



Focus on both studies and sports

PM urges children

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday encouraged children to focus on both studies and physical activities, saying sports play a vital role in developing intelligence.

"Alongside studies, you must engage more in sports. Playing helps increase intelligence," he told students during a surprise visit to BIAM Laboratory School in the capital.

The prime minister's unannounced visit created

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



The project to modernise Sofia Kamal National Public Library, originally scheduled for completion in December 2024, saw significant delays stemming from design-related complications. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN

Fakhrul rejects Jamaat chief's 'engineering' allegation

STAR REPORT

BNP

Secretary

General

Mirza

Fakhrul

Islam

Alamgir

yesterday

strongly

condemned

remarks

made by

Jamaat-e-Islami

Ameer

Shahiqur Rahman,

rejecting the claim that

BNP came to power

through "engineering."

"I saw a news report

[yesterday] that

deeply hurt me. The

Jamaat-e-Islami

ameer

said the BNP came to power

through engineering," said

Fakhrul.

"I strongly condemn

this. It once again proves

that he and his party do not

think in a healthy way," he

said at a press conference

at the party's Nayapalton

office yesterday afternoon.

"That is why the whole

nation has rejected them

very consciously, and in

the future, we must work

in such a way that they can

be completely eliminated

politically," the BNP leader

added.

Fakhrul said the BNP

assumed office through a

"neutral" election

held under an interim

government, in which the

party secured 213 seats. He

claimed that international

observers and media

outlets had recognised the

polls as free and fair.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

SUFIA KAMAL NATIONAL PUBLIC LIBRARY Modernisation project lies incomplete 3 years on

HELEMUL ALAM

The modernisation project of the Sofia Kamal National Public Library at Dhaka's Shahbagh lies incomplete even after more than three years since the work began in 2022.

As such, the library, once a vibrant space for readers, has largely been devoid of activity for a prolonged period.

The foundation of the Sofia Kamal National Public Library was laid in 1954 at the present site of Dhaka University Central Library. It was later relocated to its current location in Shahbagh in 1978.

The modernisation project was originally scheduled for completion in December 2024. However, it could not be finished on time, as physical work began only in September 2022.

According to the officials of Department of Public Libraries, so far 65 percent of the work has been completed.

"There have been delays in removing old structures and felling trees, design completion and vetting process through the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB), and appointment of a consultant. As such, it was not possible to begin physical construction within the scheduled timeframe, resulting in the need for additional time to complete the project," said Khalid Mohammad Saifullah, senior librarian and deputy project director of the department.

The project's cost, initially estimated at Tk 524 crore, has

also risen to Tk 561 crore due to addition of new components and an increase in the US Dollar exchange rate.

A revised proposal has been made to extend the project timeline by two more years till December 2027, and to increase the total cost further to around Tk 620 crore, incorporating additional features such as aesthetic artworks. The proposal is now waiting to be placed in the ECNEC meeting shortly, said Saifullah.

expenses, he also said.

He noted that design-related challenges further contributed to the delay. A connecting bridge between two high-rise buildings, along with library facilities, was initially planned at a height of 60 metres. It has now been proposed to reduce the height to 40 metres, as constructing a 60-metre steel structure is highly challenging given Bangladesh's environmental and structural constraints.

The existing pyramid-shaped stairs in front of the National Library will be replaced with long, parallel stairs similar to those of the original structure. The main complex will also include a 10-storey residential building for library staff, said another official of the department.

Around 3,00,000 books have been relocated to the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh (IEB) building, where limited library services are currently being provided.

"In the new building, around 1,500 people will be able to use the library at a time, while the total capacity will be about 5,000," Saifullah said.

Meanwhile, urban planners criticised the decision to demolish the old structure.

"Although the modernisation will increase the library's capacity, we will lose its historical significance. These buildings needed to be protected for sustainability and preservation of our history and heritage," said Adil Mohammed Khan, executive director of the Institute for Planning and Development.

The authorities could acquire new land and construct new public libraries instead of demolishing the old ones, he added.

According to the design, the library complex will be divided into two separate nine-storey buildings. One will face south, on the site where the old library building once stood. A glass plaza will be constructed on the northern side, adjacent to the museum complex, which will function as a digital library, Saifullah said.

There will also be a plaza



A design of the national library.

The project cost has increased due to revised estimates by the PWD, inclusion of a Sewerage Treatment Plant (STP), reallocation in civil works, additional electro-mechanical requirements (including HVAC, sound, lighting, and lifts), introduction of a cultural artwork package, adjustments in furniture costs, and the extended project duration leading to higher operational and consultancy



Volunteers distribute cold juice and refreshing watermelon to people working under the scorching sun -- including rickshaw-pullers, pedestrians, and day-labourers -- to help them stay cool and hydrated. A police officer seen helping them. The photo was taken at Shibbari intersection in Khulna city yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Rehabilitate, resettle evicted hawkers

PM urges authorities to take immediate measures

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman yesterday directed the authorities concerned to ensure the swift rehabilitation of street hawkers who were recently evicted from various areas of the capital and called for coordinated efforts to identify suitable alternative locations for their resettlement.

He gave the instruction during a meeting at the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in Tejgaon, according to UNB.

Senior officials from the Local Government Division, Dhaka North and South City Corporations, Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) and the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) attended the meeting, according to a press release from the PMO.

The Prime Minister instructed the relevant ministries and agencies to work in coordination to quickly identify vending zones where the evicted hawkers can continue their businesses in a dignified and orderly manner.

He said the relocated vendors must be provided with spaces where they can operate comfortably.

Recently, several hundred makeshift shops were evicted from key areas of Dhaka North City Corporation including Mirpur-1, as well as from Dhaka South City Corporation areas such as Motijheel, Baitul Mukarram, Paltan and Gulistan.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

TONU MURDER

Former army man Hafizur sent to jail after remand

DNA cross-matching ongoing

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

Cumilla

A Cumilla court yesterday sent retired army personnel Hafizur Rahman, an accused in the Tonu murder case, to jail after completion of his three-day remand.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Abdullah Aman passed the order after Investigation Officer Tarikul Islam produced the accused before the court.

Tarikul also said the process of cross-matching the DNA of the accused was ongoing, adding that

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



DUJA demands justice over attack on journo

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University Journalists' Association (DUJA) formed a human chain on the university campus yesterday to protest the attack on journalists inside Shahbagh Police Station on Thursday night.

The programme was held at 11:30am near Aparajeyo Bangla on the DU campus.

Speakers demanded the immediate identification of those involved in the attack, formal registration of a case, legal action against the perpetrators, and disciplinary measures by the university administration.

DUJA President Shahidul Islam said, "Those who indiscriminately attacked and assaulted DUJA members must immediately be brought under the law and punished. Journalists were there to perform their professional duties, but

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

Power outages stretch to 10 hours in Gazipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Load shedding in Gazipur has intensified amid a widening gap between electricity demand and supply, disrupting public life and commercial activity across the industrial district.

Residents said areas that previously experienced around seven hours of daily outages are now facing 8-10 hours of load shedding. The prolonged power cuts have triggered acute water shortages, interrupting routine household tasks such as bathing and cooking.

The strain is equally apparent across Gazipur's industrial zones. Factory output has declined as frequent outages halt machinery. While some units have turned to diesel-powered generators, high fuel costs and limited availability have made regular operation difficult.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday afternoon, Md Yusuf Ali, general manager of Gazipur Palli Bidyut Samity-1, said that demand in his area stands at 554 megawatts against a supply of 313 megawatts. He said the situation may improve by May 2.

Md Khalid Hossain, managing director of Euro Washing Limited, said outages that once lasted five to six hours a day have now stretched to as long as 10 hours, making regular production extremely difficult. In many cases, factories are

being forced to shut down. Production, which previously continued beyond 5:00pm, is no longer feasible under current conditions.

He added that global instability is exacerbating the crisis. "Ongoing conflicts have dampened foreign buyers' interest in visiting Bangladesh, while efforts to secure orders abroad are yielding weaker-than-expected responses. The uncertainty has cast a shadow over the future of the readymade garments sector," he said.

Recent nor'wester storms have further aggravated the situation in Sreepur and Mawna areas under Mymensingh Palli Bidyut Samity-2, where fallen trees damaged power lines, causing outages in multiple locations.

Shantanu Roy, deputy general manager of the Mawna zonal office, said seven transformers were damaged during the storm, resulting in nearly 24 hours of power cuts. Despite limited manpower, repair work was carried out swiftly, and supply has now been restored in most areas.

Meanwhile, long queues for water have been reported in areas including Dokkhin Dhanua New Market and in front of DBL Garments in Gazipur union.

Residents in Mawna said reliance on tube wells remains limited, and power cuts suspend water pumps, leading to severe shortages.

