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SHAH CEMENT

Confidence in opposition waning

Says PM in JS; cites poor leadership

UNB, Dhaka

Strong opposition party in the country is a must to make democracy work for people, said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday.

"For a democracy, a strong opposition party is a must as we want our democratic trend to continue," she said.

The prime minister said this while addressing the inaugural ceremony of "Programmes of Mujib Borsho", "Mujib Borsho website 2020-21" and digital compilation of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by the 11th National Parliament at the Oath Room of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

Sheikh Hasina said the present opposition parties in Parliament could not attain the confidence and trust of people at their desired level due to the lack of leadership.

"Parliament has its role in continuing the democratic system in the country."

Public representatives can speak for people in Parliament, she said, recalling her days as opposition leader in the House when they had faced lots of problems in speaking up for people.

"But we can say we are not creating that type of problems sitting at the treasury bench," she said.

Talking about coronavirus and vaccine, the prime minister said Bangladesh attained considerable success in facing the pandemic. "With the arrival of the vaccine, it [government] has gained the power to face the virus with a greater strength."

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A train crossing in the capital's Jurain area yesterday. Ignoring the risks, traders set up makeshift shops for selling vegetables and fruits on both sides of the rail lines. Every time the authorities evict them, the traders return a few days later. Accidents may happen anytime.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

A dozen MPs indulging in corruption

BNP lawmaker tells JS
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Almost a dozen lawmakers are involved in money laundering, human trafficking, and property grabbing, and other forms of corruption, BNP MP Gulam Mohammad Siraj told parliament yesterday.

Participating in the thanksgiving motion on the president's speech, the opposition MP said the government and Awami League leaders were not being held accountable.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was present in parliament at that time.

As ruling party MPs jeered at Siraj, Deputy Speaker Fazle Rabbi Miah urged everyone to calm down. "Let him speak. You will get the chance to reply to his statement."

Siraj went on: "The Honourable President has remembered eight great leaders including Bangabandhu at the beginning of his speech in parliament [on January 18]. I also pray for the salvation

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Two held for raping minors

STAR REPORT

Two men were arrested yesterday on charges of raping a third grader and a 12-year-old girl in Narayanganj and Moulvibazar.

In Narayanganj, police arrested 55-year-old Mohammad Hossain of Nandalalpur area after a man accused him of raping his third grader daughter.

Hossain took the girl to his home on Thursday offering her chocolate and raped her, said Aslam Hossain, officer-in-charge of Fatullah Police Station.

Her father filed a case with the police station after she told her parents what had happened, the OC said.

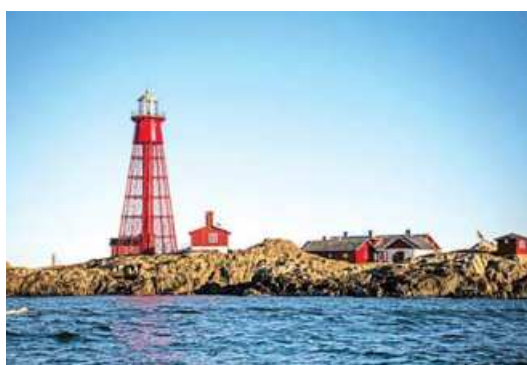
The child was sent to a hospital.

In Kulara, Moulvibazar, police arrested Jamir Ali, 35, of Barhata area yesterday morning on charges of raping a 12-year-old girl.

The man broke into the house of the victim

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Swedish Covid nurse to get pvt film screenings on island



AFP, Marstrand

A front-line Swedish nurse is getting some Covid downtime with a week of private screenings of the Gothenburg film festival, in a former lighthouse off the country's west coast.

More than 12,000 candidates from 45 countries applied to watch the festival's films in almost near isolation on an island 400 kilometres (250 miles) from Stockholm.

The prize is a week viewing as many of the festival's 70 premieres as they like in a hotel in the former Pater Noster Lighthouse. But they will be in isolation and will have no access to their own

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16 more die, 369 get Covid

UNB, Dhaka

The health authorities in Bangladesh recorded 16 more coronavirus-related deaths and 369 new cases in the last 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

The total number of deaths from the virus now reached 8,127 in the country while the mortality rate stands at 1.52 percent, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) said in a handout.

Of the 16 dead, 14 are men and two women.

Besides, 369 new cases were detected during the same period, increasing the national tally to 535,139.

The daily detection rate fell to 3.02 percent while the current overall rate is 14.65 percent.

Until yesterday morning, 479,744 patients (89.65 percent) have recovered.

So far, 3,651,722 samples have been tested, including 12,285 in those 24 hours.

Earlier on Saturday, the country recorded 363

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WHO team visits ground-zero

PROBE INTO ORIGINS OF COVID-19
Nations tighten virus curbs; CDC issues mask mandate for domestic travel in US

AGENCIES

WHO experts yesterday visited the market in central China linked to the first known Covid-19 cluster, seeking clues about the beginning of the pandemic as a number of nations further tightened restrictions to stop the coronavirus.

France yesterday closed its borders to non-European countries except for essential travel, a day after Germany imposed a ban on most travellers from nations hit by new, more contagious coronavirus variants.

And authorities in Australia imposed a snap five-day lockdown in Perth after the detection of a single case in the city of roughly two million people.

The emergence of the new variants has further complicated the fight against the coronavirus, which first emerged in late 2019 in the Chinese city of Wuhan before unleashing death and economic devastation around the world.

A World Health Organization team visited the Huanan food market in Wuhan yesterday as part of its fieldwork in a politically sensitive mission to investigate the origins of the pandemic.

Their visit is being tightly controlled, and the WHO has already downplayed expectations of finding the source of the virus, which is known to have infected more than 102 million people so far with over 2.2 million deaths.

The experts did not take any questions from journalists as they visited the market.

In recent days, Chinese authorities have relentlessly pushed a positive narrative of heroism and decisive, swift action against the virus.

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Temperature drops to 5.5 degrees in Kurigram

STAR REPORT

Cold wave continues to sweep through the country's northern region with the low-income people passing their days in hardship.

The lowest temperature was recorded at 5.5 degrees Celsius in Kurigram's Rajarhat area at 9:00am yesterday, Subol Chandra, record keeper at Rajarhat Met Office, told this newspaper.

"A severe cold wave is sweeping through Kurigram and Rajshahi districts. It may continue," Bangladesh Meteorological Department said in a bulletin at 9:00am yesterday.

A mild to moderate cold wave is sweeping through Mymensingh, Rangpur, Tangail, Faridpur, Madaripur, Gopalganj, Moulvibazar, Khulna, Jashore, Chuadanga, Kushtia, Barisal and Bhola, it added.

"Moderate to thick fog may occur all over the country from midnight to morning," said the bulletin valid for 24 hours.

Meanwhile, six people died at Rangpur Medical College Hospital after they accidentally burnt themselves in fire lit for keeping them warm.

The victims were from different districts of Rangpur division, said hospital sources.

Besides, 26 burn victims of such fire incidents are under treatment at the

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Road crash kills five in Sherpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

At least five people were killed and two others injured in a road accident on the Sherpur-Nalitabari road at Sherpur Sadar upazila's Bajitkhila union yesterday morning.

Among the injured is an eight-year-old girl whose mother died in the crash.

Quoting locals, Officer-in-charge of Sherpur Police Station Md Abdullah Al Mamun said the accident took place around 9:00am when a truck collided with a Sherpur-bound CNG-run auto-rickshaw at the union's Mirzapur area, leaving three of its passengers dead on the spot.

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PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 1

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
5:30	12:45	4:15	5:52	7:15	
JAMAT	6:05	1:15	4:30	5:56	7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



A general view of a rally in support of jailed Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny in Saint Petersburg, Russia, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

CLAMP DOWN ON NAVALNY PROTESTS Russian police detain over 3,000 people

Break up rallies in Moscow, other cities; US condemns

REUTERS, Moscow

Police detained more than 3,000 people and broke up rallies in Moscow and across Russia yesterday as supporters of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny braved the bitter cold and a massive show of police force to demand he be set free.

The nationwide rallies are the second straight weekend of protests that are part of a high-risk opposition campaign to try to pressure the Kremlin into freeing President Vladimir Putin's most prominent opponent.

The opposition politician was arrested on January 17 after returning to Moscow from Germany where he had been recovering from a nerve agent poisoning in Russia last summer. He accuses Putin of ordering his murder, which the Kremlin denies.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken condemned Russian authorities for their "harsh" response to protests across the country.

"The US condemns the persistent use of harsh tactics against peaceful protesters and journalists by Russian authorities for a second week straight," Blinken said on his official Twitter account.

Moscow accused the US of "gross interference" in Russia's affairs.

Navalny's dramatic return to Moscow despite the

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