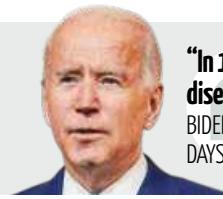




"Even during this Covid-19 pandemic, which has shaken the world, corruption continues in Bangladesh. We need to rein in our limitless greed."

ACC CHAIRMAN IQBAL MAHMUD



"In 100 days, we can change the course of the disease and change life in America for the better."

BIDEN REVEALS PLAN TO VACCINATE 100M IN FIRST 100 DAYS IN OFFICE



"The year 2020 is on course to be one of the warmest on record, while wildfires, storms and droughts continue to wreak havoc."

UNEP CHIEF INGER ANDERSEN AS WORLD SET FOR 3C WARMING DESPITE PANDEMIC, PLEDGES

COVID-19 VACCINE

The poor may face disparity

Many still have no access to testing, treatment; only 1 in 10 in poor countries to get immunised next year

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

The poor and people living on the fringes have been enduring inadequate access to coronavirus testing and treatment facilities and now they are likely to have to do the same for vaccines.

International campaigners yesterday said nine out of 10 people in 70 low-income countries are unlikely to be vaccinated for Covid-19 next year because the majority of the promising vaccines have been bought by the west.

Rich countries with 14 percent of the world's population have secured 53 percent of the most promising vaccines, said the alliance, which includes Amnesty International, Frontline AIDS, Global Justice Now and Oxfam.

While high-risk groups in Britain received on Tuesday the first shots of the vaccine developed by Pfizer and BioNTech, most people in 67 low- and lower-middle-income countries, including Bhutan, Ethiopia and Haiti, risk being left behind, they said.

Among the three Covid-19 vaccines for which efficacy results have been announced, almost all the available doses of two of them -- Moderna's and Pfizer/BioNTech's -- have been acquired by rich countries, the alliance report said.

AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford have pledged to provide 64 percent of their doses to people in developing nations. But that would only reach 18 percent of the world's population by next year at best, it added.

The EU, US, Britain, Canada, Japan, Switzerland, Australia, Hong Kong, Macau, New Zealand, Israel, and Kuwait have acquired 53 percent of

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



The last span of the Padma bridge is likely to be placed on the piers today, marking a milestone for the construction of the country's longest bridge. The photo was taken on Tuesday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

Dense fog disrupts life, connectivity

Ferry service on two key routes halted for hrs; 3 flights diverted from Dhaka airport

STAR REPORT

Dense fog enveloped most of the country, causing immense hardships for thousands of people as road, waterway and air communications were severely disrupted.

Hundreds of vehicles queued up on both sides of the Padma river as ferry services on two major routes had been suspended for hours.

At least three flights scheduled to land at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) on Tuesday night were forced to be diverted to other destinations due to poor visibility.

The Met office said yesterday that except a few

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Manpower-starved railway hiring at last

After a 3-year pause, it will recruit 12,000-15,000 in next 5 years

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

other ministries and agencies will conduct the recruitment process.

Under the previous system, BR hired its staff without involving any other agencies. But the process allegedly lacked transparency and for this it hogged the headlines on many occasions.

The authorities expect to gradually add 12,000 to 15,000 manpower in the next five years, BR Director General Md Samsuzzaman said.

They have already held a meeting to start the process, he told The Daily Star recently.

"At first, we will start recruitment of very essential manpower like station masters, loco masters, and guards and it will be done online," he added.

Officials say the railway authorities will recruit these non-gazetted staff of grade 10 to 20 -- the major workforce -- as per new recruitment rules approved recently. Railway officials from grade 1 to 9 are recruited through Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) exams.

Under the new rules, a committee comprising representatives from BR and

Working hard for women's empowerment

PM says at Rokeya Padak distribution programme; 5 personalities awarded

Bss, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government was working hard to ensure equal participation of women in every sphere of the society so that they could contribute to expediting the country's development with courage.

"A society cannot move forward without the development of women when they are the half of the total population.... How this society will be built if the women can't prepare themselves equally?" she asked.

The PM was addressing a programme marking the Begum Rokeya Day and distribution of Begum Rokeya Padak 2020.

Mentioning that the government wanted to build Bangladesh as a developed country, Hasina said it would be not possible for a society to stand on its own feet leaving half of its population behind.

"Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, immediately

SEE PAGE 12 COL 5

GRABBED RIVERLAND, WETLANDS

No bar now to recovering them

HC rules over land in MP Aslam's possession

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday cleared the way for the government to carry out eviction drives and recover Buriganga's land in Keraniganj from the possession of three companies of Maisha Group, owned by ruling Awami League lawmaker Aslamul Haque.

The court rejected a writ petition collectively filed by the three companies challenging the eviction activities of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA). The three companies are CLC Power Ltd, Dhaka West Power Ltd and Dhaka North Power Utility Company Ltd.

Delivering the verdict on the petition, the HC said the rivers of the country must be protected at any cost.

It also said the boundaries of the rivers have been determined on the basis of Cadastral Survey (CS) record, and probe reports of the National River Conservation Commission (NRCC) must be considered with importance in this regard.

A government probe, led by the NRCC, has found that Aslamul, lawmaker of Dhaka-14, filled up more than 54 acres from the Buriganga river and wetland to construct a power plant and a private economic zone in Basila of Keraniganj. The MP started the illegal activity in 2010, according to the probe report.

After the petition was rejected yesterday, NRCC Chairman Mujibur Rahman Hawlader said it has now been proved that the NRCC report is correct and the lawmaker illegally filled up and possessed the land.

"I would request the government agencies concerned to recover the land to implement the HC order. I would also request the Department of

SEE PAGE 12 COL 5

SWINDLE BY PK HALDER Enforce zero tolerance to graft: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Only the observance of the International Anti-Corruption Day will not be enough to fight graft, the High Court said yesterday.

Zero tolerance must be effectively enforced to prevent corruption and irregularities in the country, the court said.

The HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Ahmed Sohel came up with the observation while virtually hearing a suo moto rule issued by it questioning the inaction of the authorities concerned in arresting Proshanta Kumar Halder, also known as PK Halder, and bringing him back to the country.

The bench ordered the Anti-Corruption Commission to inform it by January 3 next year about the progress of the investigation into the money laundering case against PK Halder and the

SEE PAGE 12 COL 2



Tiger, the dog, and his owner Abu Taher, a homeless man, wearing matching red shirts stay warm under a quilt and take an afternoon nap by the street near Banga Bazar in the capital as the temperature dipped and the city remained shrouded by fog yesterday.

BANGABANDHU'S SCULPTURE

Khaleda, Tarique, Babunagari sued for defamation

Hefajat says it has no intention to make government its foe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, Hefajat chief Junayed Babunagari are among the six BNP and Islamist leaders who were accused in a defamation case for speaking against Bangabandhu's sculpture.

The other accused are BNP Senior Vice-Chairman Tarique Rahman, its Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, Hefajat-e-Islam Joint Secretary General Mamunul Haque, and Islami Andolan Bangladesh Senior Nayeb-e-Amir Syed Mohammad Faizul Karim.

The case was filed by AB Siddique, president of pro-Awami League organisation Bangladesh Janantri Parishad, with the court of Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Satyabrata Sikder.

Khaleda has been staying at her residence in Gulshan-2 since March 25, when she was released from prison after 776 days, on the condition that she would not leave home.

Fakhrul said the filing of such a false and baseless case against the BNP leadership was proof that Awami League had been bankrupt.

"Our chairperson has been in jail for the last two years. Our acting chief Tarique Rahman has been in London since 2008. How can they file such a case against them?" he told The Daily Star.

The magistrate heard the case and took it into cognisance. The court will pass an order in the case today, sources said.

Mamunul, also the secretary general of Bangladesh Khelafat Majlis, and Faizul made the defamatory remarks on November 13, and Hefajat Amir Babunagari on

SEE PAGE 12 COL 2