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PHOTO: **STAR**

Firefighters battle a blaze engulfing an overturned police vehicle during clashes in the Patgati bus stand area of Gopalganj's Tungipara upazila yesterday.

UPAZILA HEALTH COMPLEXES

Tk 45,000cr expansion, hasty assessment

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government is set to undertake a Tk 45,000 crore project to upgrade all upazila health complexes into 151-bed facilities across the country, aiming to enhance their capacity and strengthen healthcare services at the grassroots level.

The three-year project, scheduled to begin in December 2026, involves the construction of hospital buildings, replacement of dilapidated structures, and renovation of existing facilities across 443 upazilas.

Specialised services, including intensive care, kidney dialysis, eye care and cancer screening, will also be introduced at UHCs under the project titled "Construction, Reconstruction, Upgrading, Renovation and Repair of Infrastructure at Upazila Health Complexes in Bangladesh", according to a health ministry proposal.

However, health experts and economists have questioned the decision to expand all UHCs in one go without comprehensive needs assessments. They have also raised concerns about the hurried preparation for the mega project, warning that the approach could create significant implementation challenges.

They argue that the government should first conduct detailed assessments of disease burden, population growth, future healthcare demand and the utilisation of existing facilities, many of which remain underused, before investing in such a large-scale expansion programme.

Initially, the government planned to upgrade all UHCs to 101-bed facilities but later revised the target to 151 beds.

Talking to reporters on June 3, Health Minister Sardar Md Sakhawat Husain said preparations had already begun to expand all UHCs to 101-bed facilities.

The Public Works Department (PWD) was tasked with carrying out a feasibility study covering all upazilas.

- All upazila health complexes (UHCs) will be expanded to 151-bed facilities each
- New hospital buildings to be constructed for 305 UHCs currently operating with 50 beds, 83 with 19 beds, 18 with 100 beds, and 13 with 31 beds
- 24 upazilas are without any UHCs
- ICUs, dialysis, cancer screening to be added
- Project preparation, feasibility studies questioned

About a month later, the Health Services Division (HSD) under the health ministry directed the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) to prepare a project proposal and also take steps to create necessary posts for the initiative, several health officials told this correspondent.

However, the government revised its plan on August 12, deciding to upgrade all UHCs to 151-bed facilities.

The decision was made at a meeting of the HSD with Prime Minister Tarique Rahman in the chair. It was also decided that the project proposal would be placed before the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecnec) within a month, according to the meeting minutes.

PWD was asked to revise the study, launched in the first week of June, in line with the new decision. It submitted the report to DGHS, which prepared and sent the Tk 44,757-crore Development Project Proposal (DPP) to the health ministry in September.

Last month, the HSD sent the DPP to the planning ministry, which returned the proposal to HSD with some queries, said an official involved in the process.

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Police on alert as crude bomb blasts, arson spread

1 killed, 10 vehicles torched, 33 held in Dhaka, other dists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One person was killed, and at least 10 vehicles were torched as crude bomb blasts and arson escalated and spread to more areas yesterday.

Unidentified people also blocked major roads, padlocked the entrances to government offices and educational institutions, and attacked several establishments, including Grameen Bank offices.

Amid the rising violence, Inspector General of Police Ali Hossain Fakir yesterday held a meeting with the superintendents of police of all 64 districts and range DIGs. He directed them to arrest those involved in the attacks, strengthen patrols, particularly in border districts, and intensify intelligence surveillance to prevent illegal entry into the country.

Additional police deployment was ordered in Gopalganj, Shariatpur, Madaripur, and Faridpur where the violence was rife.

Between November 7 and 9, at least 19 buses were torched and crude bomb explosions were reported at 29 spots across the country. Police arrested 29 people and filed 11 cases, according to Police Headquarters (PHQ).

In Dhaka, a car driver was injured when a crude bomb was hurled at his parked vehicle in front of the Faculty of Business Studies at Dhaka University yesterday afternoon. The injured driver was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Between November 7 and 9, at least 19 buses were torched and crude bomb explosions were reported at 29 spots across the country. Police arrested 29 people and filed 11 cases, according to Police Headquarters (PHQ).

Another bomb went off near the Faculty of Arts, damaging a car.

Earlier in the day, police recovered four unexploded crude bombs from two spots in Dhanmondi. Two were found near City College around 11:10am and two others in front of the demolished home of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Dhanmondi-32 around 12:30pm.

At least 33 people have been arrested in the capital since Monday morning in connection with the explosions, said Md Akhter Hossain, deputy commissioner (media) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

"Almost 99 percent of those arrested are linked to the Awami League and its associate organisations, whose political activities are now banned," he told The Daily Star.

He added that police identified at least two individuals who were hired by the organisation to carry out the blasts in exchange for Tk 1,500 each.

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RELATED STORY ON PAGE 2

Tarique, Erdoğan hold 30-minute meeting

UNB, *Antalya*

Prime Minister Tarique Rahman and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan held a bilateral meeting in Türkiye's Antalya yesterday.

The meeting began at 7:15pm local time at Maxx Royal Hotel and lasted around 30 minutes, Prime Minister's Deputy Press Secretary Hasan Shiplu said.

Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman and State Minister for Foreign Affairs-1 Humaiun Kobir were also present at the meeting.

The prime minister reached Antalya yesterday afternoon on a three-day visit to attend the World Leaders' Summit of the 31st Conference of the Parties (COP31) and hold talks with leaders of different countries.

COP31, the UN climate change conference, officially began in Antalya on Monday and will run through November 20.

As part of the conference, the two-day World Leaders' Summit will be held on November 11-12.

The prime minister is scheduled to address a plenary session on November 12 and hold several bilateral meetings with world leaders on the sidelines of the summit.

PHOTO ON PAGE 12

JS panel seeks action on Biman audit findings

Questions old aircraft purchase, Tk 753cr audit objections

TASNEEM TAYEB

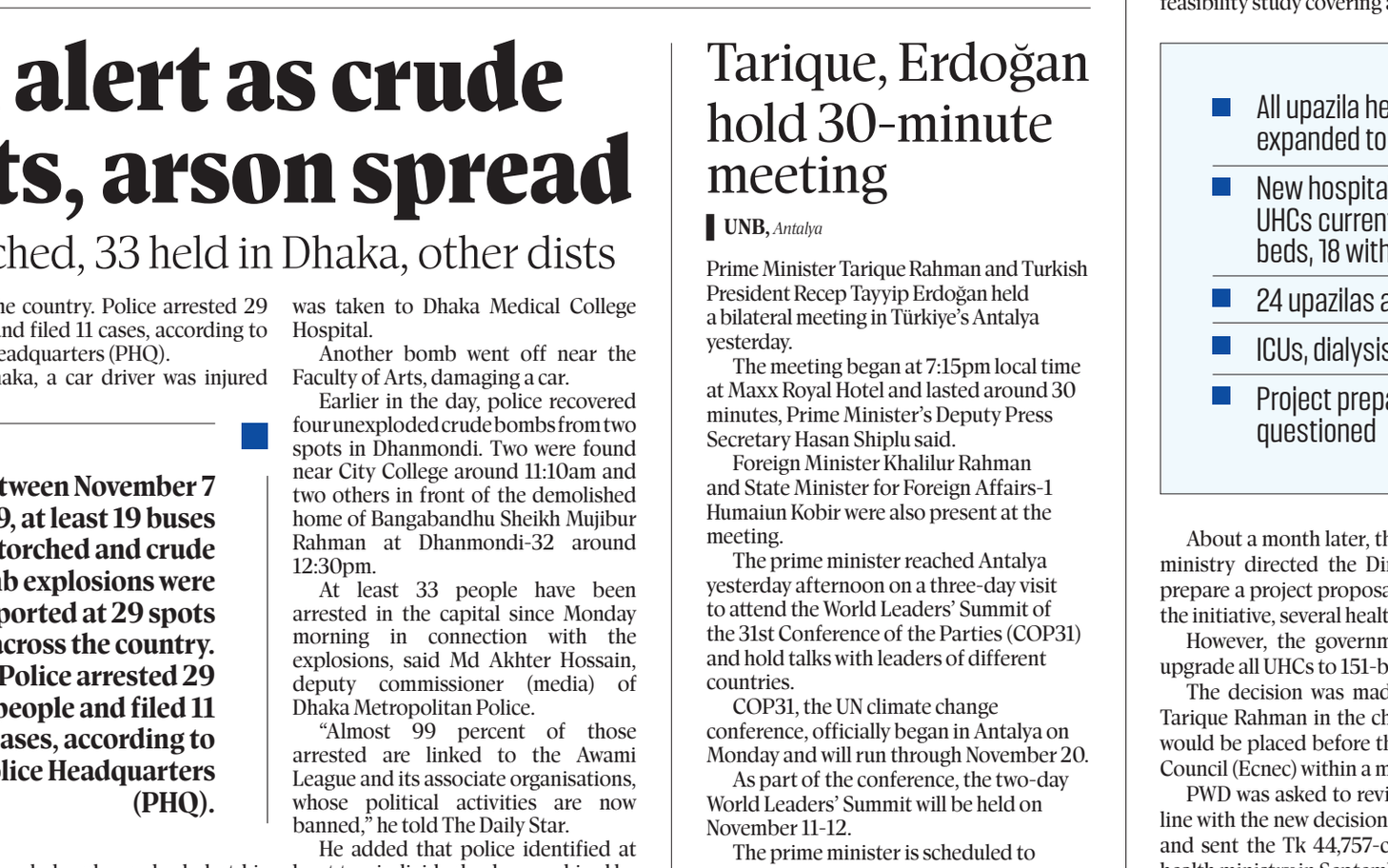
The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Undertakings yesterday directed Biman to identify those responsible for alleged financial irregularities and take action against them, as it reviewed 111 unresolved audit objections involving around Tk 753.5 crore.

The committee also questioned the purchase of two old aircraft, passenger revenue discrepancies, payments under a technology contract and losses on routes operated without adequate feasibility assessments.

The directives came at a meeting of the committee at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, chaired by Chief Whip Nurul Islam Moni, according to a Parliament Secretariat press release.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Nurul blamed much of the financial mismanagement on decisions taken under previous administrations, while noting efforts by the present management to address inherited problems.

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Two excavators extract soil from the bed of the Turag River near Gabtoli in Dhaka to fill surrounding low-lying land for real estate development. The photo, taken from the Silicon City area, shows the ongoing illegal earth extraction that threatens the river's ecology, obstructs waterways and contributes to the loss of wetlands on the capital's outskirts. PHOTO: **RASHED SHUMON**

88 students in hospital after madrasa blaze

Fire Service says institution had no fire safety measures

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Narayanganj*

At least 88 students were hospitalised with smoke inhalation after a fire broke out at a residential madrasa in Fatullah early yesterday. Four of them are in critical condition and receiving treatment at the intensive care unit (ICU), doctors said.

The critically ill students are Yusuf, 18, Khairul, 22, Jobayer, 18, and another student named Yusuf, 18, said Sultan Mahmud Sikder, resident surgeon at the National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery in Dhaka.

Of the 88 students, 53 were discharged after treatment while the remaining 35 are still receiving treatment at the hospital.

The fire broke out around 1:45am at Jamiatul Ashrafia Madrasa in the Shantidhara area of Bhuighar, said Abdullah Al Arefin, deputy assistant director of Narayanganj Fire Service and Civil Defence.

He said the fire originated in the library and office rooms on the second floor of the five-storey building.

Five fire engines brought the blaze under control in about 30 minutes and fully

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