




Talks on BBIN vehicle deal to resume

Joint Working Group meets next week as Nepal changes mind, decides to join the initiative

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Discussions on the much-talked about sub-regional connectivity initiative -- BBIN Motor Vehicle Agreement (MVA) -- are going to resume after around two years.

A Joint Working Group (JWG) meeting on Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal (BBIN) MVA would be held on January 30-31 in New Delhi.

The meeting's purpose is to finalise the BBIN MVA Protocols, namely the Passenger Vehicle Protocol and the Cargo Vehicles Protocol, Sarwar Mahmood, director general (South Asia) of the foreign ministry, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He would lead a Bangladesh delegation at the meeting. The foreign ministry has also called an inter-ministerial meeting today at its Annex Building Conference Room to formulate the position of Bangladesh in preparation for the JWG meeting.

Representatives of ministries and agencies concerned, including the road transport and bridges ministry, home ministry, commerce ministry, Economic Relations Division, National Board of Revenue, Bangladesh Land Port Authority, and Roads and Highways Department, have been asked to join the meeting.

Asked whether officials from Bhutan, which pulled out from the initiative, would join the meeting, Sarwar said, "Details about the JWG meeting would be known after tomorrow's [Wednesday] internal meeting."

The development comes after a trial run of a tri-nation (Bangladesh, India, and Nepal) bus service in April 2018.

Nepal, which was reluctant to the three-nation approach,

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Traders have set up temporary shops on the footpath and part of DT Road in Chattogram city's Kadamtali area, obstructing the movement of traffic and pedestrians. Such occupation of footpaths often causes tailbacks. Inset, traders with permanent shops have piled up their products on the footpath.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

AL MP Ismat Ara Sadique passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League lawmaker Ismat Ara Sadique passed away at a city hospital yesterday at the age of 78.

Elected from Jashore-6, Ismat Ara, also the former state minister for public administration, breathed her last around 11:00am while undergoing treatment at Apollo Hospital.

She was admitted to the hospital on January 14, a staff of her residence told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, parliament yesterday unanimously adopted a condolence motion expressing deep sorrow at the demise of the lawmaker.

President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury expressed deep shock and sorrow at the death of the lawmaker.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister and Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader, Law Minister Anisul Huq, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, Planning

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Impeachment trial of Trump opens in Senate

Democrats accuse Republicans of rigging; president slams 'hoax'

REUTERS, Washington

Democrats yesterday accused the top Senate Republican of rigging US President Donald Trump's impeachment trial with proposed rules that would prevent witnesses from testifying and bar evidence gathered by investigators.



Trump's trial on abuse of power and obstruction of Congress charges began yesterday in the Republican-controlled Senate in a rare use of the constitutional mechanism for ousting a president. The Democratic-led House of Representatives approved the charges last month on a party-line vote.

Senate Republican Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who has vowed to coordinate the televised trial with the White House, proposed on Monday rules that would execute a potentially quick trial without new testimony or evidence.

He unveiled a resolution that would give House Democratic prosecutors and

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Virus spreads, fear grows

Beijing confirms human transmission of SARS-like virus; death toll hits 6

AFP, Beijing

Asian countries yesterday ramped up measures to block the spread of a new virus as the death toll in China rose to six and the number of cases jumped to almost 300, raising concerns in the middle of a major holiday travel rush.

From Australia to Thailand and as far as Nepal, nations stepped up fever checks of passengers at airports to detect the SARS-like coronavirus, which first emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan.

Fears of a bigger outbreak rose after a prominent expert from China's National Health Commission confirmed late Monday that the virus can be passed between people.

Authorities previously said there was no obvious evidence of person-to-person transmission and animals were suspected to be the source, as a seafood market where live animals were sold in Wuhan was identified as the centre of the outbreak.

The confirmation of human transmission comes as hundreds of millions of people are criss-crossing China in packed buses, trains and planes this week to celebrate the Lunar New Year with relatives.

Almost 80 new cases have been confirmed, bringing the total number of people hit by the virus in China to 291, with the vast majority in Hubei, the province where Wuhan lies, and others in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangdong, according to the National Health Commission. State media said one case was found in Zhejiang province.

Wuhan mayor Zhou Xianwang told state broadcaster CCTV that the death toll had risen from four to six.

China said it would attend a special World Health Organization meeting on Wednesday which will determine whether to declare a rare global public health emergency over the disease, which was detected in Thailand, Japan and South Korea among four people who had visited

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Jashore Gang Rape Cops find no proof of SI's involvement

STAR REPORT

Police yesterday said they did not find any evidence of a sub-inspector's involvement in the gang rape of a woman in Jashore's Sharsha upazila in September last year.

The name of SI Khairul Islam, the then in-charge of Gorpara Camp, came up in the victim's statement to journalists on September 5.

She told them that Khairul along with several others came to her house around 2:30am on September 3 and demanded Tk 50,000 for the release of her husband, who had been arrested a few days before in a narcotics-related case.

As she refused to give them money, the SI and the others raped her, she alleged. The following day, she filed a rape case against four people -- three named and one unnamed.

At a press briefing at the Jashore office of Police

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Cows can talk!



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Cows tell each other how they feel through their moos, according to a new study.

The animals have individual vocal characteristics and change their pitch depending on their emotions, according to research by the University of Sydney.

Alexandra Green, the study's lead author, said: "Cows are gregarious, social animals. In one sense it isn't surprising they assert their individual identity throughout their life."

"This is the first time we have been able to analyse voice to have conclusive evidence of this trait."

The study found that cows use their voice to help them maintain contact with the herd and express excitement, arousal, engagement or distress.

Talking about the animals she studied, Ms Green said: "They have all got very distinct voices. Even without looking at them in the herd, I can tell which one is making a noise just based on her voice."

She would record and analyse their calls, using the pitch to "assess how aroused or excited the animal is in a certain situation".

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No EVM in city polls

BNP demands in a letter to CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP yesterday demanded that the Election Commission cancel its decision to use electronic voting machines (EVMs) in the upcoming Dhaka city elections.

Instead, it wanted the traditional ballot papers are used in the polls.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir wrote to Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda and other commissioners.

Elections to Dhaka north and south city corporations

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PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 22

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:15 5:43 7:15
JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:30 5:47 7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

