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New scanners to step up checks

RASHIDUL HASAN

The Civil Aviation Authorities of Bangladesh (Caab) have for the first time placed four full-body x-ray scanners at the pre-boarding security checkpoints at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Security officials will be able to detect any object on or inside a passenger's body, Group Captain AHM Touhid-ul Ahsan, director of the airport, told The Daily Star.

The Civil Aviation Authorities of Bangladesh (Caab) procured scanners from Japan under a project of Japan International Cooperation Agency, he added.

However, the scanners will not be used until officials from Japan arrive in Dhaka and "train our people to operate these machines. But this might take five to six months because of the coronavirus restrictions," Touhid said.

The equipment currently used can only detect metallic objects. But the new scanners can detect everything, including the ones inside a person's body, using X-ray.

The new devices will be an addition to the existing metal detectors and archways, said officials at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA).

The new scanners will be used for checking five to 10 percent of the passengers, especially those who seem suspicious,

because X-ray is not good for the human body, the HSIA director said.

"We will ask the suspicious people to go through the machine," Touhid said.

"When we find something suspicious or unwanted in manual search or when an alarm rings, we will ask the person to go through the full-body X-ray scanner to

locate and identify the object."

The full-body x-ray scanner machine works like any other X-ray machine. A person will stand inside with their arms up at the shoulder level. The X-ray will identify everything in their body and clothes in a moment.

These machines are used at different airports in Asia and many developed countries.

The new scanners will boost Caab's ability to ensure safety of the people using the airport.

Star LIVE

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Tannery waste dumped into the Dhaleshwari river in broad daylight at Hemayetpur, Savar. Pollution will become more evident around Dhaka and its outskirts since it is winter and the rivers do not have as much water. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Release cartoonist Kishore from jail

UN human rights experts urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

UN human rights experts yesterday called on Bangladesh to immediately release cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore from jail due to his deteriorating health.

Kishore was arrested in May after his cartoon series titled "Life in the Time of Corona", satirising the country's response to Covid-19, was posted on Facebook in March and April, 2020. He was charged under the Digital Security Act for spreading false news and misinformation on the country's Covid-19 response.

"Criticism of government policy, including through political satire and cartoons, is permitted under the rights to freedom of expression and cultural rights, and should not be criminalised," the experts said in a joint statement.

The experts are: Karima Bennouna, special rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; Irene Khan, special rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression; and Tlaleng Mofokeng, special rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

They have repeatedly expressed serious concerns over the incompatibility of the Digital Security Act with international law

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

New cabinet sworn in



Shamsuddoza Sajen
 DECEMBER 17, 1972

NO CHANGE IN PORTFOLIOS OF MINISTERS

The ministers of Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's cabinet, who are sworn in today under the constitution, would retain the same portfolios as they were holding before.

This cabinet would function till a new government takes over after the general elections scheduled to be held on March 7, 1973.

The swearing-in ceremony of Bangabandhu and 21 members of his cabinet is held at the Banga Bhaban in the presence of foreign diplomats, former MCAs, political leaders and high officials of the armed forces.

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CHILAHATI-HOLDIBARI RAIL LINK

Opens after 55 yrs with promises of prosperity

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

After 55 years, rail communications between Bangladesh and India through Chilahati-Haldibari route is going to resume today.

To this effect, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi are expected to inaugurate the rail link through video conferencing at 11:30am.

Chilahati is in northern district of Nilphamari and Haldibari in Cooch Behar district of West Bengal, India.

This popular route had been in operation between the two neighbouring countries even after the emergence of India and Pakistan as independent states in 1947.

But after the Indo-Pak war in 1965, the route went

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5,000-yr-old pyramid artefact found in Scotland



AFP, London

One of only three artefacts ever recovered from inside Egypt's Great Pyramid has been found in a misplaced cigar tin in a Scottish university collection, academics revealed yesterday.

The fragment of cedar wood, which has been found to date back 5,000 years to the building of the pyramid at Giza, was first discovered in the late 19th century but had been missing for more than 70 years.

A record discovered in 2001 appeared to show the fragment -- found alongside a ball and a bronze

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Biden joins Senate battle

Top Trump ally breaks silence to congratulate him

AFP, Atlanta

President-elect Joe Biden threw his weight behind the Democratic battle for control of the US Senate on Tuesday, as his White House win was finally acknowledged by top Republicans and holdout foreign leaders.

Biden flew into Georgia -- a southern state he won in an upset against President Donald Trump -- to host

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PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 17

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5:20	12:45	3:45	5:22	7:00
JAMAAT 5:55	1:15	4:00	5:25	7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Passenger held with 130 gold bars at HSIA

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Customs officials arrested a passenger with 130 gold bars weighing 15kg at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital on Tuesday night.

Arrestee Lutfar Rahman Munshi, a resident of Mymensingh, returned home from Dubai.

Customs sources said the seized gold was worth Tk 10.50 crore.

Marufur Rahman, deputy commissioner of the Customs Preventive Team, said they had received intelligence that a passenger would return home from Dubai on flight EK-564 with a huge quantity of gold.

Accordingly, members of the customs (preventive) team took position at different places of the airport. At one stage, they arrested Lutfar and seized the gold bars.

The seized gold bars were deposited to the treasury branch of Dhaka Customs House, Marufur said.

A case was filed with Dhaka Airport Police Station in connection with the incident.



Fishermen from various villages setting off on the Monu river on several boats in Moulvibazar. This is part of the annual fishing festival which takes place over three days. This photo was taken recently from Kulaura upazila.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

Europe tightens pre-Christmas lockdowns

WHO urges special precautions; US sets new 24hr record of Covid-19 infections

AGENCIES

Several European countries tightened restrictions yesterday, as Germany set a record for daily deaths and the United States broke its own daily high for infection numbers.

The tougher measures came as EU countries agreed to rollout vaccinations on the same day.

"To get to the end of the pandemic, we will need up to 70 percent of the population vaccinated," European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen told MEPs.

Pressure has been mounting on the bloc since Britain and the United States both started their programmes, using a vaccine developed in the EU by Pfizer and BioNTech.

The World Health Organization's European wing yesterday warned of a resurgence of the virus on the continent early next year, urging special precautions over the holiday season.

"It may feel awkward to wear masks and practise physical distancing when around friends and family, but doing so contributes significantly to ensuring that everyone remains safe and healthy," the health agency said.

Germany, which dealt with its first wave relatively smoothly, closed non-essential shops and schools yesterday as its daily death toll soared to 952.

The country has struggled to contain a surge in recent months and has joined calls for the European Union's

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