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Your Right to Know

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CORONAVIRUS FALLOUT

Aviation takes a hit

Flights depart almost empty; incoming tourists cancel trips

RASHIDUL HASAN

Airlines operating flights between Bangladesh and China have been hit hard by the coronavirus outbreak.

The number of travellers on the otherwise busy air route has drastically fallen.

The new virus that has spread to at least 26 countries also affected Bangladesh's tourism as fewer people are choosing to fly in and out, several travel agencies and tour operators said.

They said many foreign tourists' planned trips to Bangladesh had been cancelled.

Besides cancelling almost all scheduled tours to China, Many Bangladeshis cancelled tours to India, Bhutan, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and Vietnam.

Bangladesh's US-Bangla Airlines and China's China Southern and China Eastern airlines operate direct flights between Dhaka and cities in China.

US-Bangla and China Southern used to operate seven flights between Dhaka and Guangzhou while China Eastern used to operate seven flights between Dhaka and Kunming every week.

But since last week, each of the three carriers have reduced flight frequency to three flights a week, officials said.

Hong Kong-based Dragon Air, which used to operate

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QUARANTINED CHINA RETURNEES GO HOME -- PAGE 2



PHOTO: AFP

A girl wearing a face mask plays on her scooter at a park in Beijing on February 15, 2020. The death toll from China's new coronavirus epidemic surged past 1,500 yesterday after 143 more people died in the country, according to official data. Beijing authorities on Friday ordered everyone returning to the city from holidays to go into quarantine for 14 days or risk punishment, Chinese state-run media reports.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

As we enter the Fourth Industrial Revolution, what are some of the biggest challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for Bangladesh in regards to industrialisation, urbanisation and growth? Find out in the third instalment of our five-segment special supplement series, titled "REIMAGINING GROWTH IN THE DIGITAL AGE" which is out today.

The fourth and final parts of this special supplement series titled "DIGITISATION AND INCLUSIVITY: TAKING EVERYONE ALONG" and "THE YOUTH IN THE AGE OF DIGITALISATION" will come out on February 18 and 20, respectively.

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Fifth Bangladeshi infected in S'pore

Europe reports its first coronavirus death; Egypt confirms first case in Africa

AGENCIES

One more Bangladeshi in Singapore has been infected with the novel coronavirus, Singapore's Ministry of Health said yesterday.

This is the fifth Bangladesh to be infected and all five are linked to the cluster at Seletar Aerospace Heights construction site.

The latest case is that of a 26-year-old,

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COVID-19 UPDATE

1,527 DEATHS

67,088 CONFIRMED CASES

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Special tribunals to ensure speedy trials

Says law minister as US sanctions loom over country for not doing enough to combat it

PORIMOL PALMA

The government is going to set up seven special tribunals for speedy trials in human trafficking cases as Bangladesh faces risks of US sanctions for not doing enough in combatting the heinous crime.

"Seven special tribunals will be established in divisional cities. They will start functioning from March this year," Law Minister Anisul Huq told The Daily Star on Wednesday.

The tribunals will surely help speed up the trial process of the human trafficking cases, he said.

Over 4,700 human trafficking cases are now pending, Anisul Huq said, expecting that the tribunals, once set up, will try the human traffickers to check such incidents.

The development comes after Bangladesh

2019 US REPORT FINDS

- Official complicity remains a serious problem
- Victim care remains insufficient
- Rohingya, foreign victims cannot access protective services

was ranked in Tier 2 Watch List for the last three consecutive years in the US Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report.

As per the US law, Bangladesh is not eligible to remain in Tier 2 this year, said the US Embassy in Dhaka in an email response to The Daily Star on

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AL picks new face over AJM Nasir for Ctg mayor polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League last night chose Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, joint general secretary of the party's Chattogram city unit, instead of incumbent mayor AJM Nasir Uddin to contest the Chittagong City Corporation mayoral election.

The ruling party also nominated former president of the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) Md Shafiqul Islam Mohiuddin for the by-polls in Dhaka-10 constituency.

Besides, Umme Kulsum Smriti was picked for the

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Academicians at odds

At a time when debates and discussions are rife over the "uniform admission test" the UGC is set to introduce for public universities, The Daily Star has taken the views of Prof Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury, UGC Chairman Kazi Shahidullah and DU Prof Tanzimuddin Khan on the matter.

ROBAB ROSAN

The UGC head believes that while issues might arise with the introduction of something new, such fears should not stop them from taking the initiative. On the other hand, the two distinguished educationists have strongly stated that a sensitive matter like admission in public universities must not go through a "trial and error" approach.

Four leading universities -- Dhaka University, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), Jahangirnagar University and Chittagong University -- are still undecided about adopting the new system.

According to Prof Serajul Islam, there are pros and cons.

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Serajul Islam Choudhury

Kazi Shahidullah

Tanzimuddin Khan



Throwaway plastic and other discarded items make Chaktai canal look like a stream of garbage in Chattogram's Chawkbazar. In the monsoon, some of the non-degradable objects will end up in the Karnaphuli river while others will impede the flow of water in the canal, leading to waterlogging. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

DREDGING KARNAPHULI

Work hindered by plastic waste

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chattogram

The capital dredging work in the Karnaphuli has slowed down due to a deep layer of polythene in the riverbed.

The cutter suction dredger (CSD), which was brought from China in February last year to dredge the river, was returned in August that year as the contractor wants to use the latest grab dredger to excavate.

A CSD is equipped with a rotating cutter head for cutting and fragmenting harder soils and rock while a grab dredger picks up seabed material with a clamshell bucket, which hangs from an onboard crane.

A recent survey conducted by the researchers at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology revealed that the riverbed has a layer of polythene and plastic waste stretching from 2 to 7 metres, said

sources at the Chattogram Port Authority (CPA).

The CPA had initiated "Sadarghat to Bakaliar Char Dredging" project at a cost of Tk 258 crore in May 2018 to restore navigability of the Karnaphuli.

The four-year-project is supposed to be completed in 2022, said CPA sources.

In October 2018, excavation

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