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Your Right to Know

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"I hope, you'll remain as friends of Bangladesh... you'll remain as goodwill ambassadors and will never forget Bangladesh."
PRIME MINISTER SHEIKH HASINA TELLS FOREIGN SOLDIERS GRADUATING FROM DSCSC



"Kick the government out of power" is street slang, not political language."
AL GENERAL SECRETARY OBAIDUL QUADER ON GONOFORUM PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS



"It is unprecedented in Thailand, and I want this to be the last time this crisis happens."
THAILAND'S PRIME MINISTER PRAYUTH CHAN-OCHA ON SATURDAY'S MASS SHOOTING

LAST YEAR SAW RECORD NUMBER OF FIRES

24,074 incidents, Tk 330cr loss

MUNTAKIM SAAD

Fire incidents across the country rose by 22.5 percent to 24,074 last year, compared to 19,642 in 2018, causing a loss of Tk 330.41 crore, says a government report.

One-third of the fire incidents -- 8,466 -- occurred at households mainly due to electrical short circuit, show data compiled by Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defence.

Rapid urbanisation and careless use of electronic equipment are among the major reasons behind the rise in fire incidents, say

officials. They have stressed the need for raising awareness among people to prevent it.

Terming the rise alarming, Fire Service Director General Brig Gen Sazzad Hussain said, "We didn't conduct any research on why the number rose last year, but the difference is significant..."

In case of households, most of the fire incidents were caused by low quality electrical goods, he pointed out.

"We sometimes use several devices using a low quality multiplug. We even use the

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Thick smoke billowing from a building after a storage of plastic barrels caught fire yesterday afternoon in the capital's Shyambazar. Fires in plastic factories and storage facilities in Old Dhaka have caused major tragedies in recent years.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Coronavirus kills more than SARS

REUTERS, Shanghai/Beijing

China raised the death toll from its coronavirus outbreak to 811 yesterday, passing the number killed globally by the SARS epidemic, as authorities made plans for millions of people returning to work after an extended Lunar New Year break.

Many of China's usually teeming cities have almost become ghost towns during the past two weeks as Communist Party rulers ordered virtual lockdowns, cancelled flights, closed factories and shut schools.

Even today, a large number of workplaces and schools will remain closed and many white-collar employees will work from home.

The scale of the potential hit to an economy that has been the engine of global growth in recent years has taken a toll on financial markets, as shares slumped and investors switched into safe-havens such as gold, bonds and the Japanese yen.

China's cabinet yesterday said it would coordinate with transport authorities

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First Bangladeshi infected in Singapore

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Bangladeshi worker in Singapore has been diagnosed with coronavirus infection, said the Ministry of Health of Singapore.

The worker has no known recent travel history to China, reports The Straits Times, Singapore.

The 39-year-old has a work-pass and was taken to an isolation room at the National Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCID).

His symptoms surfaced on February 1, and he went to a clinic on February 3, and Changi General Hospital on February 5. He was admitted to the intensive care unit at Changi General Hospital on February 7.

He was confirmed to have the coronavirus on Saturday afternoon, and was then transferred to the NCID.

The total number of people infected in Singapore has grown to 43.

The Daily Star could not independently verify the identity of the patient. Meanwhile, health staffers in all international ports of entry across the country screened some 16,023 incoming passengers from different countries in the 24 hours until 8:00am yesterday.

None of the screened had any symptoms of novel coronavirus, according to the daily report on coronavirus surveillance by the directorate general of health services (DGHS).

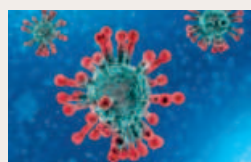
Over the 24-hour period, Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport reported the highest number of passengers screened with 8,210.

Two other international airports -- MAG Osmani International Airport in Sylhet and Shah Amanat International Airport in Chattogram -- screened 488 and 434 passengers respectively.

All the land ports collectively screened a total of 6,891 inbound passengers in the last 24 hours.

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CORONAVIRUS

Total deaths
813Deaths in
mainland China
811Confirmed cases
37,562Confirmed
cases in China
37,198Worst hit Chinese
region Hubei
27,100 casesCountries affected
27

SOURCE: WHO

Mega plan taken up to dredge 178 rivers

State minister tells JS; navigability of 10,000km of waterways to be ensured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has taken measures to ensure navigability in 10,000 kilometres of river routes through dredging 178 rivers, State Minister for Shipping Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury today told parliament.

"The current government has taken up a dredging master plan to bring navigability to the internal waterways across the country. Under it, around 10,000km of river routes will be made navigable through excavating 178 rivers by the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority [BIWTA]," said the junior minister.

He said this in reply to a query from ruling Awami League MP Nurunnabi Chowdhury from Bhola-3.

As per the plan, the state minister said the BIWTA had begun excavation of 12 important river routes, capital dredging in 53 river routes, navigability development of the river route from Mongla port to Pakshi via Chandpur, Mawa, Goalando

and restoration of old Brahmaputra, Darla, Tulai and Punarva rivers.

Besides, feasibility study of 47 more rivers will be done under the plan, he added.

The minister's question-answer was tabled at the beginning of yesterday's parliament session with Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury in the chair.

In reply to another query from treasury bench MP Kazi Nabil Ahmed from Jashore-3, the state minister informed the House that the length of the inland river routes reduced to about 6,000km during the dry season, while it rose to around 24,000km during the rainy season.

Replying to another question from AL MP M Abdul Latif from Chattogram-1, Khalid Mahmud said excavation of 470km of river routes under the Bangladesh-India river protocol had already begun. It will be jointly financed by the two countries.

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Tigers staring at innings defeat

SPORTS REPORTER

Pakistan pacer Naseem Shah became the youngest bowler to take a hat-trick in Test cricket, leaving the visiting Bangladesh on the verge of yet another humiliating innings defeat in the longest format of the game. Bangladesh were struggling on 126 for six in their second innings against Pakistan after the third day of the first Test in Rawalpindi yesterday.

Courtesy of the 16-year-old's late blow, Bangladesh lost four wickets for just two runs. The visitors require another 86 runs with four wickets in hand to avoid the innings defeat.

Naseem initiated the carnage by dismissing Nazmul Hossain Shanto on 38 and then removed Tajul

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A man signals a bus to stop as he jaywalks across a road in the capital's Farmgate yesterday. At the time the photo was taken, the man was surrounded by three buses and his actions put not only his but also others' lives at risk.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Crackdown on corruption, drugs to continue

PM reiterates at DSCSC graduation ceremony

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday reiterated that the ongoing drives against corruption, drugs and terrorism will continue to protect the society from such menaces.

"We have already announced a zero-tolerance policy against drugs, terrorism, militancy and corruption. So, the drives against corruption, drugs and terrorism will continue," she said while delivering her speech at the graduation ceremony of Defence Services Command and Staff College (DSCSC) 2020 at Sheikh Hasina Complex of Mirpur Cantonment in the capital.

The PM urged the members of the Armed Forces to pay special attention to these social menaces.

Hasina said her government wants to utilise merit, knowledge and strength of the youth in the interest of the country.

Mentioning that the Armed Forces of Bangladesh have been contributing to the United Nations peacekeeping missions, she said, "I want to develop them as modern forces so that they can move forward in keeping pace with any country and face the situation in any country [where they are or would be deployed]."

She added the Bangladesh Armed Forces earned fame in whichever country they worked in and won the hearts of the locals of different countries through humanitarian services.

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