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Govt eyes expanded circular rail

Rail minister asks for further study to see if Keraniganj, Purbachal can be covered

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan has directed the authorities concerned to do further study on whether Keraniganj and the entire Purbachal area can be brought under the proposed circular rail network.

He came up with the directives at a meeting yesterday on the draft feasibility study report on the construction of the circular rail line around Dhaka city, said three meeting participants.

Officials of the railways ministry, Bangladesh Railway, and different government agencies concerned took part in the meeting held at the capital's Rail Bhaban, they said.

As per the draft feasibility study report, the 80.89km circular rail would go along the existing inner ring road and eastern bypass embankment of the capital and part of Narayanganj district.

The proposed route is Biswa Ijtema Ground-Uttara-Dhaka Zoo-Gabtoli-Mohammadpur-Sadarghat-Postagola-Fatullah-Chashara-Adamjee-Demra-Trimohini-Purbachal-Tongi. The project's estimated cost is \$8.37 billion.

A China-Bangladesh joint venture firm conducted the feasibility study at a cost of Tk 24.56 crore and submitted

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ONLY YARDS TO GO ... The Payra Bridge in Lebukhali area of Patuakhali on the Dhaka-Kuakata highway is almost finished. Once completed, trips to the tourist destination from the capital will be a lot easier. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

CLIMATE CHANGE
Kerry assures Bangladesh of continued support

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

US President Joe Biden's Climate Envoy John Kerry assured Bangladesh of continued support and cooperation on tackling climate change impacts and Rohingya crisis as he called Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen on Tuesday evening.

Kerry recognised the extraordinary challenges faced by Bangladesh due to climate change and frequent natural disasters, while stating that the next COP26 (UN conference on climate change) might be the world's last chance to hit the target of carbon emission.

He assured US' firm engagement to achieve the goal, said a foreign ministry statement yesterday.

The 2015 Paris Agreement aims to limit average global warming to 1.5-2 degrees Celsius this century relative to

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LAUNDERING Tk 2,000CR
ACC summons 10 for quizzing
They allegedly collaborated with PK Halder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has summoned ten businesspersons for quizzing over laundering of about Tk 2,000 crore from People's Leasing and Financial Services Limited (PLFSL).

ACC's Deputy Director Gulshan Anowar Prothman issued a notice to the businesspersons to appear before the Commission's Segunbagicha headquarters between February 2 and February 3.

The ACC summoned owners, managing directors and directors of a dyeing factory, real estate and agro-base companies, and a solar power company.

ACC sources said the those summoned had laundered the money from PLFSL allegedly in collaboration with former managing director of NRB Global Bank and fugitive Proshanta Kumar Halder alias PK Halder.

Earlier this week, the ACC filed five cases against 33 people, including Halder, for laundering around Tk 346 crore of International Leasing and Financial Services Limited (ILFSL).

The anti-graft body also arrested

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BANGABANDHU'S IDEA OF SECULARISM
It's different from western concept

Says Nobel laureate Amartya Sen

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The best way to honour Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is building an egalitarian and secular Bangladesh where all will have equal access to opportunities, and religion will not be used for political purposes, two leading economists said yesterday.

Nobel Laureate Prof Amartya Sen said the idea of secularism that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman held is that people will have freedom of practising religions, but its political use will be prevented -- which is quite different from the western concept of secularism that speaks against religion.

"The countries in the Indian subcontinent can learn from Bangabandhu's idea of secularism," the Indian economist said at the Bangabandhu Birth Centenary Talk on "Bangabandhu and Visions of Bangladesh" organised by the Bangladesh High Commission in UK and the South Asia Centre of the London School of Economics (LSE).

Amartya Sen said Bangabandhu was a great political leader and most admired by the people in Bengal. His ideas of secularism, equality and leadership emanated from his love for the people who faced repression during the Pakistani regime since 1947 when India and Pakistan were

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Amartya Sen

Rehman Sobhan

RAPE AT MC COLLEGE
Hostel supers, 5 guards at fault

Finds HC formed probe body

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The probe committee, formed by the High Court to investigate the incident of gang-rape on Murari Chand College campus in Sylhet, found negligence of two hostel superintendents, three day-guards, two night-guards.

Principal Prof Mohammad Saleh Ahmed, the head of the institution, also cannot avert his responsibilities, the committee wrote in its inquiry report submitted to the HC.

Some former and current students of the college had occupied seats in the hostel and Saifur Rahman, a former student, managed to occupy the residence of the hostel superintendent.

Thus, they dared to

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Icelanders get Covid vaccine 'passports'



AFP, Reykjavik

Iceland has issued its first vaccination certificates to ease international travel for those inoculated against Covid-19, authorities told AFP on Tuesday, with EU countries still haggling over using such documents.

All the 4,800 Icelanders who have received two doses of the vaccine are eligible for the digital certificates, said the health ministry, which has set up a website to handle their distribution.

"The aim to facilitate the movement of people between countries so that the individuals

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PSC extends deadline for cadre aspirants

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Public Service Commission (PSC) has extended the deadline till March 31 for the submission of application for the 43rd Bangladesh Civil Service examination.

The PSC in a statement yesterday said the deadline was extended till 6:00pm of March 31 from the previous one -- 6:00pm of January 31.

The possible date of the preliminary exam is August 6, it said.

The development came after the University Grants Commission requested the PSC last week to extend the deadline till March 31.

The UGC made the request as many final semester students would not be able to apply for one of the most sought-after recruitment exams since their final exams are

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Covid daily infection rate drops

UNB, Dhaka

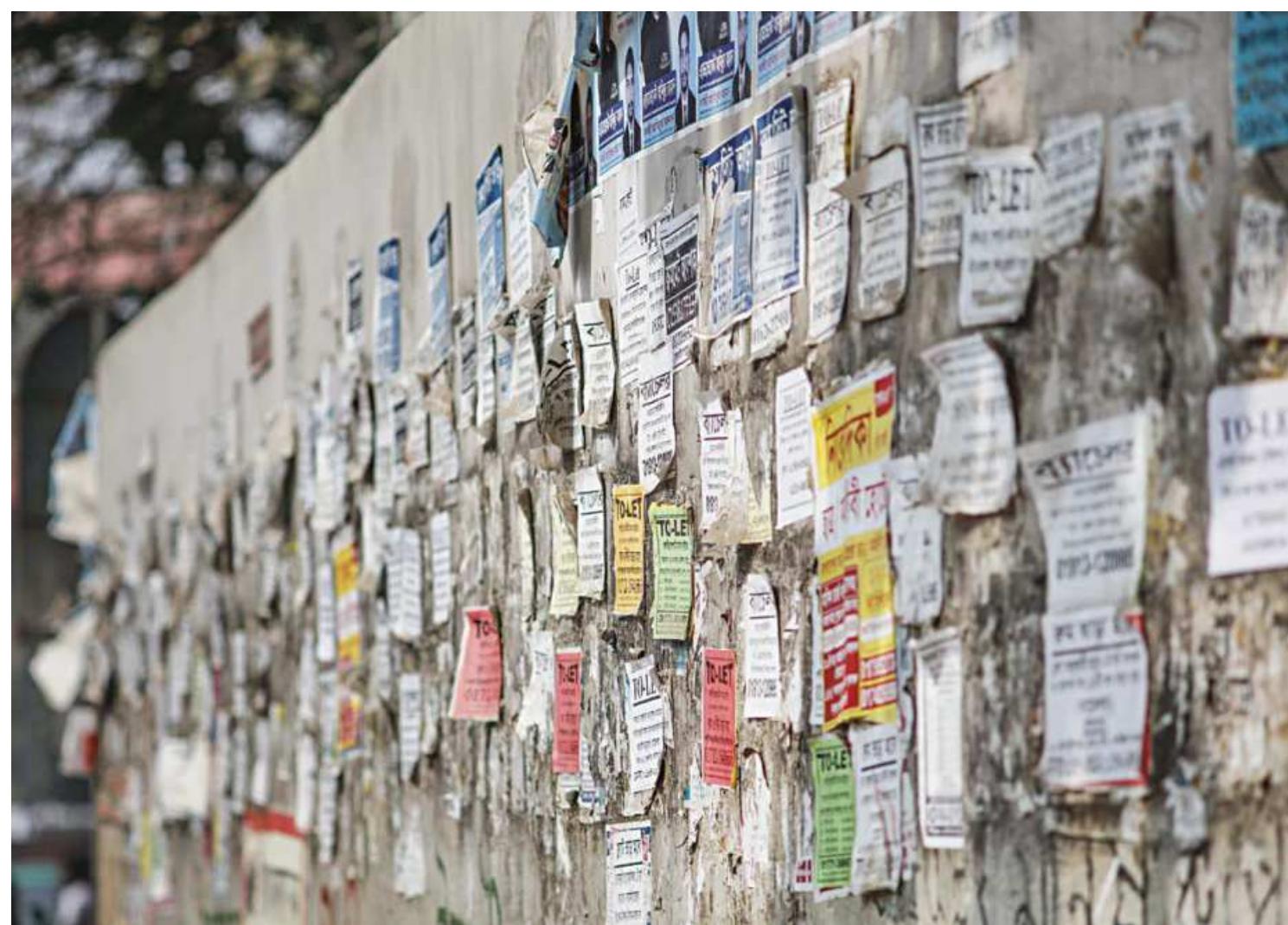
The Covid-19 infection rate in the country fell to 3.36 percent yesterday, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) said in a handout.

The health authorities confirmed 17 new coronavirus-related deaths and 528 new cases in 24 hours till yesterday morning.

With the latest fatalities, the death toll rose to 8,072. "The mortality rate is now 1.51 percent," DGHS said.

Meanwhile, the new cases pushed up the national tally to 533,444. The current overall detection rate is 14.82 percent.

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Defying a ban imposed by the authorities, people have been putting up posters and fliers on the wall of Holy Cross College, making it displeasing to the eyes, in the capital's Farmgate area.

VACCINATION IN POOR NATIONS

GAVI asks for political support

EU grapples with vaccine delays

AGENCIES

Political support is needed for a global scheme to vaccinate people in poor and middle income countries as wealthier nations strike fresh bilateral deals with developers to secure limited supplies, the head of the GAVI vaccine alliance said.

"There is almost a sense of vaccine panic," Seth Berkley, CEO of the GAVI alliance that co-leads the COVAX multilateral vaccine facility with the World Health Organization (WHO), told a press conference for UN correspondents in Geneva on Tuesday.

"The headlines this week clearly just told us how changeable supply scenarios are right now even for well-resourced governments," he said.

The European Commission said earlier it would finalise a proposal by the end of the week to require pharmaceutical firms to register their vaccine exports from the European Union, while insisting it had no plans to impose an export ban.

EU countries learnt late last week that deliveries of the vaccine from AstraZeneca would be some 60% lower in the first quarter than initially indicated. There have also been reduced deliveries of a vaccine jointly produced by Pfizer and BioNTech.

Berkley said that a global political consensus was needed behind the COVAX facility, which he said now aimed to deliver 2.3 billion doses by year-end, including 1.8 billion doses to lower income countries at no cost to their governments.

"We are currently on track to meet our initial objective of vaccinating 20% of the population of each and every lower

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PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 28
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:35 12:45 4:15 5:46 7:15
JAMAAT 6:10 1:15 4:30 5:50 7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION