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Your Right to Know

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**"The contractors who will finish their work within the stipulated time will get their bill, or they will not get it."**  
DSCC MAYOR SHEIKH FAZLE NOOR TAPOSH



**"BNP's democracy means getting assurance of their win in elections."**  
AWAMI LEAGUE GENERAL SECRETARY  
OBAIDUL QUADER



**"It's very important to have transparency... it's also important to get across that this is a normal part of virus evolution."**  
WHO EMERGENCIES CHIEF MIKE RYAN ON NEW COVID STRAIN

## HUMAN TRAFFICKING PROCEEDS

# Papul, family made over Tk 355cr

*Finds a CID probe into money-laundering allegations against the independent lawmaker*

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Independent lawmaker Mohammad Shahid Islam Papul and his family members amassed more than Tk 355 crore mainly through human trafficking over the last several years.

The money was transacted through more than 500 bank accounts and Fixed Deposit Receipts (FDRs). Over Tk 130 crore is now available in these accounts.

The Criminal Investigation Department of Police has come up with the findings after a probe into the allegations of money laundering against the MP from Laxmipur-2 and his family members.

The CID yesterday filed a money laundering case against Papul, his daughter Wafa Islam, brother Kazi Badrul Alam Liton, sister-in-law Jesmin Prodhana, staffers Sadiqur Rahman Monir and Golam Mostafa, and two overseas employment agencies owned by Badrul and Jesmin.

This is the third case against the lawmaker and his family members.

"Over Tk 355 crore was transacted



through more than 500 bank accounts and FDRs in the last several years. In its primary investigation, the CID found that the money was made through human trafficking," said Assistant Superintendent of Police Al-Amin Hossain of the CID's Financial Crime Unit, who filed the case with Paltan Police Station.

According to the case statement, Papul's associate Monir took Tk 5 to 7 lakh from each victim seeking overseas job through "Job Bank International" owned by Badrul.

The CID found that Tk 38.22 crore was transferred and withdrawn by Papul, Wafa and Jesmin from Monir's bank account with a state-run bank between 2016 and this year.

Though there were no business relations between Jesmin and Monir, Tk 17.48 crore was transferred to Jesmin's bank account from Monir's account. Monir also transferred Tk 1.18 crore to Papul's company Four Point Housing and Real State, it said.

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People through a road near Gulistan underpass in the capital yesterday to buy warm clothes without following health safety rules. A lane of the road is occupied by hawkers, causing a tailback. Such blatant violation of health safety rules remains a major concern for the authorities as the country is seeing a rise in Covid-19 infections.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## SUSPENDING FLIGHTS TO UK

# Govt taking time to decide over new strain fears

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will decide on suspending flights to the UK after understanding the situation over the spread of a new strain of the novel coronavirus there, Mohibul Haque, senior secretary of the civil aviation and tourism ministry, said yesterday.

He made the comments after several countries have cancelled flights to the UK in the wake of the new coronavirus outbreak.

Talking to reporters at the secretariat, he said, "We are aware of the situation. We are collecting information. We are yet to make any decision on suspending flight to the UK. Action will be taken after understanding the situation in this regard."

Saudi Arabia suspended all international flights, including to and from Bangladesh, for a week amid reports of the appearance of a new strain of novel coronavirus in the UK.

The suspension casts uncertainty on the return of Bangladeshi expatriate workers to their workplaces in the Gulf country.

Asked what would happen to Saudi-

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## PUBLIC HOSPITALS

# Oxygen supply under strain

*Disaster averted by taking prompt action to bring oxygen from India*

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Supply of liquid oxygen to public hospitals has been under strain as a production plant of a key supplier remains out of service for nearly two weeks.

The supplier, Linde Bangladesh Limited, a multinational company, is now bringing in the life-saving oxygen from India using tankers and delivering it to the hospitals on a temporary basis.

It happened at a time when Covid-19 deaths are on the rise in this winter. Linde Bangladesh provides the government hospitals with 90 percent of their daily demand for 100 tonnes of liquid oxygen, which is essential to ensure uninterrupted oxygen supply.

But the plant, situated in Narayanganj's Rupganj, around 17km off the capital's zero point, went of service on December 11 following a technical glitch, said its officials.

They said they were working to fix it and resume the production, but it might take some time. In the meantime, they were keeping the supply chain unharmed using alternative means.

Asked, health officials claimed that the situation was under control. They thanked the government for taking prompt actions and ensure that the oxygen is imported from India on an emergency basis.

They said it could have been disastrous had the government not taken the steps immediately.

The officials said uninterrupted oxygen supply was extremely crucial in

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## RISING CYBERCRIME

# Police hotlines flooded with complaints

*4,567 calls received in three weeks*

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

"Please save me, I have no other option but to die."

A middle-aged homemaker pleaded while calling the hotline number of Police Cyber Support for Women (PCSW) wing at the Police Headquarters around midnight on November 29.

The victim said she gave an alert post on Facebook that her sister's ID had been hacked. Responding to it, a woman called her on messenger and said it would take money to recover the hacked ID.

During further communication, the caller hacked this woman's ID and demanded the victim engage in some unsocial activities or pay a huge sum of money to get her ID back.

As the victim refused to oblige, the hacker started sending fabricated messages to her relatives and friends. The messages were so offensive and vulgar that the woman broke down mentally.

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## HOUSE RENT ALLOWANCES

# Not for those who avoid staying in govt houses: PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government officials and public university teachers who do not stay in the houses and quarters earmarked for them will not be given any house rent allowances.

Presiding over the weekly Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecnec) meeting, she also directed the finance ministry to take necessary steps to that end, said Ashadul Islam, senior secretary of the Planning Division, after the meeting.

Hasina gave the directions while talking about the first revision of the project to further develop Rajshahi Science and Technology University with the additional cost of Taka 259.17 crore, he said.

The Tk 340-crore project, originally planned to be completed by June 2020, was given a two-year extension at the meeting.

Ashadul added that it was seen that many government houses and quarters have been lying empty as a good number of teachers and government officers do not stay in their designated homes.

"If the houses remain vacant for too long, there is a lack of maintenance, which ultimately destroys the properties," he said.

Officials said that many government officials and university teachers outside the capital prefer staying in rented homes and not at their allocated quarters. If they stay in their allotted quarters, they do not get the rent allowance, which is usually more than the rent.

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## 17 more die, 1,318 infected with Covid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health directorate reported 17 people died from Covid-19 -- the lowest daily count in the last five weeks -- in 24 hours ending 8:00am yesterday.

With this, the number of deaths caused by the virus rose to 7,329 and the death rate stood at 1.46 percent, said a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services.

The same number of people -- 17 -- died on November 20.

In the 24 hours, 1,318 new infections were recorded, taking the number of people infected to 5,03,501, the release said.

Against 15,452 tests in those 24 hours, the positivity rate was 8.70 percent, while the overall positivity rate stood at 16.21 percent.

At least 2,235 Covid-19 patients recovered in the same 24 hours.

The total number of recoveries now stands at 4,41,929 and the recovery rate is 87.77 percent.

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A woman cooks a meal while a train passes by with inches to spare in the capital's Tejgaon. Homeless people living along railway lines in the city are exposed to accidents and cold temperatures as they struggle to make ends meet. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## MIGRATION TO ITALY

# Don't fall in trap, use legal ways

*Says Italian Ambassador Enrico Nunziata in interview with The Daily Star*

PORIMOL PALMA

As Italy has enlisted Bangladesh as one of the 30 countries eligible to send seasonal and non-seasonal workers after an eight-year long suspension, Italian authorities have urged aspirants to use legal pathways.

"If you follow legal pathways, you can make a fortune. Or else, you [will] fall prey to the traps of middlemen and frauds," said Enrico Nunziata, Italian Ambassador to Bangladesh, in an exclusive interview with The Daily Star recently.

Once Bangladeshis will get a regular long-term stay permit and work regularly, they can take their families and eventually get Italian citizenship after 10 years of regular uninterrupted residence.

"Now that there is a new opportunity, don't waste it. Choose the legal pathway," he stressed.

Italy is home to some 148,000 registered Bangladeshis, while some thousand are undocumented. Under an amnesty programme, Italy regularised at least 12,746 undocumented Bangladeshis this year.

The only European country that recruits workers from Bangladesh as "seasonal" or "non-seasonal categories" had suspended this programme in 2012 as many people overstayed their terms.

The other phenomena in recent years was the illegal migration to Italy from Libya through the Mediterranean Sea. In 2017 alone, 9,000 Bangladeshis went to Italy illegally, using the sea route. That trend has now significantly come down.



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