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JAMADIUL AWAL 14, 1441 HJRI

16 PAGES PLUS SHOWBIZ PRICE : Tk12.00



'Mujib Borsho' countdown begins

UNB, Dhaka

The countdown for the birth centenary celebration of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman began yesterday through a gala opening ceremony.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina formally inaugurated the nationwide countdown ceremony at the capital's National Parade Square where Bangabandhu landed in the newly-liberated Bangladesh on January 10, 1972.

The PM opened the event through unveiling the logo of the Mujib Borsho, to be celebrated from March 17, 2020 to March 26, 2021.

Through observing the birth centenary, the government aims to present Bangabandhu's life and works before the people, especially the new generation.

Speaking at the programme, Hasina said the government wanted to move ahead with the torch of victory which was given by the Father of the Nation by liberating the country.

She said the government wants to make Bangladesh free from hunger and poverty, and a developed country as dreamt by Bangabandhu.

The PM said there was a dark chapter in the country after the brutal assassination of Bangabandhu.

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina unveiling the logo of *Mujib Borsho* at the capital's National Parade Square yesterday. She started the countdown for the birth centenary celebration of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. *Inset*, a laser image of Bangabandhu at the door of a plane recreates the moment of his arrival home 48 years ago.

PHOTO: PTI

TENSION IN MIDDLE EAST May deal blow to Bangladesh

Analysts wary of negative impact on overseas jobs, export

PORIMOL PALMA

As tension between the US and Iran fuel fears of war, economists and international relations experts warn that any armed conflict between the countries will deal a blow to Bangladesh's export-import, and overseas job market in the Middle East.

They also say oil prices have already started going up, and if it continues, global economy, including that of Bangladesh, will witness a downturn.

Bangladesh heavily depends on migrant remittance and oil import from the Middle East, which has over half of the world's proven oil reserves, while the US is one of Bangladesh's largest export destinations.

The tension flared up after an US drone attack killed Iranian military commander Qasem Soleimani on January 3, and Iran retaliated by attacking US bases in Iraq.

In a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed concern over escalation of tension between the two countries, saying developing countries like Bangladesh would suffer if oil prices rise, a meeting source said.

Talking to The Daily Star, Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said, "If a war breaks out and it spreads across the Middle Eastern regions and prolongs, it will have adverse impact on our economy."

On Wednesday, Iran, in retaliation of the attack on Soleimani, fired missiles on the US airbases in Iraq, heightening fears of a war.

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Khulna roar into play-offs

SPORTS REPORTER

Needing a win to seal the last Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League play-offs spot, Khulna Tigers skipper Mushfiqur Rahim led from the front with an unbeaten 98 to set up a 92-run thumping of Cumilla Warriors at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

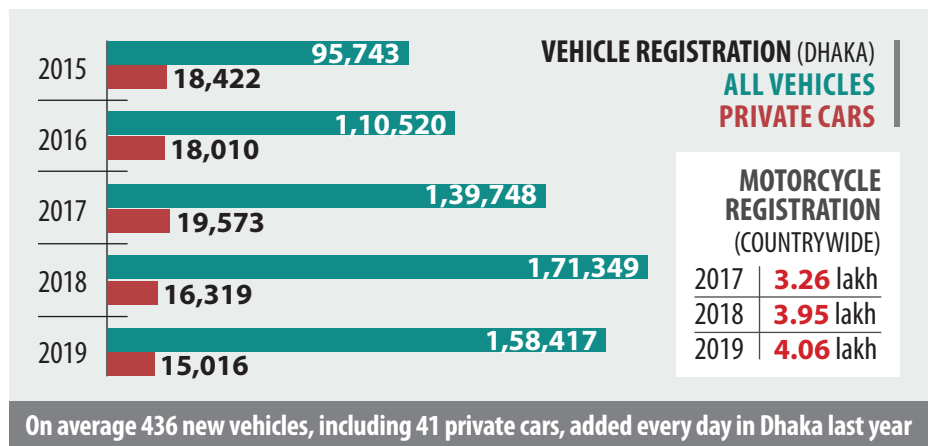
In chase of a daunting 218 for two -- the highest ever BPL total in Dhaka -- Cumilla limped to 126 for nine. Defeat for Cumilla meant that they were eliminated from the play-offs race. The last four lineup is now complete with Khulna joining leaders Chattogram Challengers, Dhaka Platoon and Rajshahi Royals.

During the chase, Upul Tharanga top-scored with 32. For Khulna, pacer Shahidul Islam took three

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Vehicle registration drops in Dhaka

Increasing use of ride-sharing services, higher import cost of reconditioned cars among key factors



TUHIN SUBHRA ADHIKARY

The number of vehicles registered in Dhaka declined last year for the first time since 2013.

Besides, the number of new and reconditioned cars and microbuses getting registered with the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) continued to drop across the country for the second consecutive year.

Experts and vehicle importers attribute vehicles' sales slump to the growing popularity of ride-hailing services and the rising price of reconditioned cars.

However, with Dhaka being the exception, the numbers of new motorcycles registered last year went up across the country.

Nevertheless, 434 vehicles are registered at BRTA offices in Dhaka every day. The daily average registration includes 272 motorcycles and 41 cars, according to BRTA data.

Many experts see the trend as a ray of hope for reducing the capital's traffic congestion. They blame cars for taking up road space while carrying fewer people than larger vehicles.

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Preteen, teen gang-raped in the city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 13-year-old girl was allegedly gang-raped in the capital's Kamrangirchar area on Thursday night.

Five, aged around 18, raped the girl at an under-construction building in Rasulpur area between 6:30pm and 8:00pm after a female friend of the victim took her to the building, according to the case statement filed by the victim's mother accusing six people.

Police yesterday arrested four and the victim's female friend, 14. The other accused is on the run, said police.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Iran denies plane 'downed by missile'

Calls on US, Canada to share data

AGENCIES

Iran's civil aviation chief yesterday denied that a missile downed a Ukrainian airliner which crashed killing all 176 on board, dismissing claims of a catastrophic mistake by Tehran's air defences.

The declaration at a press conference in the Iranian capital came after Britain and Canada pointed to what they said were signs of an accidental missile strike.

"One thing is for certain, this airplane was not hit by a missile," Iran's civil aviation chief Ali Abedzadeh said.

Abedzadeh called on the US and Canada to share any information they have on the crash. "If they are really sure, they should come and show their findings to the world" in accordance with international standards,

he added.

Iran's government spokesman Ali Rabiei said in a statement: "No one will assume responsibility for such a big lie once it is known that the claim had been fraudulent."

"It is unfortunate that the psychological operation of the US government, and those supporting it knowingly and unknowingly, are adding insult to the injury of the bereaved families and victimizing them for certain goals by propagating such fallacies."

The Boeing 737 crashed on Wednesday shortly after Tehran launched missiles at US forces in Iraq in response to the killing of a top Iranian general in a US drone strike in Baghdad.

It is Iran's worst civil aviation disaster since 1988 when the US military said it

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With a moving train just a few yards away, people cross the rail lines in the capital's Tejgaon area, putting their lives at risk. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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Girl killed as bus hits motorbike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A road crash yesterday killed a 10-year-old girl near Bijoy Sarani intersection in Dhaka.

The victim is Marzana, a student of grade III at Ideal Kindergarten School in Gazipur, said Kamal Uddin, inspector (investigation) of Tejgaon Police Station.

According to the police official, the girl and her father were riding a motorbike when a speedy bus of Dewan Paribahan rammed their vehicle.

The girl died on the spot and her father Mizanur Rahman, 38, principal of Jamia Rahmania Madrasa in Gazipur, sustained injuries on his head, knees and hands, he added.

A witness of the accident said the bus dragged the girl around eight yards under its rear wheels. She could not survive for more than a few seconds after the accident.

The body was sent to Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.



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