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TOLLS ON HIGHWAYS RHD to start infrastructure assessment

TUHIN SHUBHIRA ADHIKARY

The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) is going to conduct a survey for assessing necessary infrastructure that would be required to start collecting tolls on the four-lane highways across the country.

Initially, the survey would be conducted on Dhaka-Chattogram and Dhaka-Mymensingh highways, as an initial step to implement the prime minister's directives in this regard.

"We have approved a RHD proposal for conducting necessary survey on how to collect toll from vehicles on the two highways," Mohammed Shafiqul Karim, joint secretary (toll and axle) at the Road Transport and Highways Division, told The Daily Star yesterday.

RHD sent the proposal on December 30 last year and the division yesterday sent a letter to the department seeking opinion from it after surveying the two highways, another official said.

PM Sheikh Hasina during an Ecneec meeting on September 3 last year instructed the authorities concerned to collect tolls from long-haul vehicles on the national highways.

After the meeting, Planning Minister MA Mannan told reporters that the toll money would be deposited in a bank account and spent on the maintenance and repair works of the roads.

Vehicles travelling short distances would not have to pay any amount, he said, adding the ministry would prepare a

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



Protesters blocking traffic at Shahbagh intersection in the capital yesterday afternoon, demanding that the elections to Dhaka city corporations be held at a later date so as to prevent it from coinciding with the Saraswati puja on January 30. The puja is celebrated mainly in educational institutions that would be used as polling centres.

PHOTO:
PRABIR DAS

3 killed in 'gunfight' with law enforcers

STAR REPORT

Three people, including two Rohingyas, were killed in separate "gunfights" with law enforcers in Cox's Bazar and Faridpur districts early yesterday.

In Cox's Bazar, two Rohingya men, suspected of being drug dealers, were killed in an alleged gunfight with Rab on the Cox's Bazar-Teknaf Marine Drive road.

The dead were identified as Abul Hasim, 30, and Mohammad Ayub, 24, both residents of Kutupalong Rohingya camp in Ukhiya, reports our Cox's Bazar correspondent.

Md Shah Alam, assistant superintendent of police (ASP), also the in-charge of CPC-2 Hoaikeyang Camp of Rab-15, said a Rab team conducted a drive in Shamlapur area on the marine drive road after a tip-off that a large amount of yaba was being smuggled. As soon as the Rab team reached the spot,

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

Govt tightened grip on voices of dissent

Says HRW in World
Report 2020

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Silencing critics, journalists, students, and activists did not subside in Bangladesh last year, rather the landslide victory of Awami League in December 2018 elections seemed only to have emboldened authorities in their crackdown, the Human Rights Watch said yesterday.

"Journalists faced pressure to self-censor or risk arrest," said the New York-based global rights watchdog in its world report 2020.

The Digital Security Act, passed in October 2018 to replace the often-misused Information and Communication Technology Act, included harsher provisions that have been used to penalise criticism of the government, said the report prepared on the events last year.

The rights body said the Act effectively prohibits investigative journalism. However, the government refused to budge despite repeated calls to bring the law in line with Bangladesh's international commitments to protect freedom of expression.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

POLICE IN NEW ROLE

67 inspectors to serve in BGB

SHARIFUL ISLAM and FM MIZANUR RAHMAN

Police officials, from now on, will also be posted at the Border Guard Bangladesh, mainly with the responsibility to make flawless seizure lists and prepare cases.

Although border guards have been handling post-arrest legal procedures for different border crimes with trainings from police, the civilian force's direct involvement in these tasks is expected to produce better results, said BGB officials.

The government recently approved 4,282 additional manpower for the paramilitary force and 67 of them will be police inspectors.

"The provision for posting of police inspectors on deputation in BGB is there in the organogram of the para-military force restructured in 2010," Lt Col Mohiuddin Ahmed, director operations of BGB, told The Daily Star. The Police Headquarters in a letter on December 18 asked its different units to send a list of police inspectors interested in getting posted to BGB on deputation.

Those inspectors cannot be above 53 years and will have no more than one departmental punishment in their record, mentioned the letter.

Deputy Commissioner Anisur Rahman of the Headquarters of Dhaka Metropolitan Police said they would send 10 inspectors from DMP.

The rest of the police inspectors will be sent from other units.

According to the government deputation policy, usually an officer is posted on deputation for three years.

Lt Col Mohiuddin said each of the 59 BGB battalions will have one police inspector, who will particularly look after the procedures of making flawless seizure lists, preparing cases and training BGB members on the tasks.

He did not provide any information about the posting of the other eight police inspectors.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Free speech at stake now

BNP MP Rumeen
Farhana tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People's rights to freedom of speech is at stake now, BNP lawmaker Rumeen Farhana told parliament yesterday.

Participating in the discussion on the thanksgiving motion on the president's speech, the opposition MP alleged that people could not talk freely even in social media as they fear the Digital Security Act.

Pointing to the editors of a Bangla daily and an English daily, Rumeen said the situation was so dreadful that the two editors were talking about self-censorship.

"The government has also gagged voices of mass media by putting pressure on advertisers," she said.

Criticising President Abdul Hamid for saying that the last national election was held in a free, fair and inclusive manner,

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Brain freeze Russian firm offers path to immortality



REUTERS, Sergiyev Posad

When Alexei Voronenkov's 70-year-old mother passed away, he paid to have her brain frozen and stored in the hope breakthroughs in science will one day be able to bring her back to life.

It is one of 71 brains and human cadavers - which Russian company KrioRus calls its "patients" - floating in liquid nitrogen in one of several metres-tall vats in a corrugated metal shed outside Moscow.

They are stored at -196 degrees Celsius (-320.8°F) with the aim of protecting them against deterioration, although there is currently no evidence science will be able to revive the dead.

"I did this because we were very close and I think it is the only chance for us to meet in the future," said Voronenkov who intends to undergo

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

ROHINGYA CASE ICJ ruling on emergency measures on January 23

AFP, Yangon

The UN's top court will deliver its decision next week on whether emergency measures should be imposed on Myanmar over alleged genocide against its Rohingya Muslims, the Gambian government tweeted yesterday.

In a shock move, Myanmar's civilian leader and Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi travelled to The Hague last month

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 16

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5:30	12:45	4:00	5:36	7:00
JAMAAT 6:05	1:15	4:15	5:40	7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Dense fog halts flights, ferries

1 killed in road crash
due to poor visibility

STAR REPORT

Due to poor visibility caused by fog, authorities kept flight operations and ferry services suspended for several hours early yesterday.

In the dense fog, a bus heading for Dhaka rear-ended a sand-laden truck on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway near Kazir Shimla High School yesterday morning killing bus assistant Abul Hossain. Seventeen others were injured.

Talking to The Daily Star, Officer-in-Charge of Trishal Police Station Azizur Rahman said Abul Hossain was ejected from the bus on impact.

Flight operations were suspended for seven hours from 3:00am at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA), UNB reports quoting Beni Madhab Biswas, deputy director of the airport.

Operations resumed

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



People watching in horror an upended concrete slab on a manhole moments after a sewer gas explosion tossed at least four huge and heavy slabs into the air and shook the street near Azad Products in the capital's Purana Paltan around 2:00pm yesterday.

PHOTO:
RASHED SHUMON

2 missiles hit Ukraine plane

Verified security camera footage
shows Iranian projectiles were
fired 30 seconds apart

AFP, Washington

New video footage has emerged showing two Iranian missiles tearing through the night sky and hitting a Ukrainian passenger plane, sending the aircraft down in flames and killing all 176 passengers and crew on board.

The projectiles were fired 30 seconds apart and explain why the plane's transponder was not working as it hurtled to the ground -- it was disabled by the first strike, before being hit by a second, said the New York Times, which published the verified security camera footage Tuesday.

The blurry film, shot from a rooftop in a village four miles from an Iranian military site, shows the Kiev-bound plane on fire and circling back to Tehran's airport, the Times said. Minutes later, the aircraft exploded and crashed.

Iran had for days denied Western claims that the Boeing 737 had been downed by its missiles.

Tehran came clean on Saturday when Revolutionary Guards aerospace commander Brigadier General Amirali Hajizadeh acknowledged a missile operator had mistaken the Ukraine International Airlines plane for a cruise missile and opened fire.

The incident happened when Iran's armed forces were on heightened alert after launching a volley of missiles at Iraqi bases hosting US troops in retaliation for the killing of top general Qassem Soleimani on January 3.

Meanwhile, a person who posted a video online last week of a missile striking the plane has been taken into custody by the elite Revolutionary Guards, the semi-official

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2