

FORAGING THE MUDFLATS

A Eurasian Curlew forages for crabs, small aquatic animals and earthworms along the shore at Dimer Char in the Sundarbans yesterday. The migratory waterbird, recognised by its brown-and-whitish streaked plumage, long legs and downward-curving bill, visits Bangladesh's coastal mudflats during the colder months, playing an important role in maintaining the balance of wetland and coastal ecosystems.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Govt turns to drones to monitor Turag pollution

Tk 184cr project planned to protect the river



REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The government is planning to use drones to monitor and curb pollution in rivers around Dhaka, particularly the Turag.

To this end, a Tk 184 crore integrated project for the environmental protection and pollution control of the Turag river will be placed before the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecnec) for approval.

The project, titled "Metro Dhaka Water Security and Resilience Program: Integrated Pollution Monitoring and Enforcement System of Turag River ECA", will be implemented by the Department of Environment (DoE) with funding from the World Bank.

The implementation period is scheduled for July 1, 2026, to December 31, 2028.

According to the project proposal, drones will regularly monitor illegal waste dumping and storage along the riverbanks. Authorities will also identify pollution hotspots and finalise a list of industries discharging waste into the river in violation of environmental regulations.

The project will seek to ensure the installation and effective operation of effluent treatment plants (ETPs) at industrial facilities through regular monitoring, at least 100 enforcement operations, notices and fines against unauthorised industrial activities.

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After 14 years, BRT project reaches a dead end

Govt scraps the Gazipur-Airport service after Tk 2,810cr spent, opts for six-lane road instead

SHAMIMA RITA

After 14 years and Tk 2,810 crore already spent, Bangladesh's first dedicated Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project has been scrapped before it ever began operations, with the government deciding to convert the Gazipur-Airport corridor into a six-lane road.

Under the plan, BRT stations, lane dividers and other related infrastructure will be dismantled to make way for three lanes of general traffic in each direction. Two existing two-lane overpasses may also be widened to four lanes.

According to a letter issued by the Road Transport and Highways Division on October 19, the decision was taken at a cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on October 18.

The letter, signed by Deputy Secretary Taslima Ahmed Poli, said the cabinet also decided to dissolve Dhaka Bus Rapid Transit PLC and transfer its responsibilities to the Roads and Highways Department (RHD).

The relevant authorities have been instructed to submit an initial progress report within 15 days and provide updates by the third day of each month until the decisions are implemented.

Before formally closing the project, the authorities must consult development partners and resolve any legal and contractual issues, the letter added.

Approved in November 2012, the 20.5 km project was initially scheduled for completion by December 2016 at a cost of Tk 2,037.9 crore. Repeated delays and revisions later pushed the estimated cost to Tk 4,268.32 crore.

The project was funded by the government, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and France's Agence Française de Développement (AFD).

By December 2024, around 97 percent of the infrastructure work had been completed, while overall physical progress stood at 77.48 percent.

The project expired that month without an extension. Although the dedicated BRT lanes were later opened to general traffic, the service never began as two attempts to procure buses failed.

- 20.5km project approved in 2012 for Tk 2,037.9 crore
- Estimated cost later rose to Tk 4,268.32 crore
- Deadline expired in Dec 2024, with 77.48% overall progress
- Two attempts to procure buses failed
- Six people killed in accidents at the construction site



In July 2025, the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecnec) rejected a proposal to raise the project cost to Tk 6,598 crore and extend the deadline to December 2029. Instead, it ordered an investigation into the project's design and feasibility study.

The government later considered four options -- completing the

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JOURNALIST ALIF MURDER

Suspect Opurba on 4-day remand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Netrokona*

A court in Netrokona yesterday placed Opurba, 22, on a four-day remand in connection with the murder of journalist Lutfozzaman Fakir Alif in Durgapur on October 15.

It passed the order after police produced him before it at the end of a previous one-day remand and sought a fresh seven-day remand.

Khandakar Shaker Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Durgapur Police Station, said Nurul Amin Bhuiyan, judge of the Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court, granted a four-day remand after the hearing.

Earlier on Sunday, the court had placed Opurba on a one-day remand following a police petition.

Investigation sources said Opurba was arrested after midnight on Saturday in front of the old cinema hall in Durgapur municipal town.

Police claimed Opurba was present at the crime scene during Alif's murder, carrying a bag containing weapons.

The OC said Opurba is the nephew of the prime suspect and alleged shooter in the killing. The suspect is known to be a professional killer, and investigators obtained information indicating that the firearms used in the murder had been kept in Opurba's custody.

According to case documents, Alif was shot dead by criminals around 8:00pm while returning home after having tea at a stall in the Telanjia area of Durgapur upazila.



Scores of people, accompanied by family members, board buses at Gabtoli Bus Stand in the capital yesterday, just in time to head home and spend the Durga Puja holidays with loved ones. This year's extended Puja holidays, including weekends, have given people across the country more time to travel.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

IN BRIEF

President accepts Ishraque's resignation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Cabinet Division has issued a gazette notification after President Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir accepted Ishraque Hossain's resignation as state minister for liberation war affairs.

Following his resignation, the government has 23 state ministers and 27 ministers, including the prime minister. Earlier, two ministers resigned from Prime Minister Tarique Rahman's eight-month-old government: Dipen Dewan, minister for Chittagong Hill Tracts affairs, and Zahir Uddin Swapon, who was in charge of the information ministry.

Ishraque formally announced his resignation at a press conference at Jatiya Press Club on Monday afternoon.

Cabinet Division sources said that after Ishraque submitted his written resignation on Monday evening, it was forwarded to the president through Tarique Rahman, in line with the rules. The Dhaka-6 lawmaker drew criticism on Saturday for brandishing a firearm during an "anti-drug drive" in Gandaria, Dhaka.

5 more die of dengue, 1,366 get hospitalised

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



At least five dengue patients died and 1,366 others were hospitalised in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Of the deaths, two each were reported in Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) and Barishal division, while one was reported in Rangpur division.

With the latest deaths and cases, the total death toll rose to 357 and the number of cases to 1,15,617. Currently, 5,944 dengue patients are undergoing treatment at hospitals across the country.

DC confce from Jan 31 to Feb 3

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is planning to hold its first conference of upazila nirbahi officers (UNOs) in December this year, while the annual deputy commissioner (DC) conference is scheduled for January 31 to February 3 next year.

The exact date of the UNO conference has yet to be finalised, according to sources at the Prime Minister's Office.

Sources at the Prime Minister's Office confirmed the details of the two events, saying Prime Minister Tarique Rahman has consented to inaugurate the DC conference at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium on January 31. The head of the government is also scheduled to inaugurate the UNO conference once the date is fixed.

At the annual DC conference, separate sessions are held for each ministry. A few months before the event, the government seeks proposals from DCs on problems, prospects, development projects and policy matters concerning their respective districts and regional and national issues.

The Cabinet Division then finalises the list of proposals after discussions with the ministries concerned. The proposals are subsequently discussed in the presence of ministers, advisers and secretaries of the relevant ministries.

30 detained in Cambodia return home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirty Bangladeshis detained at an immigration centre in Cambodia while trying to return home from alleged cyber scam operations arrived in Dhaka yesterday, more than six weeks after their detention.

They landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport around 12:30pm on Thai Airways flight TG-321, said Al Amin Nayon, president and co-founder of Anirban Survivor Voice Foundation.

The Criminal Investigation Department conducted forensic tests on their mobile phones and other belongings because they had been held in cyber scam centres, Nayon said.

The returnees were among 32 Bangladeshis detained by Cambodian immigration police at Phnom Penh airport on September 3 while attempting to return home. Brokers had allegedly lured them to Cambodia with promises of lucrative jobs, but many were confined in cyber scam centres and forced to commit online fraud. Some were allegedly tortured when they tried to escape.

The 32 had registered for repatriation after Cambodia offered to waive overstay penalties. However, immigration police

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