



The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

www.thedailystar.net

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JAMADIU SANI 14, 1441 HIRI

20 PAGES PRICE: Tk 12.00



“None can give autocracy an institutional shape. People who had tried faced dire consequences”.

DR KAMAL HOSSAIN, JATIYA OIKYAFRONT CONVENOR, AT A MEETING DEMANDING BNP CHIEF KHALEDA ZIA'S RELEASE (PAGE 16)



“We should be strong to prevent any war against the county. Being weak will encourage our enemies to attack Iran.”

IRAN'S SUPREME LEADER AYATOLLAH ALI KHAMENEI BATS FOR STRONGER MILITARY AMID INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE (PAGE 12)



“We are trying to play the normal cricket that we have been playing throughout the tournament ...”

BANGLADESH U-19 SKIPPER AKBAR ALI ON HANDLING THE PRESSURE BEFORE THE MEN'S U-19 WORLD CUP FINAL AGAINST INDIA (PAGE 14)



PHENSEDYL SMUGGLING

Pouring in unchecked

Inflow of the banned cough syrup 'rising with factories in India relocated, reopened'

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The smuggling of Phensedyl through various border points appears to be rising with alleged relocation and reopening of some factories in India.

The flow of this drug into Bangladesh had declined after the Indian health ministry banned it on March 11, 2016. The authorities reportedly had closed down factories in the bordering districts of India though production of the cough syrup actually never stopped.

In recent years, narco syndicates have started manufacturing this contraband in factories relocated deep into the Indian state of Bihar from bordering areas, according to intelligence sources.

Law enforcement officials in Bangladesh say they have come to know about some Phensedyl factories that resumed production. Their knowledge of possible locations of the factories have been communicated to Indian counterparts.

According to two narcotics dealers in Chapainawabganj, a district bordering Murshidabad and Malda in West Bengal, the price of 100 bottles of Phensedyl was Tk 20,000 to Tk 24,000 before the shutdown of factories in Indian border areas in 2016.

But the price went up after the factories were relocated

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PHOTO: MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN/COLLECTED



Drug traffickers use this shack on the zero line of Bangladesh-India to store hauls of Phensedyl near Jaminpur village in Chapainawabganj's Shibganj upazila. Bangladeshi drug dealers and addicts buy the codeine cough syrup from this shack, owned by an Indian national, said locals. But the BGB cannot raid the shack as it is on the zero line. *Inset*, local anti-narcotics campaigners preparing to destroy the empty bottles they had picked up from different roads and mango orchards in the area. The photos were taken recently.

‘Commission business’ of another kind

To have firsthand knowledge about Phensedyl smuggling in the wake of an apparent rise in the flow of this contraband, our staff correspondent Mohammad Jamil Khan went to two villages in Chapainawabganj, a northwestern district bordering India. The villages are among those border pockets through which the drug is trafficked into the country. Here is what he found and what he learnt:

It requires a series of planning and a good amount of cash to start a new business. But for the residents of Azmatpur village, only Tk 1 lakh is quite enough to start what is locally known as “commission business”.

This is actually the trade of Phensedyl, a codeine-based Indian cough syrup banned in 2016, which was a top choice among drug addicts in Bangladesh before yaba gained its foothold.

“You can buy 12 cases of Phensedyl at Tk 84,000, each containing 25 bottles. A single case would cost Tk 7,000,” said a 30-year-old man, who has been a smuggler for the last one decade.

“But a commission of Tk 3,000 has to be paid to the carriers for bringing every hundred bottles from the border to the village. A carrier will get Tk 9,000 if he brings in a consignment of 12 cases, which means 300 bottles of Phensedyl.”

That's why locals call it “commission

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CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

86 die in a single day in China

US citizen among them

AFP, Beijing

The death toll from the novel coronavirus outbreak soared to 722 in China yesterday, including the first foreign victim, as Hong Kong imposed a mandatory quarantine on mainland arrivals to block the spread of an epidemic that has caused global panic.

With 86 more people dying in mainland China -- the highest one-day jump so far -- the toll was closing in on the 774 killed worldwide during the 2002-2003 SARS epidemic.

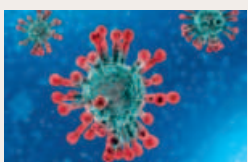
A 60-year-old US citizen diagnosed with the virus died on Thursday in Wuhan, the city at the epicentre of the health emergency, according to the US embassy, which did not provide more details about the person.

China's foreign ministry said in a statement to AFP that the victim was a US citizen of Chinese origin.

A Japanese man in his 60s with a suspected coronavirus infection also died in hospital in Wuhan, the Japanese foreign

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CORONAVIRUS



Total deaths
724

Deaths in
mainland China
722

Confirmed cases
34,822

Confirmed
cases in China
34,598

Worst hit Chinese
region Hubei
(24,953 cases)

Countries affected
25

SOURCE: WHO

Govt steps up screening

All incoming passengers to be screened at three int'l airports, 12 land ports

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

With the coronavirus outbreak getting worse, the authorities have started screening incoming international passengers at land ports and airports yesterday.

According to officials, the 12 operational land ports have been given handheld infrared thermometers to check arriving passengers.

“So far, filling up a health status form and further check-ups were mandatory only for the passengers coming from China. From now on [Saturday], all incoming passengers will have to go through the same process at international ports,” Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora, director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), told The Daily Star.

Since January 21, passengers from China had to pass through thermal scanners and have health check-ups and a form signed by health officials to be able to enter the country.

In Bangladesh, Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport receives four flights a day from different cities in China. Shah Amanat International Airport in Chattogram and the Osmani International Airport in Sylhet have no flights from China.

As of yesterday, health officials at Hazrat Shahjalal International screened 8,484 passengers from China with no detections, according to the IEDCR.

On an average, 10,000 passengers enter the country through Hazrat

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DEMAND FOR KHALEDA'S RELEASE

BNP threatens ‘mass upsurge’

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday said they would rejuvenate the people to organise a “mass upsurge” to free party Chairperson Khaleda Zia from jail.

“We held many rallies, placed our demands on various occasions, and took part in polls in the past. Now our main responsibility is to force the government to free our leader Khaleda Zia and restore the people's rights,” he said.

Speaking at a rally in front of the BNP's Nayapaltan central office, Fakhru also announced that the party would stage demonstrations across the country on February 15 to press its demand for Khaleda's release.

“We would like to say that we would wake the people up through a movement, and then organise a mass upsurge to defeat this dangerous monstrous government and reinstate the people's rights,” he said.

The BNP organised the rally protesting the imprisonment of Khaleda. Yesterday was the second anniversary of her imprisonment.

Fakhru urged the government to free the BNP chief immediately and allow her to receive better treatment for her “serious” ailment.

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Young Tigers eye history

SPORTS REPORTER

Following a dream run in the ICC Under-19 World Cup that has seen Bangladesh reach the final of the flagship event for the first time, the youngsters will be eyeing history as they try to clinch the title against defending champions India in the final in Potchefstroom today. The match is scheduled to start at 2:00pm BST.

Under skipper Akbar Ali, the young Tigers have been clinical throughout the tournament in all three departments. But with both sides contesting the final unbeaten so far, it will be an

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A large crowd at a BNP rally demanding its Chairperson Khaleda Zia be released from jail. The programme in front of the BNP office in the capital's Nayapaltan yesterday marked two years of her imprisonment.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Bismillah ir Rahmanir Raheem

**Haji
Mohammed
Iqbal Dada**

Haji Mohammed Iqbal Dada passed away peacefully on 4th February, 2020 (Inna lilahi wa inna ilayhi Raji'un).

We request everyone to pray to almighty Allah to grant him jannat, Ameen.

He was a renowned businessman and philanthropist doing his BBA from American University of Beirut and his MBA from Columbia University, New York. He follows his late wife, Bilquis Dada in leaving behind his 3 children, Rima, Ayesha and Asghar, his 6 grand children, Daanish, Ruqayya, Rabeeah, Ayaan, Zahraan and Aizar and 2 great grand children, Liyana and Zayer.

He was a valued member of the Chittagong community and also the honorable president of the Chittagong Memon Jamaat.

Dada family.