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DHAKA-TANGAIL-RANGPUR HIGHWAY Govt to turn it tolled road

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The two-lane Dhaka-Tangail-Rangpur highway that is being turned into a four-lane one has been selected for charging toll from those plying it.

This would be the second major highway to be included in the list of roads from which the government would be charging toll after the Dhaka-Mawa Expressway.

The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) has also formed a committee last week to do some preliminary works such as selecting places for toll booths and asked the committee to submit a report within 15 days.

"We have started taking necessary preparation for collecting toll from the highway. But it may not be possible before the completion of the project works," RHD's Chief Engineer Abdus Sabur told The Daily Star on Thursday.

The government is implementing SASEC Road Connectivity Project-1 to expand 70km road from Joydevpur to Elega into four-lane, with service roads on both sides at the cost of Tk 6,214.41 crore.

The project is scheduled to be completed in June next year.

On the other hand, SASEC Road Connectivity Project-1 is now under implementation for upgrading 190km highway from Elega to Rangpur into a four-lane one at the cost of Tk 16,662 crore.

The deadline of the project is December 2024 with a one-year defect liability period.

In September 2019, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in an Ecnc meeting, instructed the authorities concerned to collect tolls from long-haul vehicles on the national highways.

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Discharge from a dredger is being dumped straight into the Payra river near Amtali Ferry Terminal in Barguna making the dredging efforts futile as the silt will eventually clog up another part of the river key for water transport. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Nine int'l rights bodies urge govt to repeal DSA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nine rights organisations on Friday urged the Bangladesh government to respect and protect people's rights to freedom of expression and to end what they said was an escalating crackdown on human rights.

They also urged stopping the crackdown on peaceful assembly to curb protesters demanding justice for writer Mushtaq Ahmed's death in custody.

The organisations are: The Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances (AFAD), Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), Asian Human Rights Commission (AHC), Asian Network for Free Election (ANFREL), CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Eleos Justice - Monash University, FIDH: International Federation for Human Rights, OMCT: World Organisation Against Torture and Robert F

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'I was made a scapegoat'

Says cartoonist Kishore

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore, now on bail in a case filed under the Digital Security Act, yesterday said he did not do anything wrong or commit any offense by drawing cartoons but he still became a "victim of the situation".

"I was made a scapegoat," said the ailing cartoonist, now undergoing treatment at a city hospital.

Speaking to The Daily Star last night, Kishore said he draws cartoons as part of his professional responsibilities and he has passion for it.

He said Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had never been the subjects of his cartoons.

"I did not draw cartoons with a motive to act against any individual," he added.

Asked about his health, Kishore said he was still experiencing pain in his hands, legs and right ear. Besides, he was feeling dizzy.

He said he was suffering from trauma and he could not hear on his right ear.

Expressing concern over the misuse of the Digital Security Act, the cartoonist said innocent people had been detained since the act came into force.

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'Our revolution must win'

Anti-coup protesters in Myanmar defiant amid brutal crackdown

AGENCIES

Myanmar security forces used tear gas and stun grenades to break up a protest in Yangon yesterday, a day after a United Nations envoy urged the Security Council to hear the nation's "desperate pleas" and take swift action to restore democracy.

The country has been in turmoil since a February 1 putsch ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi from power, triggering a massive uprising from hundreds of thousands angered to be returned to military rule.

Security forces have escalated an increasingly brutal crackdown on demonstrators -- killing more than 50 people since the coup -- but protesters rallied again yesterday.

From the dusty roads of northern Lashio -- where young protesters stared down police behind homemade shields -- to central Loikaw city in view of Myanmar's eastern mountains, demonstrators continued to march for democracy.

"Our revolution must win," chanted protesters in Loikaw. Civil servants such as teachers in their green and white uniforms were among the protesters.

The country's vital sectors have been crippled by an ongoing "Civil Disobedience Movement" -- a campaign urging civil servants to boycott working under a military regime.

The impact has been felt at every level of the national infrastructure, with shuttered hospitals, empty ministry offices, and banks unable to operate.

Yesterday, state-run media announced that if civil servants continued to boycott work, "they will be fired" with immediate effect from March 8.

But protesters in Myanmar's commercial hub of Yangon continued to defy authorities, gathering especially in San Chaung -- a once-buzzing

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ROHINGYA CRISIS US, Australia, Japan to keep supporting Bangladesh

Envoys say after visiting Cox's Bazar camps

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US pledged continued support to the Rohingya and their host communities in Bangladesh and called for the Myanmar military to restore power to the democratically elected government and refrain from further violence.

"The international community has not forgotten the refugees or host communities supporting the Rohingya refugees," US Ambassador Earl R Miller said.

He made the statement after a visit to Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar from March 3-4. Australian High Commissioner Jeremy Brier and Japanese Ambassador Ito Naoki were also in the delegation that visited the camps.

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Astonishing nearby super-Earth found



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Scientists have found a new super-Earth, relatively nearby -- and it is the kind of planet they say they have been dreaming of for years.

The world could be the perfect place to better understand how atmospheres exist on rocky planets like our own that are outside the solar system, researchers say.

The new world is called Gliese 486b and is referred to as a super-Earth because it is solid and rocky like our own world, but much bigger.

Despite the name, it is in many ways not like Earth: it is 30 per cent bigger and nearly three times heavier, and it is so hot that its surface could melt lead and lava rivers cover its surface.

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DSA should be abolished

Says Dr Kamal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gonoforum President Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday said the Digital Security Act (DSA) should be abolished, adding that it is one of those "black laws" which was enacted "to extend the tenure of this isolated government".

Kamal, an architect of the country's constitution, made the comments at a press conference at Jatiya Press Club.

Gonoforum lawmaker Mokabbir Khan read out Kamal's written statement.

"People -- the owners of the state -- become helpless where there is an absence of their effective participation in the process of formulation and impartial execution of laws," he said, adding, "It is possible to ensure people's role in the process of the formulation and impartial execution of laws only if they could choose their representatives through a neutral election."

On whether they are

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Inmate goes missing from Chattogram prison

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A murder accused inmate in Chattogram Central Jail is missing since yesterday morning.

Failing to find him, the jail authorities lodged a general diary with Kotwali Police Station, said police.

Quoting the GD, officer-in-charge (OC) Md Nezam Uddin of Kotwali Police Station said prisoner Farhad Hossain Rubel was found missing after the jail authorities opened the lock of his cell yesterday morning.

"He has been languishing in jail since February 9 in connection

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A thick layer of dust on the solar panels that recharge the street lights in Fakirpool area of the capital. If the panels are not cleaned properly at regular intervals, it renders them unable to generate adequate amount of power from the sun.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Don't let your guards down

Warns WHO

AFF, Geneva

Covax will distribute 14.4 million Covid-19 vaccine doses to 31 more countries next week, the WHO said as it warned people not to waste, through complacency, the hope that vaccines bring.

The WHO warning came as the death toll from the novel coronavirus hits 2,581,034 since the outbreak emerged in China in December 2019, according to a tally from official sources compiled by AFP at 1100 GMT yesterday. At least 116,031,470 cases of coronavirus have been registered.

On Friday, 10,685 new deaths and 450,657 new cases were recorded worldwide.

The Covax global vaccine-sharing facility shipped more than 20 million doses to 20 countries as the scheme aimed at ensuring poorer nations get access to jabs took off this week.

But the World Health Organization voiced fears that further waves of the coronavirus pandemic could be on the way if people think the roll-out of vaccines around the globe means the crisis is over.

"The arrival of vaccine is a moment of great hope. But it potentially also is a moment where we lose concentration," WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan told a press conference.

"I really am very concerned that... we think we're through this. We're not.

"And countries are going to lurch back into third and fourth surges if we're not careful.

"We should not waste the hope that vaccines bring... by dropping our guard in other areas."

WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus praised the first full week of the Covax roll-out, but said

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PRAYER TIMING MARCH 7

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
JANUARY	5-15	12-45	4-30	6-05	7-30
FEBRUARY	5-50	1-15	4-45	6-10	8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION