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Next budget to focus on curbing inflation

Finance adviser tells senior journos

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed yesterday said the interim government will not incorporate any mega projects that cost billions of dollars in the next budget for FY2025-26.

"We will not undertake monumental projects costing \$10-\$12 billion in the upcoming budget. Instead, we will take projects that create employment."

He made the remarks during a pre-budget meeting with editors and senior journalists from print, online, and electronic media held at his office at the Secretariat in the capital.

He said the next budget will be realistic and people-centric.

"We will not formulate a budget that an elected government would throw away," said the finance adviser, adding that the upcoming budget will mainly focus on controlling inflation, not driving economic growth.

Finance Secretary Khairuzzaman Mozumder expressed optimism that

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2 girls raped in Rangpur, Patuakhali

Three held, one of them for attempted rape

STAR REPORT

Police detained three suspects on charges of raping or attempting to rape three girls in different districts.

In Gazipur's Sreepur, the detainee was identified as Moslem Uddin, 60, while the victim was an 8-year-old child.

Moslem, a neighbour of the child, was caught red-handed by locals when he attempted to rape the girl in the Satkamair area of Barmi union, said ASI Mizanur Rahman of Sreepur Police Station.

They beat Moslem up before handing him over to the police. He was later admitted to Sreepur Upazila Health Complex. The child was still with the family.

Legal action would be taken over the matter, said ASI Mizanur.

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After two wagons of a freight train from Chattogram derailed at the entrance to the capital's Kamalapur Railway Station at 11:30am yesterday, trains travelling to and from Dhaka were delayed by up to four hours, causing immense suffering to passengers. Trains were running late even late at night yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

79 rivers dead or on deathbed

Reveals RDRC study

PINAKI ROY

At least 79 of the government-listed 1,156 rivers flowing through the country have dried up or are in the process of drying up in recent times, threatening livelihoods, agriculture, and local biodiversity, a recent study has revealed.

All of these rivers are heavily silted and either completely or partially dry up during the lean period, mainly due to water diversion upstream. Meanwhile, large portions of some rivers have disappeared in recent years due to encroachment, according to the study published yesterday.

The Rivers and Delta Research Centre (RDRC) conducted the study based on government data, various academic papers, and newspaper reports published from January 2023 to December 2024.

The study, titled "Dried Up Rivers of Bangladesh", was based on data from a new list of rivers prepared by the government,

which used information from all deputy commissioners in the country, said Khalid Saifullah, one of the researchers from RDRC.

The study's lead researcher, Mohammad Azaz, said, "We found at least 79 rivers are either drying up or have already dried up."

Of these, 25 are in Khulna division, 19 in Rajshahi, 14 in Rangpur, six in Chattogram, five in Mymensingh, four in Dhaka, and three each in Barishal and Sylhet divisions. Most are located in Khulna, Satkhira, Rajshahi, and Kushtia regions, where sedimentation and rapid urbanisation have severely disrupted the natural flow of water.

The rivers classified as dead or heavily dried up include the well-known Atrai, Barai, Bhairab, Bhola, Chitra, Dhaleshwari, Dharla, Dudhkumar, Gomati, Gorai, Ichamoti, Kaliganga, Karatoya, Kholpetua, Kopotakkha, Kushtia, Mahananda, Matabhanga, Muhuri, Nabaganga, Teesta, Surma, and Titash.

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1 killed in Jubo Dal factional clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A young man was killed and two others injured after being shot during clashes between two factions of Jubo Dal for "control over the drug trade" in Chonpara of Narayanganj's Rupganj early yesterday.

The deceased has been identified as Md Hasib, 28, younger brother of local Jubo Dal activist Md Babu.

He said Hasib was shot around 2:00am. He was announced dead an hour later when he was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Hasib had previously worked as a battery-run autorickshaw driver but was recently unemployed,

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TK 721CR REMITTANCE NBR suspects foul play

Businessman, officials being probed for money laundering

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A businessman, who brought Tk 721 crore into the country claiming it as remittances, utilised the tax-exemption facility to repatriate funds that were earlier laundered abroad, tax officials believe.

Shown as earnings from several Chinese companies, SM Faruqi Hasan brought the funds in phases since the 2012-13 fiscal year.

Of the amount, Tk 500 crore was shown as having been brought from abroad between fiscal 2020-21 and 2021-22.

Hasan claimed tax exemptions on the income but did not submit valid proof supporting this claim, tax officials said.

The field office, Tax Zone 5, reopened his case for audit in 2021 on the grounds that Hasan was residing in Bangladesh when he received the money.

However, without providing any explanation, tax officials at the time settled the case by accepting just Tk 15,543 as tax, according to findings from the Income Tax Intelligence Unit of the National Board of Revenue (NBR).

"If the NBR were to impose the tax accurately, it would amount to at least Tk 181 crore. The tax amount may rise

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Astronauts return home after being 'stranded' in space for 9 months

AFP, Washington

Home at last: After an unexpected nine-month stay in space, a pair of NASA astronauts finally returned to Earth on Tuesday, concluding a mission that captured global attention and became a political flashpoint.

A SpaceX Crew Dragon spaceship carrying Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams – alongside fellow American Nick Hague and Russian cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbovov – streaked through the atmosphere before deploying parachutes for a gentle splashdown off the Florida coast at 5:57pm (2157 GMT).

Ground teams erupted in cheers as the gumdrop-shaped spacecraft named Freedom,

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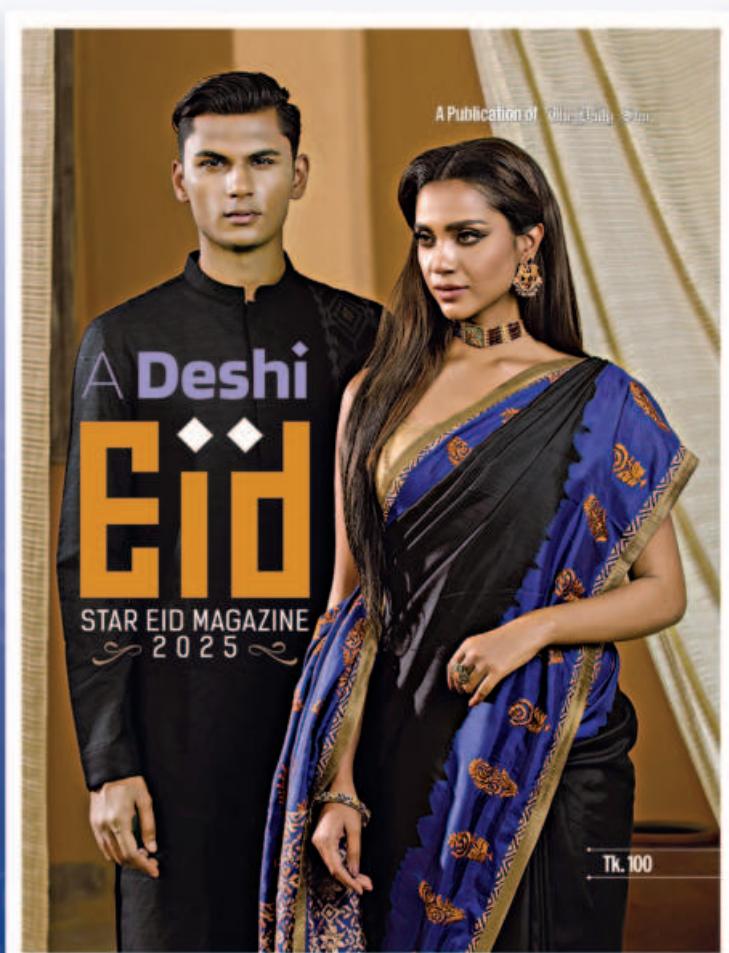


Addressing the high demand for subsidised essential commodities, TCB trucks now carry double the previous supply, sufficient for 400 people. As a result, men and women are seen forming orderly queues, a significant improvement from several weeks ago when limited supplies caused pushing, shoving, and even fights to break out in the middle of the queues. Every day, people from low-income groups, who are unable to keep up with the soaring market prices of essentials, wait for hours for TCB trucks at various locations around the capital. This photo was taken in the capital's Dhanmondi area.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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Start taking steps now for holding peaceful polls

Yunus tells police force

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus has directed the police force to take initiatives now on planning the measures needed for ensuring a peaceful election.

He said that after categorising the district police based on their performances, initiatives will have to be taken to enhance the skills of the underperformers, said a statement from the chief adviser's press wing yesterday.

The chief adviser said this during a meeting between him, the home adviser, and the officials concerned.

There, Prof Yunus also instructed the authorities to take several prompt measures for the welfare of field-level police personnel, which include considering withdrawal of existing ceiling on risk allowances.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

2 PUST students suspended over Facebook post 7 others avoiding campus in fear of attacks

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Two students of Pabna University of Science and Technology (PUST) have been suspended over social media post that allegedly hurt religious sentiments.

Seven others have been avoiding campus fearing that they would be attacked by protesters.

Suspended students Pronoy Kundu and Bikorno Das Dibbo are of urban and regional planning department.

According to university sources, Pronoy made a Facebook post on March 13, which was "liked" by Bikorno. A day later, a group of students

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**PRAYER
TIMING**
MARCH 20

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 4:47 12:45 4:45 6:10 7:45

JAMAT 4:57 1:15 5:00 6:25 8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN | MARCH | SEHRI | IFTAR

19 20 4:45 6:10

20 21 4:45 6:10

21 22 4:44 6:11