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38pc harassed,
31pc paid bribes
while seeking
police services

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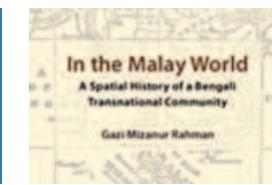
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India's fencing along border 'unauthorised'

Such activities will hurt bilateral ties, says foreign secy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka has told New Delhi that the construction of barbed wire fences by the Indian Border Security Force along the Bangladesh-India border "without proper authorisation" undermines the spirit of cooperation and friendly relations between the two nations.

Foreign Secretary Md Jashim Uddin has made this communication to Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Pranay Verma, who was summoned to the foreign ministry yesterday amid tensions touched off by the recent BSF activities along the border.

"Such activities, particularly the unauthorised attempts to construct barbed wire fencing and the related operational actions by BSF, have caused tensions and disturbances along the border," Jashim Uddin said in a media statement yesterday.

Also, Dhaka will push for the cancellation of any "unequal agreements" related to Bangladesh-India borders at a director general-level meeting of the border forces of the two countries scheduled for February.

Speaking at a press conference at the Secretariat yesterday, Home Affairs Adviser Lt Gen (retired) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury said that due to the BSF's recent fencing activities, tensions arose in five border areas, including Chapainawabganj, Naogaon, Lalmonirhat, and the Tin Bigha Corridor.

Home Adviser Jahangir Alam accused the previous Awami League government of granting India "unequal opportunities" through MoUs.

"Thanks to the strong position of the BGB and locals, India has been forced to halt its activities. I extend my gratitude to them for their role in this matter."

He added that various issues have risen along the border due to some "unequal agreements" signed during the previous government's tenure.

Jahangir Alam said four border-related Memorandums of Understanding have been signed between the two countries since Bangladesh's independence.

Asked at a separate press briefing in the foreign service academy, Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam said those four agreements are the 1974 Land Boundary Agreement for the disposal of enclaves and disputed lands; the Joint Indo-Bangladesh Guidelines for Border Authorities 1975; the Land Boundary Agreement Protocol 2011; and the Coordinated Border Management Plan 2011.

The home adviser said that, of those agreements, the 1975 MoU specifies that no defence development activities can take place within 150 yards of the zero line.

"Another MoU states that any development activities cannot occur within the 150 yards of the zero line without mutual consent. Any such work will require prior agreement between the two nations."

He said India has already fenced 3,271km of the 4,156km-long border with Bangladesh, leaving approximately 885km unfenced.

Jahangir Alam accused the previous Awami League government, which was in power between 2009 and 2024, of granting India unequal opportunities through MoUs,

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After a break during the July-August movement, the construction of the Dhaka-Ashulia Expressway, the second such expressway centring the capital, is now going on in full swing and saw almost 50 percent progress till December last year. Once completed, this 24km expressway – stretching from Dhaka airport to Dhaka EPZ – will be connected to the partially-opened Dhaka Elevated Expressway. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Next polls to be 'best ever and historic': Yunus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Professor Muhammad Yunus yesterday said the government is planning to make the upcoming general election of Bangladesh "the best ever and historic."

"We want to make it an example, a historical example," Yunus said during a meeting with Norwegian Ambassador to Bangladesh Håkon Arald Gulbrandsen.

Yunus also encouraged Norway to use Bangladesh as a regional distribution hub for their products

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ATTACK ON TRADERS
Emon among
10 sued for
attempted
murder

SHAFIQUL ALAM
AND
MUNTAKIM SAAD

Friday's attack on two computer traders in the capital's Elephant Road took place as they refused to pay extortion money to the gang of top criminal Sanjidul Haque Emon, says the case statement.

However, sources said the attack might be linked to a power struggle between two top criminals – Emon from Hazaribagh and Imamul Hasan Helal, alias Pichchi Helal, from Mohammadpur -- who are allegedly attempting to dominate the Multiplan Centre traders on Elephant Road.

The two were released on bail after the August 5 political changeover.

Two computer shop owners -- Wahedul Hasan Dipu, president of Elephant Road Computer

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Top criminals on extortion spree

SHAFIQUL ALAM
AND
MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

In November last year, a contractor secured the work to demolish a building in Dhaka's Moghbazar for Tk 16.5 lakh. Shortly afterwards, members of a local gang arrived at the site and demanded Tk 3 lakh to allow the work to proceed.

"We have been handling construction projects in Dhaka for over a decade. While we are no stranger to extortion, the situation has worsened over the last few months as unprecedentedly high amounts are being demanded in the name of top criminals," the contractor told The Daily Star, requesting anonymity.

"We even had to abandon a project in Bhashantek due to a similar extortion threat," he added.

The contractor initially paid Tk 100,000 to two gangs to resume the work in Moghbazar.

Sources claimed that one of the gangs operates under Zeesan Ahmed, a top criminal reportedly residing in a Middle Eastern country now. This

newspaper could not independently verify the claim.

A close associate of Subrata Bain, the leader of the other gang, however, denied his involvement in the incident.

Speaking to The Daily Star anonymously, he said, "Dada [Subrata] is not involved in any extortion activities. Other gangs are using his name."

Mohammad Razu, officer-in-charge of Hatirjheel Police Station, said they did not receive any information about Subrata's involvement in extortion. "If evidence emerges, we will take necessary legal action," he said.

Subrata's whereabouts are unknown, but people who knew him said he was sighted in Bangladesh after a long time recently.

With a good number of similar incidents reported in recent months, a climate of fear permeates businesses in Dhaka. Contractors in the construction sector are being forced to pay or stop work under threat, while businesspeople in other sectors are targeted with abduction or attacks.

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'ILLEGAL PLOT ALLOCATION'
ACC sues Hasina, her daughter

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her daughter, Saima Wazed (Putul), have been sued for irregularities in the allocation of plots under the Purbachal New Town project.

The Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case with its Dhaka Integrated District Office, ACC Director General Akhtar Hossain told reporters yesterday.



According to the case statement, Saima Wazed, the prime accused, concealed information about ownership of housing or apartments by her and her family members within the jurisdiction of Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakha (Rajuk) and abused Hasina's (second accused) authority as a public servant by influencing and colluding with 14 public officials involved in the allocation process to secure Plot-017 on Road-203 in Sector-27 of the Purbachal project despite her ineligibility.

This action violated laws and policies governing the allocation of plots in the Purbachal New Town Project.

ACC DG Akhtar said, "The charges have been filed under sections 161, 163, 164, 409, and 109 of The Penal Code, 1860, along with section 5(2) of The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947."

Fourteen other individuals have also been named as accused in the case. They are: Saiful Islam Sarkar, administrative officer, Purabi Goldar, senior assistant secretary, Kazi Wazi Uddin, additional secretary (administration), and Shahid Ullah Khandaker, secretary

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**VAT hike to improve tax-GDP ratio
Says CA press secy**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The interim government has been compelled to raise VAT on some commonly consumed products to improve revenue collection and stabilise the country's economy.

Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Shafiqul Alam made the statement at a press briefing at the Foreign Services Academy yesterday.

He said capital flight and erratic development expenditure by the previous government have left the economy in a fragile state.

"We need macroeconomic stability, and a good tax-to-GDP ratio is an indicator of that. However, our tax-to-GDP ratio is among the lowest in the world. In the last five months, we have had a significant shortfall in revenue collection."

"We had a revenue collection target of Tk 1,69,000 crore [in the last five months], but we

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Halima, who lives near the Khulna Railway Station, woke up to see these two puppies shivering amid the heavy winter fog yesterday morning. She made sure to get some warm clothes to cover them up while they sleep. The dogs are not at risk as this particular rail track

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

First HMPV case of the year reported

DGHS issues guideline

SYMPTOMS

- COUGH
- FEVER
- RUNNY OR STUFFY NOSE
- SORE THROAT
- WHEEZING
- SHORTNESS OF BREATH (DYSPNEA)
- RASH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 30-year-old woman has been found infected with the Human Metapneumovirus (HMPV), the first case of the disease in Bangladesh this year, according to health officials.

Halimur Rashid, line director of Communicable Disease Control Programme of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), said the woman from Kishoreganj also tested positive for Klebsiella Pneumoniae, a variant of pneumonia.

"The condition of the woman deteriorated due to pneumonia, not HMPV," said Halimur, adding that the patient is currently under treatment at Infectious Diseases Hospital, Mohakhali.

First identified in the Netherlands in 2001, HMPV spreads through direct contact between people, or when someone touches a contaminated surface.

HMPV is transmitted through respiratory droplets, direct contact with infected individuals, or contaminated surfaces. Infections are most common during late

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