZA

JAGARAN CHAKMA

Corruption and policy inconsistencies have posed significant challenges to attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) in Bangladesh over the past 15 years, said Ashik Chowdhury, the first private-sector leader to head the government's key investment promotion agencies.

"Countries such as India and Vietnam have successfully attracted FDI by shifting away from protective policies," the new executive chairman of the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) and Bangladesh Economic Zones Authority (BEZA) said.

"In Bangladesh, the gap between policy and execution will be bridged by promoting a results-driven, investor-focused approach," he said in an interview with The Daily Star.



Ashik Chowdhury

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Monsoon brings fortune for Kaushalya Thikadar as the swollen waterbodies in the Dumurtala village of Jashore's Abhaynagar become the perfect hosts for the growth of waterlilies, locally known as shapla – the stems of which are winter delicacy in the country. She collects around 25-30 shapla sticks from different canals and beels every day and sells them at Tk 10 per bundle of seven to 10 sticks. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## Dream and drive change Yunus urges youth



BSS, Dhaka

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus yesterday encouraged the youth to set their minds and dream of bringing positive change to the country.

"I especially encourage young people to set their minds, envision, and dream. A dream is the beginning of change. If you dream, it can happen; if you don't, it never will," he said while addressing members of the NDC and AFWC courses at his office in Tejgaon.

He emphasised that

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## HOME MINISTRY Interim govt okays merger of 2 divisions The move aimed at streamlining duties

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The Chief Adviser's (CA) Office has given in-principle approval for merging the Public Security Division and the Security Services Division under the Ministry of Home Affairs, a move expected to improve coordination and reduce costs.

A letter signed by AKM Moniruzzaman, director of the CA Office, was sent yesterday to the Cabinet Secretary, instructing the next steps for the merger. The decision aims to streamline responsibilities and enhance efficiency given the overlapping functions of both divisions. Confirming the development, a source at the CA Office told The Daily Star, "The chief adviser has given the nod following a request from the home ministry. Now, further review will be conducted by the secretary-level committee, finance ministry, and public administration ministry."

The two divisions have often faced issues with coordination.

The Public Security

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

## KALURGHAT ROAD-RAIL BRIDGE Ministry decides to review cost 17 days after approval Committee to reassess Tk 1,156.77cr project

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The railways ministry has decided to review the cost of the Kalurghat road-rail bridge project, 17 days after the interim government approved the Tk 1,156.77 crore project.

It has formed a four-member committee, led by ASM Ashrafal Alam, additional secretary (audit and ICT) of the ministry, to submit a report reviewing the estimated project cost, said officials.

The body will have representatives from the Road Transport and Highways Division (RTHD), Bridges Division, and Buget, reads the ministry circular issued on October 24.

"Following the directive of our adviser [railways ministry adviser], the committee was formed to review the component-wise cost of the project," Railways Ministry Secretary Abdul Baki told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said the committee will check whether any unwanted component was added to the project or cost was inflated irrationally.

Although the body has been asked to submit its report within seven working days, the RTHD named its representative HM Salauddin Monzu, a senior assistant secretary, for the committee on October 30.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## Adani dues to be cleared fast Says CA's press secy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government will accelerate the payment of the dues of Adani Power after the Indian power giant threatened to cut off electricity supply if its outstanding amount is not cleared by November 7.

"We are trying our best to accelerate the payment as our reserve is swelling... Now we are able to make international payment without digging into the main reserves," said Shafiqul Alam, the chief adviser's press secretary, at a briefing yesterday.

The government is expediting the payment to Adani.

"We are hopeful we will be able to repay about \$700 million to Adani as soon as possible," he said, adding that the backlog of dues to Adani was created by the previous government as it did not pay the bills on time.

He, however, said the power ministry has not received any correspondence from the Indian power company about suspending electricity supply over payment issues.

"If it is true then, we are dismayed and shocked. We will not be hostage to any individual power producer,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## CONSTITUTION'S FATE Decision after proposals, talks

Says head of reform commission

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Constitution Reform Commission will seek proposals from political parties and other stakeholders and then decide whether the constitution should be amended or rewritten.

"We will reach out to political parties, and request them to submit written opinions and specific proposals. We will not sit with them, but we will discuss with other stakeholders regarding reforms," Prof Ali Riaz, chief of the Constitution Reform Commission, said this during its first formal press conference held at the LD Hall of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday afternoon.

The government, not the commission, will talk with political parties about their proposals, he added.

Prof Riaz said, "Every written proposal and opinion submitted by political parties and other stakeholders will sincerely be reviewed by the commission, and efforts will be made to reflect those in the commission's recommendations as much as possible."

Later, the commission will consult with experts, lawyers, representatives of civil society organisations, prominent civil society figures, representatives of professional organisations, young thinkers, and representatives of cultural organisations and seek written proposals from them.

The commission will also hold discussions with representatives of the Anti-discrimination Student Movement and the Jatiya Nagorik Committee.

Responding to journalists' questions whether the constitution will be amended or rewritten, Prof Riaz said, "We cannot say yet what kind of proposals we will receive ... We will decide whether the constitution will be amended or rewritten after getting the proposals."

He said the commission will begin discussions with stakeholders next week.

Besides, the commission will gather views and proposals of the people through its website, which will be functional from tomorrow.

He added that the website address will be shared with the media through a press release.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Prof Ali Riaz

## 4 die in bike collision near Padma Bridge

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Shariatpur

Four people died in a head-on collision between two motorcycles near the Padma Bridge's South Toll Plaza in Jajira upazila of Shariatpur last night.

The deceased are Nabil Farazi, 18, Sayem Madar, 19, Arman Dhali, 18, and Khidir Madar, 20, all of whom are from Jajira, said Md Ahsan Habib, additional superintendent of police in Shariatpur.

He said the incident occurred around 9:00pm on the road adjacent to Sheikh Russel Cantonment near the toll plaza.

Locals along with law enforcers from the South Padma Bridge Police Station rescued and sent them to a hospital. "They died on the way," said Habib.

Quoting locals, he mentioned that both motorcycles were unregistered and driving at high speeds.

The police official said the bodies have been sent for autopsies.

Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) reported at least 4,153 deaths in 4,494 road crashes nationwide between January and September this year. In comparison, those figures were 4,016 and 3,727 in the first nine months of last year.

## 14 govt hospitals renamed

Major facilities in  
Dhaka among them

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health ministry has renamed 14 government medical college hospitals and other healthcare institutions across the country after the names of their respective districts.

A circular signed by MA Akmal Hossain Azad, senior secretary of the ministry's Health Services Division, issued yesterday announced the name changes.

In Dhaka, the Sheikh Hasina National Burn and Plastic Surgery Institute will now be known as the National Burn and Plastic Surgery Institute, and the Sheikh Russel National Gastroenterology Institute and Hospital has been renamed the National Gastroenterology Institute & Hospital.

Other institutions

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



Palestinians mourn near the bodies of their relatives, who were killed during Israeli bombardment, in Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

## Israeli attacks kill 31 Palestinians in Gaza

Four children among dead;  
Egypt hosts post-offensive talks  
on Gaza as part of truce efforts

REUTERS, Cairo

At least 31 people were killed during Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip yesterday, Palestinian medics said, with nearly half of the deaths in northern areas where the army has waged a month-long campaign it says aims to prevent Hamas regrouping.

Palestinians said the new aerial and ground offensives and forced evacuations were "ethnic cleansing" aimed at emptying two northern Gaza towns and a camp of their population in order to create buffer zones. Israel denies this, saying it is fighting Hamas who launch attacks from there.

Medics said at least 13 Palestinians were killed in separate attacks on houses in Beit Lahiya town and Jabalia, the largest of the enclave's eight historic refugee camps and the focus of the army's new offensive.

The rest were killed in separate Israeli airstrikes in Gaza City and in southern areas, including one in Khan Younis, which health officials said had killed eight people, including four children.

Israel has not commented on its military actions in Gaza yesterday.

Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO) said four children were among six people wounded Saturday in a strike on a polio vaccination centre in northern Gaza.