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Railways in trouble with rescue cranes

Outdated cranes causing delays in salvage operations, restoring rail link; BR eyes 3 modern ones

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Most of 22 relief cranes of Bangladesh Railway (BR) are either outdated or broken, causing difficulties in carrying out salvage operations after train accidents.

At least 10 are over 35 years old while three are between 21 and 35 years old, according to BR documents.

Three are now broken. Only six are within their economic life, which is 20 years.

Of the 22 relief cranes, 15 are meter-gauge and seven broad-gauge, the documents show.

Most of the outdated cranes are steam-operated and spare parts for them are not available in the international market, BR officials said.

Besides, some of them are not capable of conducting salvage operations as they are too "small" and take more than usual time to complete a rescue operation, causing passengers' sufferings, they said.

Under the circumstances, the BR has made a move to procure three relief cranes to ensure quick salvage operation after accident to resume rail communications, officials said.

As per the plan, the two modern broad-gauge and one meter-gauge hydraulic accident relief cranes would be bought at an estimated cost of Tk 230.8 crore between January 2021 and December 2023.

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A devastating fire burned down 55 shanties at Kalshi Taltola slum in the capital's Mirpur 11 yesterday. The fire service, after visiting the spot, said the blaze started around 1:45pm and was doused around 5:00pm.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

32 more die, 1,470 get Covid-19

UNB, Dhaka

Covid-19 fatalities in Bangladesh rose to 7,312 with 32 more deaths in 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday.

Besides, 1,470 new Covid-19 cases were reported, taking the caseload to 502,183.

The mortality rate stood at 1.45 percent, the Directorate General of Health Services said in a press release.

So far, 439,694 patients, 87.56 percent, including 2,167 new ones have recovered during the period.

Bangladesh reported its first case on March 8. The infection number reached the 300,000-mark on August 26. The first death was reported on March 18 and the death toll exceeded 7,000 on December 12.

Until now, 30,91,339 tests have been carried out, 15,669 new ones.

Bangladesh is seeing 2,948.70 infections, 2581.78 recoveries and 42.93 deaths per million.

Mercury may rise

Met office forecasts

STAR REPORT

Day-to-day life in many districts is being hampered due to the bone-chilling cold and daily wage-earners are the ones suffering most.

Yesterday's lowest temperature was 7.5 degree Celsius, which was recorded in Tentulia of Panchagarh.

"A mild cold wave is sweeping over the regions of Gopalganj, Sitakunda, Cumilla, Sreemangal, Badalgachhi, Tentulia, Rajarhat and Chuadanga," said a weather bulletin.

"It may abate in some more places," said the bulletin of Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

"Night temperature may rise slightly and day temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country," it added.

The Met office forecast for 24 hours was released at 6:00pm yesterday.

"Weather may remain

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Bangabandhu unveils memorial plaque



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman consoling the relatives of the martyred intellectuals at Mirpur on the occasion of the unveiling of the memorial plaque on December 22, 1972.

December 22, 1972
SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

DRAW INSPIRATION FROM MARTYRS' SACRIFICE
Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman renews his call today to all irrespective of their ideological or political affiliations to dedicate themselves to the great task of rebuilding the country into a truly Shonar Bangla drawing inspiration from the sacrifice of the martyrs of the Liberation Struggle.

The prime minister speaks on the occasion of unveiling of a memorial plaque dedicated to the memory of Shaheed intellectuals at Mirpur. He observes that the souls of the martyrs of the Liberation Struggle would not find peace until and unless the high ideals and principles for which they had laid



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SINHA MURDER CASE Court accepts charge sheet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A Cox's Bazar court yesterday accepted the charge sheet in Maj (ret'd) Sinha Rashed Khan murder case.

Judge Tamanna Farah of Cox's Bazar Senior Judicial Magistrate Court-4 accepted the charge sheet after hearing the prosecution and defence lawyers.

The court also issued an arrest warrant for suspended assistant sub-inspector Sagar Dev, the only absconding accused in the case, said Public Prosecutor Faridul Alam of Cox's Bazar District and Sessions Judge Court.

Rab Senior ASP Mohammad Khairul Islam, also the investigation officer of the murder case, had submitted the charge sheet to the court on December 13, accusing 15 people.

Among the accused are suspended Teknaf

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World's oldest rice paddies found in China



MAIL ONLINE

The world's oldest rice paddies have been uncovered in China that experts say were farmed more than 6,000 years ago.

The ancient checkboard patterned fields were found in the city of Yuyao, east China's Zhejiang Province and are said to cover about 222 acres - only one acre has been excavated thus far.

Archaeologists said that the paddies had different forms across three prehistoric periods that spanned about 2,000 years, with the oldest

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CMCH doc dies from Covid-19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A doctor of Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) died of Covid-19 at a private hospital in the port city early yesterday morning.

The deceased, Md Hasan Murad, 48, was a lecturer of Microbiology at CMC and worked in the Covid-19 RT-PCR laboratory at CMCH, said principal of the college Prof Dr Shamim Hasan.

After testing positive for coronavirus, Hasan was admitted to the city's

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PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 22

Fazr 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

Gunmen kill journo in Afghanistan

AFP, Kabul

Gunmen murdered an Afghan journalist in the eastern city of Ghazni yesterday, the third reporter in the violence-plagued country to be killed in the last two months.

Rahmatullah Nekzad was shot dead with a silenced pistol by unknown gunmen near his home while he was travelling to a nearby mosque, Ghazni province police spokesman Ahmad Khan Seerat told AFP.

No group has claimed the murder so far but the Taliban denied responsibility.

Nekzad, aged in his late 40s, had worked on a freelance basis for the Associated Press news agency and the Al Jazeera broadcast network, according to the Afghan Journalists Safety Committee.

"AJSC strongly condemns the serial killing of Afghan journalists," the committee, which reports on threats to media

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One of the finest ways to welcome winter in Bangladesh is with the traditional rice cakes (pitha). While nothing can quite beat the homemade ones, pitha-vendors scattered across the country provide the warmth of soft Bhapa, Chittoi or Tel er pithas at Tk five to 10 to those who have to spend their days out and about. The photo was taken in Farmgate area yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

VACCINE SHIPMENTS Interpol expects 'dramatic' jump in crime

AFP, Berlin

Interpol chief Juergen Stock yesterday predicted a sharp rise in crimes with robbers seeking to get their hands on precious vaccines aimed at stopping the coronavirus pandemic.

"With vaccines rolling out, crime will increase dramatically," Stock told business weekly WirtschaftsWoche.

"We will see thefts and warehouse break-ins and attacks on vaccine shipments."

The secretary general of the France-based global policing agency said he also expected more cases of graft related to Covid-19 vaccines.

"Corruption will be rampant in many places to get the valuable vaccine quicker," he said.

A vaccine produced by German company BioNTech and US giant Pfizer has already been approved for use by 16 countries.

The European Union's EMA was poised to make a similar decision yesterday, with the first jabs to begin in the bloc next Sunday.

In Germany, federal police will be deployed to secure transportation of the vaccines, which will also be stored in secret places.

Besides the threat of robberies, fears are also running high of possible sabotage by anti-vaxxers.

On December 1, Interpol warned that organised criminal networks could be targeting Covid-19 vaccines, and could look to sell fake shots.

The agency said it had issued a global alert to law

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