



NUMBER OF AIR PASSENGERS RISING ON DOMESTIC ROUTES
SEE PAGE 3

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"If Turkey renounces everything, would France be rid of the mayhem provoked by the incapable person who is heading France..."
ERDOGAN LASHES OUT AT FRENCH PRESIDENT OVER MEDITERRANEAN ROW
PAGE 6



"I heard that the Indian Ministry of External Affairs is very sorry. Because they didn't know about the sudden ban."
FOREIGN MINISTER AK ABDUL MOMEN ABOUT INDIAN ONION EXPORT SUSPENSION



"Every day, health workers are exposed to stress, burnout, stigma, discrimination and even violence."
WHO DIRECTOR-GENERAL TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS
PAGE 6

ANTIGEN TEST FOR COVID-19

Policy tangled in red tape

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The government's Covid-19 testing expansion policy has been caught up in a bureaucratic red tape, leaving many suspected coronavirus patients dependent on expensive and time-consuming RT-PCR testing for diagnosis of the disease.

A final draft of the policy, formulated months ago, suggests introducing antigen testing, but the authorities concerned have not yet approved it despite an extensive exercise involving different bodies of the health ministry for the last two months.

The final draft is now lying with the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Experts say the policy should have been approved on an urgent basis to boost the number of daily tests and allow suspected Covid-19 patients to avail the alternative testing facilities.

With a population of over 160 million, Bangladesh still conducts the lowest testing in the world with just 10,465 tests per one million people, according to www.worldometers.info.

India is testing 42,170 people per one million.

An antigen test reveals if a person is currently infected with a pathogen. Once the infection is gone, the antigen disappears. This test is considered highly accurate and can provide results in minutes.

RT-PCR, considered a gold-standard technology for Covid-19 detection, traces pieces of the coronavirus through analysing sputum or mucus samples collected from the human body -- nasal and throat.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



A man returning after buying onions, sugar, pulse and oil from a truck of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) in the capital's Khamarbari area around noon yesterday. As onion prices have shot up in the market following Indian ban on export of the bulb, people lined up before such TCB sale points for hours to buy onions at subsidised prices. Some of them, however, had to remain satisfied with poor quality onions.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



DEALING WITH COVID-19

PM lauds health ministry

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the health ministry showed enough efficiency in fighting the Covid-19 pandemic in the country by taking necessary measures properly in time.

"I think the health ministry has showed enough efficiency. We have been able to keep this Covid-19 under control as instant measures, which were necessary at that time, were taken properly," she said.

The premier was speaking at the signing ceremony of the annual performance agreements

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

NARAYANGANJ MOSQUE BLAST

Admin probe blames Titas, mosque committee

Titas finds no fault of its own

STAR REPORT

Negligence of the mosque's committee was behind the explosion at Baitus Salat Jame Mosque in Narayanganj Sadar upazila on September 4, found a probe committee formed by Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited.

The mosque committee's ignorance, callousness and illegal electricity connection are the reasons behind the blast, read the report.

Meanwhile, another report submitted by the district administration of Narayanganj held both the mosque

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

PADMA BRIDGE RAIL LINK

Tweak rail design to let tall vehicles pass

Cabinet division asks rail project

TUHN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

In a major setback, Padma Bridge Rail Link Project authorities have been asked to change its viaduct designs as the poor clearance of bridges would impede large lorries on approach roads.

The Cabinet Division gave the directives recently after the Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project (PMBP) authorities expressed serious concerns because the designed viaducts for rail use have left too little clearance for tall vehicles that might use the roads underneath.

Viaduct designs for both ends of the bridge have the same issues.

Judging by the international standards for national highways, both the vertical and horizontal clearances are too small, and hence the faulty design should be amended, PMBP authorities said.

Padma Bridge Rail Link Project (PBRLP) designed the viaducts.

PMBP officials said construction of viaducts with the existing vertical limit will hamper movement of heavy lorries or loaded vehicles and the existing horizontal limit will shrink the width of the connecting roads of the country's longest bridge.

Rail link authorities claimed that the problem regarding vertical clearance actually arose over pier -25(1) and -25(2), and their contractor is redesigning it now. The task would not take more than a month, officials said.

Besides, the officials are now consulting with Buett experts to find alternative solutions to the problem regarding horizontal limits.

The PBRLP authorities stopped the construction work of the pier in question in mid-July, amid

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Onion added to the list of thorny issues

Analysts say on Dhaka-Delhi ties

PORIMOL PALMA

The recent market disruption in Bangladesh due to India's ban on onion exports could potentially cause a glitch in an Indo-Bangla relationship which is otherwise at its friendliest, analysts said.

The latest export ban on onions by India, without any prior notice, and the subsequent skyrocketing price of the kitchen staple in Bangladesh's markets is not the first such instance.

In late September last year, a similar ban was

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

MP Shahid's trial begins in Kuwait

RASHIDUL ISLAM and PORIMOL PALMA

Lawmaker Shahid Islam Papul and three managers of his company were taken to a Kuwait court yesterday on charges of human trafficking, money laundering, bribing and threatening the state security.

"The hearing is going on. We can't say for sure when it ends. Sometimes it continues up to 11:00 at night," a Bangladeshi, who works in Kuwait as a stringer for a Bangladeshi satellite TV channel, told The Daily Star around 8:00pm yesterday.

They were taken to the court at Kuwait time 3:18pm (Bangladesh time 6:18pm) in a case that created much hype in the Arab world as well as in Bangladesh.

A total of 13 people were accused in the case, but four were later exempted during investigation.

Other accused including two Kuwaiti lawmakers -- Saadoun Hammad and Salah Khorshid -- are facing trial

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



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