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SECOND EDITION



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"BNP made mistakes in polls calculation."
INFORMATION MINISTER DR HASAN MAHMUD AT A MEETING IN PABNA (PAGE 5)



"You can't solve problems with high level principles."
JARED KUSHNER, US PRESIDENT'S SON-IN-LAW, DEFENDS US MIDEAST PEACE PLAN AT UNSC (PAGE 11)



"If we had a little more patience, it would have been good for us."
BANGLADESH BATSMAN NAZMUL HOSSAIN SHANTO AFTER THE FIRST DAY OF THE FIRST TEST AGAINST PAKISTAN (PAGE 14)



ECONOMIC CRISIS IN LEBANON

Job losses, low pay hit expats

PORIMOL PALMA

Around 1.6 lakh Bangladeshi migrant workers are passing days in uncertainty in crisis-hit Lebanon as most of them have either lost their jobs or remained unpaid over the last few months.

Of the Bangladeshis, some 30,000 are undocumented, mostly women who work as house help. Many of them are desperate to return home, but the Lebanese authorities were making delay in giving them the go-ahead, said officials and migrants in the West Asian country.

Lebanon's mismanaged economy has been stagnant for nearly a decade. The crisis has deepened in recent months with an acute dollar shortage leading banks to restrict foreign currency withdrawals in the heavily dollarised economy, reports Al Jazeera.

Scores of businesses have closed down and thousands of employees have been laid off or had their working hours and wages slashed. Meanwhile, prices of everyday goods have gone up.

Last year, the World Bank estimated that up to half of Lebanon's population could

- **1.6 lakh** Bangladeshis currently work in Lebanon
- Economic crisis, unrest affect expatriate workers
- **30,000** undocumented Bangladeshis desperate to return
- **4,000** Bangladeshis so far registered for returning home
- Authorities take long time to clear way for their return
- **600** Bangladeshis returned since October last year

fall into poverty, up from 30 percent in 2018. Unemployment, "especially among youth, is already high and could further rise sharply", it cautioned.

Lebanon is also reeling from a political crisis. Thousands have been taking to the streets for over three months demanding a productive economy, an end to corruption

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These two children and their guardians are among the 312 Bangladeshis, who have been kept under observation at the Hajj Camp in the city's Ashkona upon their return from coronavirus-hit Chinese city of Wuhan on February 1. They will have to stay at the camp for another six days. Inset, carrying a meal for his son, a father calls him from outside the camp. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED/ ANISUR RAHMAN

NAYAPALTAN RALLY

BNP waits for DMP's formal nod

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As the BNP prepares to hold a rally at the city's Nayapaltan today, the party and the Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday gave contradictory statements on permission for the programme.

Talking to The Daily Star, BNP Publicity Affairs Secretary Shaheed Uddin Chowdhury Annie said they received "verbal permission" from the DMP for holding the rally at 2:00pm.

The rally will be organised demanding release of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia from jail.

But the DMP commissioner, Md Shafiqul Islam, last evening said the issue of permission was

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2 YEARS OF KHALEDA'S IMPRISONMENT

BNP in a fix over what to do next

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Two years after BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia landed in jail, many activists and leaders of the party are losing hope of getting her released through legal and political means.

The top leaders, however, are saying that they will continue their efforts to get the 73-year-old former prime minister out of jail.

"We tried the legal and political means. Since the government kept her in jail out of vengeance, we could not get her released. But we believe that we will succeed in the coming days," BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told The Daily Star yesterday.

But many of the party leaders say that they do not have the strength to take to the streets in such large numbers that it would force the government to release Khaleda.

She was sent to jail on February 8, 2018.



Two standing committee members and two vice chairmen of the BNP said their chairperson was jailed on political grounds and the government would not release her unless there was a tough movement demanding her release.

Had the BNP put pressure on the government ahead of the last parliamentary election, Khaleda could have been released, because the government was looking forward to holding a participatory election. The party also had the chance to press for the cause before the lawmakers took oath. But it did neither, they added, requesting anonymity.

"The party had not used any of its weapons to release her," said a senior leader.

The top leaders, meanwhile, cannot decide whether to wage a movement for her freedom as grassroots and central leaders are failing to agree on what strategy they should take.

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DMCH opens 'isolation unit'

It's equipped to treat 12 patients at a time

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The authorities of Dhaka Medical College Hospital have opened an "isolation unit" to treat coronavirus patients if there is any.

"We opened the isolation unit on January 30, a day before 312 Bangladeshis returned home from the coronavirus-hit Chinese city of Wuhan, as part of our advance preparation," Brig Gen AKM Nasiruddin, director of the hospital, told The Daily Star yesterday.

So far, nobody has been infected with the virus in the country.

Located on the ground floor of DMCH Building-2, the seven-bed unit has facilities like those of a high-dependency unit.

The unit, equipped with necessary medical equipment, nurses, and paramedics, can treat 12 patients at a time, said the director.

He added that they were ready to increase the capacity of the unit.

"Currently, some nurses and paramedics are performing their duties at the unit regularly. We will deploy

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CORONAVIRUS EPIDEMIC IN CHINA

Whistleblower doctor's death sparks anger

Trump has 'confidence' in China's efforts; cases on Japan cruise ship hit 61

AFP, Beijing

A Chinese doctor who was punished after raising the alarm about China's new coronavirus died from the pathogen yesterday, sparking an outpouring of grief and anger over a worsening crisis that has now killed 636 people.

At least 31,211 people have now been infected by a virus that ophthalmologist Li Wenliang brought to light in late December before becoming its latest victim.

The virus is believed have emerged from a market selling exotic animals in Wuhan before jumping to humans and spreading across China and abroad as millions travelled for the Lunar New Year holiday.

Researchers at the South China Agricultural University have identified the endangered pangolin as a "potential intermediate host" for the disease, as the genome sequences of viruses found on the scaly mammal are 99 percent identical to those on coronavirus patients.

The virus has since spread across China, prompting the government to lock down cities of tens of millions of people, and panic has spiralled

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CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

636
DEATHS (ALL IN CHINA)

31,211
CONFIRMED CASES



Tigers shot out for 233

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh's performance against Pakistan on the first day of the first Test was better in comparison to their showing against India in their previous Test just a couple of months ago as the visitors managed to reach 233 in their first innings before being bowled out in Rawalpindi yesterday.

At the end of Bangladesh's innings which lasted 82.5 overs, the umpires called off play due to bad light.

Despite the improvement - they were bowled out for 106 and 195 by India in November 2019 -- there were repeats of mistakes such as throwing away wickets in crucial situations, inability to convert starts into big ones and a lack of partnerships, which kept

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Bangladesh batsman Mohammad Mithun cuts the ball away while scoring 63 on the first day of the first Test against Pakistan at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium yesterday. Mithun was the only batsman to cross fifty as Bangladesh were bundled out for 233.

PHOTO: AFP

TRUMP'S IMPEACHMENT

Trial over but politics isn't

CNN ONLINE

A hundred senators have cast judgment on President Donald Trump, but the saga of his impeachment will only be put to rest when the ultimate jury -- 150 million American voters -- delivers a final verdict in November.

Trump claimed complete absolution and took veiled shots at his political opponents while speaking at the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington Thursday morning, saying Americans "have been put through a terrible ordeal by some very dishonest and corrupt people." He's scheduled to make additional comments about his acquittal of high crimes and misdemeanors by the Senate at the White House later in the day.

Given the scandal and controversy constantly whirling around the president, the details of his pressure campaign on Ukraine -- never really refuted by his impeachment trial defense team -- may be long forgotten by November.

But the underlying cause of impeachment may be the most crucial issue on the ballot: The president's determination to wield sweeping, unrestrained power and his refusal to accept the checks and balances invested in Congress.

The political aftershocks from the four-month impeachment showdown will shape the destiny of the presidency, influence races involving vulnerable Democratic and Republican senators in swing states and play into the Democrats' fight to hold onto the House of Representatives.

Trump emerges from impeachment politically strengthened -- in the short term. He has proven once and for all his extraordinary hold on his own party. Only Utah Sen Mitt Romney -- who has an independent power base

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