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GHATARCHAR-KANCHPUR BUS ROUTE

High fares on top of monopoly

Govt body decides to recommend ministry concerned

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A government-formed committee has proposed fixing a bus fare of Tk 2.2 per kilometre on the Ghatarchar-Kanchpur Bridge route, where a single company will operate all the buses on a pilot basis from April 1.

The proposed fare is almost 30 percent higher than the current fares in Dhaka city.

The committee led by Nur Mohammad Mazumder, chairman of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), made the decision at a meeting at the BRTA headquarters on Sunday.

"We will submit our proposal to the ministry [of Road Transport and Bridges], which will finalise the fare," Nur Mohammad told The Daily Star yesterday.

The Bus Route Rationalisation Committee designated to bring all bus services under a few companies aims to bring discipline on city roads. It decided to begin with the Ghatarchar-Kanchpur Bridge route.

After the previous meeting of the committee on January 19, Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh said the city corporation directed the BRTA to update within five days the information on the public buses operating on the Ghatarchar-Kanchpur Bridge route.

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The top soil of croplands are being cut and taken away in Sylhet's Companyganj upazila. Locally influential people collect the soil in exchange of a minimal amount from farmers. The soil is then sold to brick kilns at a much higher price. This process destroys alluvium of the fields, eventually affecting the farmers and the economy. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Sand, stone lifters beat up journo on duty

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Sand lifters beat up a journalist and tied him to a tree when he went to collect information on a story of sand and stone lifting by destroying the banks of the Jadukata in Sunamganj's Tahirpur upazila yesterday.

Kamal Hossain is the upazila correspondent of Bangla Daily Sangbad and organising secretary of the upazila press club. He was undergoing treatment at Tahirpur Upazila Health Complex.

Quoting him, local journalist Abir Hasan Manik said Kamal went to collect information to prepare a report on the illegal sand and stone lifting in Ghagotia village around 1:30pm.

Locals said Mahmudul Islam, Deen Islam and Rois Uddin of Ghagotia village started beating up the journalist first and then others joined.

The Daily Star obtained
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11 die of alcohol poisoning in two days

STAR REPORT

At least eleven people, including two students of a private university and three staffers of a media organisation, have died allegedly from alcohol poisoning in Dhaka and Bogura district over the last 48 hours.

A dozen other employees of the media organisation have been admitted in hospitals, while two of them are undergoing treatment at the Intensive Care Unit.

Police said they are investigating the incidents.

In Dhaka, around 41 employees of the media organisation went to a resort in Gazipur last Friday for an office tour, according to sources.

Some had alcoholic beverages and got sick. They returned to Dhaka for treatment, a team member, preferring anonymity, told The Daily Star.

After returning to Dhaka, many were hospitalised for poisoning. While undergoing treatment, two employees died on Sunday and another died yesterday, said the team member, who also received treatment after having the drinks.

Around 10 employees of the organisation are still undergoing treatment

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WB to help upgrade rural communication

Teams up with govt to deliver benefits of Padma bridge

STAR REPORT

The World Bank has agreed to finance rural communication development so that people can effectively avail the benefits of the Padma Bridge, although it had earlier withdrawn its loan for the bridge construction over allegations of graft.

The government and the WB jointly initiated a multi-phased \$1.4 billion 10-year programme to upgrade road communications and other infrastructures in the country's western and southwestern regions.

"The Padma Bridge is going to open a new horizon of economic potential for Bangladesh. In this context, a programme has been adopted by the Government of Bangladesh and the World Bank for the period of 2020-2030 to upgrade rural communication to facilitate and ensure overall socio-economic development," said a press release of the government's Economic Relations Division (ERD).

"Under the programme, a 260-kilometer national highway from Hatikumul, Sirajganj to Bhomra land port will be upgraded from two lanes to four lanes with a service lane by the RHD [the Road and Highways Department]," said the press release yesterday.

Besides, the upgrading of logistics infrastructure of selected markets, growth centres, connected road networks for agriculture value chains and associated amenities will be done by the Government Engineering Department," the press release added.

As part of implementation of the programme, the government yesterday signed a \$500 million financing agreement to implement a project titled "Western Economic Corridor and Regional Enhancement Program (WeCARE) Phase-I: Rural Connectivity, Market and Logistic Infrastructure Improvement Project (RCMLIIP)."

The project, the first of a multi-phased \$1.4 billion 10-year programme,
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Teen gang-raped, 3 accused arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A Dinajpur court yesterday sent three men, accused of gang-raping a 10th-grader in a case filed by her father, to jail in the district's Ghoraghat upazila.

All three were arrested on Sunday night after the victim's father filed a rape case with the Ghoraghat Police Station the same day.

The arrestees are Labu Mia, 28, a night guard, Ashraf Islam, 35, and Omar Faruk, 21, a mason.

Police sent all the accused to Dinajpur District Jail through a local court yesterday, said Azim Uddin, officer-in-charge of the station.

According to family members and the first information report (FIR) filed with Ghoraghat Police Station, Labu had gotten hold of the girl's phone number and, pretending to be someone she knew,
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People sleep less on nights before a full moon: study



MAIL ONLINE

On nights leading up to a full moon, people go to bed later and sleep for shorter periods of time, a new study reveals.

US researchers observed the same variations in both the time of sleep onset and the duration of sleep among indigenous people living in rural settings and college students in urban settings.

Sleep cycles generally oscillated during the 29.5-day lunar cycle, during which time the moon gradually goes from being effectively invisible (a new moon), to a full bright, gleaming sphere (full moon), and back again.

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10 more die, 443 get the virus

UNB, Dhaka

Ten more people died of novel coronavirus and 443 new cases were reported in Bangladesh in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

With the latest fatalities, the death toll from the virus reached 8,137. The mortality rate stood at 1.52 percent, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) said in a handout.

It said the Covid-19 infection rate in the country is now 3.55 percent.

Meanwhile, the new
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PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 2

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

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Gold robbed from temple in Barishal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Gold ornaments, weighing around 30 grams, have been stolen from the idol of goddess Kali at Sri Sri Ugra Tara temple and Shaktipith in Shikarpur village of Barishal's Ujirpur upazila.

Debashish Das, vice-chairman of the temple committee, said the priest of the temple, one of the oldest in Barishal division, opened its gate yesterday morning and found that the ornaments, including the crown of the goddess, were missing. He informed the committee and the police about the matter immediately.

Asked, he said, "No door of the temple was broken. Also, there is a CCTV camera. But someone tried to disconnect it."

Debashish said the priest had locked the temple gate that night before returning to his home situated nearby.

"We demand the quick recovery of those ornaments and arrest of the
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Ignoring health risks, a woman is melting plastic waste using an electric machine in the capital's Kamrangir Char area. At least a hundred factories in the area purchase waste plastic bottles from rag pickers, and melt and turn those into new plastic products. Meanwhile, the workers are not provided with any safety gear. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Time to team up, tackle Long Covid

Says WHO expert; EU secures extra vaccines after row

AGENCIES

It is time to start solving the mystery of Long Covid, an aspect of the pandemic blighting millions of lives, the World Health Organization's leader on post-Covid conditions told AFP.

Little is known about why some people, after coming through the acute phase of Covid-19, struggle to recover and suffer ongoing symptoms including tiredness, brain fog, cardiac and neurological disorders.

At this stage of the pandemic, the world is fixated on vaccine roll-out and new, more contagious variants of the coronavirus.

However, Long Covid deserves similar urgent attention, said Janet Diaz, the clinical care lead in the WHO's emergencies programme, ahead of a push for a globally-united approach to the problem.

"We still don't fully understand what Long Covid is," Diaz told AFP in an interview outside the WHO's headquarters in Geneva.

"There's quite a bit to learn, but I am confident that the scientific community is really rallying around."

Tellingly, Long Covid does not yet have a proper name. The WHO currently calls it post-Covid condition, while other terms in circulation include post-acute Covid syndrome and Covid long haulers.

The WHO is hosting a first global seminar on Long Covid on February 9. It will bring scientists, experts and clinicians together to define the condition, give it a formal name and harmonise study methods.

"It's a condition that needs further description, further understanding of how many are affected and
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