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SECOND EDITION



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"As per the constitution, she deserves bail but the government is not giving her bail for political reasons."
BNP SECRETARY GENERAL MIRZA FAKHRUL ISLAM ALAMGIR

"I felt really hurt to see the propaganda against me... I am a victim of a conspiracy."
CCC MAYOR AJM NASIR UDDIN ABOUT NOT GETTING AL TICKET (PAGE 5)

"Today, voting is not only a revolutionary and national responsibility, but it is also a religious duty."
IRAN'S SUPREME LEADER AYATOLLAH ALI KHAMENEI (PAGE 8)

We're looking for alternatives

PM tells JS regarding import of raw materials from China following coronavirus outbreak; 'country's economy better than that of Singapore'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said there was nothing to panic about coronavirus fallout as the country was taking steps to import raw materials from markets other than China.



House, Opposition Leader Raushan Ershad asked how did Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal say Bangladesh would cross Singapore in terms of economic progress.

Hasina said, "But I will say that Singapore is a small country with a smaller population. The [Singapore] country is a disciplined one. We are a small country but we have more population."

"We're facing a little problem; many things have to be imported from China. But we're cautious enough," she said in parliament.

The prime minister was taking part in a discussion on the thanksgiving motion on the president's speech. It was her concluding speech at the sixth session of the current parliament.

"We're taking steps to import raw materials, including chemicals, for the pharmaceutical industry... we're enquiring about the alternatives, we're taking measures to import even from markets that may cost us more. There's nothing to panic about."

She urged businesspeople not to stock any essential items out of fear, warning that if they do so, that might be a waste.

Hasina also claimed that Bangladesh is now economically stronger than Singapore. "I can at least claim that we are stronger than Singapore in terms of economic progress," she said.

Earlier, in her valedictory speech in the

"Ensuring development in Singapore is easy due to the political and economic environment that prevails in the country. On the contrary, we have to face arson attacks, killing and torture."

She also said Bangladesh was receiving a huge amount in investments. "Bangladesh is the most attractive destination for investment in the South East and South Asia... Not only among the South Asian countries, we are also ahead among the South Eastern countries."

In her speech, Raushan also said, "Many take out loan but don't invest the money."

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Broken and old TVs are piled up outside a shop at Chan Mia Housing in the capital's Mohammadpur area. Zahid, a 25-year-old TV technician, inset, has bought those from nearby homes for Tk 500-600 each. After repairing many of those, he would sell them for Tk 2,000-5,000 each. The rest of the TV sets would be sold for scrap. The photo was taken on Friday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Khaleda seeks bail again

Cites poor health; wants to go abroad for treatment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday again sought bail from the High Court on health grounds. She wants to have treatment abroad.



She has been sentenced to seven years' imprisonment in the Zia Charitable Trust corruption case by a lower court.

Khaleda submitted the bail petition to the HC through her lawyer Sagir Hossain Leon.

The BNP chief said she has been suffering from several diseases like diabetes and dental problem, and her physical condition has been deteriorating since December 12 last year.

She is now seriously ill. She cannot move freely, take food, and medicine without the help of others. She needs immediate treatment/therapy abroad, like in the UK, says the petition.

The HC is yet to set any date for hearing the petition.

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Rape incidents rose by 19pc last year

Shows police data; on average, 17 women, children were raped a day

SHARIFUL ISLAM

On an average, 17 women and children were allegedly raped each day last year, shows data based on cases filed with police stations across the country.

The number of such cases rose by 19 percent compared to the previous year, shows the data of the Police Headquarters.

The actual number could be higher as many victims refrain from lodging complaints due to social stigma associated with rape as well as insecurity and fear of harassment, say experts and rights activists.

According to the PHQ statistics, 6,321 rape cases were filed with police stations from January to December last year. For the period in 2018, the number was 5,123.

The statistics rings an alarm bell as the number of alleged rape victims exceeds those given by different rights bodies.

For example, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), in its annual report released recently, said 1,413 victims were either gang-raped or subjected to rape last year. The number almost doubled compared to the previous year, it said.

The ASK report, prepared on the basis of media reports, said 118 of the victims were aged six or below, 210 victims between seven and 12, and 234 victims were aged 13-18.

Another recent report, published by Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, said 1,370 rape incidents were reported last year.

Talking to The Daily Star about the PHQ data, Rokeya Kabir, executive director of Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS), said the situation was very grave. "The picture is also grim when it's about women repression."

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COVID-19 UPDATE



1,873 DEATHS

73,323 confirmed cases

72,436 confirmed cases in mainland China

Worst hit Chinese region Hubei 59,989 cases

The virus spread to at least 25 countries

At least 887 confirmed cases outside China

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

WHO urges calm as death toll climbs

Hospital director at Wuhan dies; global economic impact spreads

AGENCIES

The death toll from the new coronavirus outbreak rose again yesterday but Chinese and international health officials sought to calm global nerves, citing a study showing most cases are mild and warning against excessive measures to contain the epidemic.

Nearly 1,900 people have now died and more than 72,000 people have been infected by the virus in China, with hundreds more cases in some 25 countries.

The epidemic has triggered panic-buying in Singapore and Hong Kong, concerns about cruise-ship travel and the postponement of trade fairs, sports competitions and cultural events in China and abroad.

The outbreak is threatening to put a dent in the global economy, with China paralysed by vast quarantine measures and major firms such as iPhone maker Apple and mining giant BHP warning it could damage bottom lines.

Several countries have banned travellers from China and major airlines have suspended flights.

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IEDCR boss cautions against rumours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Government officials should act based on facts and avoid using force in handling suspected coronavirus patients so that people don't panic, IEDCR Director Prof Meerjady Sabrina Flora said yesterday.

Referring to the death of a woman following rumours about her son in Satkhira recently, she said rumours on social media and use of force by law enforcers and administration would create obstacles to detecting coronavirus cases.

The director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Diseases Control and Research (IEDCR) was briefing reporters on the latest coronavirus situation.

On February 10 night, Renuka Bala, 56, of

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Saidpur airport to turn regional

Nepal to start using it soon

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to expand the airport in Saidpur for Nepali flights to improve connectivity, trade and tourism with the South Asian Himalayan nation.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen revealed the plan after meeting with his Nepali counterpart Pradeep Kumar Gyawali at the Meghna State Guest House in the city yesterday.

"Now a technical committee will be formed to assess what kind of flights can land and take off from there," Momen told reporters.

A Nepali delegation, led by Gyawali, arrived in Dhaka Monday on a three-day visit. During the meeting yesterday, the two sides discussed ways of improving trade and commerce, connectivity, tourism, energy cooperation etc.

"We are expanding the Saidpur Airport. Currently, 12-14 flights are operated there daily. So, people can come to Dhaka easily," Momen said.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Nepal Mashfee Binte Shams told The Daily Star that presently there are flights between Dhaka and Kathmandu, but Bangladesh wants to turn Saidpur Airport into a regional one. The government is working to upgrade it into an international airport.

The Saidpur Airport is only around 15 minutes from Nepal's Bhadrapur and Biratnagar airports. The people in Bangladesh's northern districts can travel to and from

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Set up nursing areas in all factories

HC asks govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed authorities concerned of the government to set up breastfeeding and baby care corners at all mills and factories, including the garments factories, across the country.

The labour and employment secretary and the director general of the Department of Labour were asked to submit separate reports in two months.

The bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman passed the order while hearing a writ petition that said mothers feel uneasy to feed their children at workplaces and other public places.

Yesterday, writ petitioner Advocate Ishrat Hasan

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