

CGS event starts today

Mahathir, other world leaders to join

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad will join an array of global dignitaries at the three-day Bay of Bengal Conversation 2024, beginning today at a Dhaka hotel.

The event, hosted by the Centre for Governance Studies, will feature 200 discussants, 300 delegates, and 800 participants from around 80 countries.

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus will inaugurate the programme, said CGS Executive Director Zillur Rahman during a press conference at the Pan Pacific Sonargaon yesterday.

Notable attendees include former Bolivian President Jorge Fernando Quiroga Ramirez, former Malian President Moussa Mara, former Serbian President Boris Tadic, alongside

celebrated
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Workers recycle plastic bottles at this plant in Hazaribagh without any safety equipment. Without protective eye-wear, gloves and masks, these women risk their health in the recycling process. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Power deals to be probed

Says energy adviser on quick rentals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite a court verdict on quick rental agreements in the power sector, exiting these deals will be challenging, said Energy Adviser Muhammad Fauzul Kabir Khan yesterday.

However, irregularities will be investigated by a committee, and necessary action will follow, he added.

He made the remarks during a meeting with officials and political leaders at the Circuit House in Chattogram.

The adviser also announced that construction of the long-awaited Kalurghat Bridge would begin in February next year. Additionally, the development of Unit 2 of the Eastern Refinery is set to commence soon.

To address the ongoing gas crisis, 100 new gas wells will be drilled over the next two years, he said. Tenders for offshore gas exploration are also expected to be invited in December.

During the meeting, various issues such as commodity price control, electricity, road and rail transport, and unplanned infrastructure projects were discussed.

Mayor Shahadat Hossain, Jamaat Chattogram Metropolitan ameer Shahjahan Chowdhury, and senior government officials were present at the event.

Bangladesh falls behind in rooftop solar race

MD ABBAS

Despite significant potential for rooftop solar energy, Bangladesh has lagged behind in development, while Vietnam has emerged as a regional leader in the sector.

As of 2024, Bangladesh's total solar energy output stands at 1,084.55 MW, according to the Sustainable and Renewable Energy Development Authority. This includes 258 non-net-metered rooftop solar systems with a capacity of 88.451 MW, and 2,476 net-metered rooftop solar systems

have called it a failed initiative.

Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, criticised the policy as flawed and politically motivated, claiming it primarily served a specific political group.

"Many people installed low-quality solar panels just to obtain utility connections. As a result, most of these systems are now non-operational," said Moazzem, also an adviser to the Just Energy Transition Network Bangladesh.

This sentiment was echoed by users who admitted they installed

stagnation to a lack of political will and inadequate policy support.

"We've never seen strong political commitment from previous governments, whereas Vietnam has shown remarkable dedication to renewable energy," said Moazzem. He said Vietnam boasts a well-established renewable energy supply chain, heavily supported by private sector investments, which Bangladesh lacks.

Bangladesh's net metering policies have also failed to gain traction.



BARRIERS	RECOMMENDATIONS
Lack of political will	Proper standards
Inadequate policy support	Financial incentives
Unclear guidelines	Private sector engagement
Limited financial returns	Robust policy framework
Complex approval processes	Shift in mindset

generating 111,732 MW.

In contrast, Vietnam produces 9,300 MW of rooftop solar energy out of a total solar capacity of 16,500 MW, making it the top solar energy producer in Southeast Asia, according to Vietnam Electricity.

Vietnam's total solar energy production is nearly equivalent to Bangladesh's entire power generation capacity.

A FAILED POLICY
Bangladesh introduced a policy in 2012 mandating new buildings to install solar panels for utility connections. However, experts

rooftop solar systems solely to fulfil the utility connection requirement.

"The rooftop solar I installed is now non-operational. I only installed it to get a utility connection. For outages, we rely on the building's generator," said Arif Mollah, a resident of Bailey Road.

Consequently, many rooftop solar systems across Dhaka have fallen into disuse.

LACK OF COMMITMENT, SUPPORT
Experts attribute Bangladesh's

Md Abul Kalam Azad, manager of the Just Energy Transition (JET) team at ActionAid Bangladesh, criticised the 70 percent capacity cap on renewable energy converters, which limits installations.

"This capacity limit needs revision to allow larger solar installations, making investments more attractive for residential and commercial users," said Azad, also the member secretary of JETnet-BD.

Shafiqul Alam, lead energy
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No more burnt bricks in government construction

Says Rizwana

BSS, Dhaka

Environment Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan said the use of burnt bricks will be stopped in all government constructions by 2025.

"Letter has been sent to the government offices informing them to stop using burnt bricks in any construction works as the government is the biggest consumer of bricks for various construction works like roads and buildings and bricks are used in large constructions," she told BSS.

Rizwana said the government should adopt an alternative to burnt bricks and it can be resolved if the government issues a demand letter.

Noting that brick kilns are one of the major causes of environmental pollution, she said the government is taking a strict stance to stop it.

New brick kilns in the country will not be given clearance as operations of 3,491 brick kilns have been shut due to a lack of environmental clearance, she said.

About environmental pollution caused by the use of polythene, she said the action against banned polythene or polypropylene

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Dengue still alarming in November

HELEMUL ALAM

Despite being mid-November, dengue has claimed 84 lives and hospitalised 15,784 people in this month so far.

Bangladesh's first dengue outbreak in 2000 saw 93 deaths and 5,551 hospitalisations, with November accounting for only 11 deaths and 724 cases, according to the Directorate General of Health Services.

In recent years, November dengue fatalities were two in 2018 and 2019, three in 2020, 113 in 2022, and a record 274 in 2023. Fresh cases in November were 1,192 in 2018, 4,011 in 2019, 546 in 2020, 3,567 in 2021, 19,334 in 2022, and 40,716 in 2023.

Experts blame ineffective measures by Dhaka city corporations, climate change, and public unawareness for the high density of Aedes mosquitoes. Entomologist Manzur A Chowdhury warned that cases could peak this month and linger until February.

National University's entomologist GM Saifur Rahman criticised the ineffective identification and eradication of Aedes clusters, particularly in district towns. He urged enhanced surveillance and community collaboration.

Prof Kabirul Bashar of Jahangirnagar University said climate change has altered Aedes mosquitoes' behaviour, enabling year-round breeding and biting at night, in addition to morning and evening. He stressed the need for sustained anti-mosquito drives.

A supernatural SCAM!

How a 'Dervish Baba conjured' crores from a retired nurse

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Want to earn easy money? Just find someone who thinks their partner is cheating on them, then claim to be a "Genie King" or "Dervish Baba", and offer solutions to "relationship problems" for a fee.

Bag crores of taka from the suspecting partner and disappear into the wind.

It may sound outlandish, but that's exactly what a group of fraudsters did to a retired nursing supervisor. She is also the wife of a noted physician in Dhaka.

Having doubts about her husband's faithfulness, she stumbled across an ad on Facebook in 2022, promising supernatural solutions for marital issues.

Desperate for help, she reached out and was soon speaking to a man introducing himself as "Quadir Al Jilani". He claimed to be a former imam from a prominent Madina mosque and a spiritual healer now based at a madrasa in Chattogram.

The man referred to her as "Maa". He assured her that the answers she sought could be hers if she is ready to pay.

The woman first paid Tk 9,000 through a mobile financial service. Over time, she spent Tk 5.86 crore in total, which drained her savings and more.

She cashed in her retirement benefits, mortgaged her gold, and even borrowed from family to meet the gang's constant demands.

To lend credibility, the fraudsters used voice-changing software to impersonate an actual "genie", a female fairy, and a 200-year-old "Dervish Baba". The elaborate setup was convincing enough to dupe the victim; she genuinely believed she was communicating with supernatural entities.

And so, when they told her the "work" was almost done but needed more funding to complete, she complied without question.

Each time they asked for cash, they warned her to keep everything confidential, claiming that any disclosure would "break the magic".

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RAOZAN IN CTG 11 hurt as masked assailants open fire No case filed, none arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"Everyone was wearing masks. There must have been 20 to 25 of them. When we arrived at the scene after receiving the news, they started firing indiscriminately before we could make sense of what was happening. Some even started hacking. Those who could, ran in any direction they could to save their lives."

This is how Md Jasim Uddin, 50, who was injured in an attack by a group of masked assailants in Raozan, Chattogram, on Thursday, described the incident. He said this while speaking to journalists at the casualty ward of Chittagong Medical College Hospital yesterday afternoon.

Along with him, two others injured in the same incident, Zane Alam, 44, and Md Saifuddin, 31, are also admitted there. The incident took place around 10:30pm on Thursday in Noapara Union's Niramishpara village.

At least 11 persons were admitted to CMCH, with three still undergoing treatment, while the rest received first aid. The incident began around 9:00pm when local shopkeeper Mohiuddin was returning home from Noapara Sadar via a dark road, preventing him from seeing the attackers.

They stopped him, questioning him about a message he had sent on his phone, then proceeded to assault and hack him. At one point, he managed to escape and return home in an injured state.

Upon hearing the news, nearby residents gathered at the spot, at which point the masked attackers opened fire indiscriminately.

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Distinguished guests -- including politicians, intellectuals, business leaders, and cultural figures -- gather to celebrate the 26th anniversary of the Bangla daily Prothom Alo at Radisson Blu Auditorium, Dhaka yesterday. The event featured a cultural programme, tribute to martyrs of the July uprising, and presentation of the Latifur Rahman Award for journalistic excellence.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Prothom Alo celebrates 26th anniv

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangla daily Prothom Alo celebrated its 26th anniversary with much enthusiasm and fanfare yesterday.

As part of the event, a cultural programme was held at Radisson Blue Auditorium in Dhaka, where employees of the daily from across the country took part.

Distinguished personalities including advisers to the interim government, politicians, intellectuals, industrialists, businessmen, women leaders, art and literature connoisseurs, senior public and private officials, lawyers, and civil society representatives joined the event as guests.

Executive Editor of Prothom Alo Sajjad Sharif welcomed the guests.

"In the last 26 years, we have devotedly tried to protect the promise of independent journalism. It continued during the July-

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