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The under-construction third terminal of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport. The Tk 21,399 crore project is funded by Jica and the Bangladesh government. Mitsubishi and Fujita of Japan and Samsung of Korea are expected to complete the work by June, 2023. The photo was taken a couple of days ago.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Act before it's too late

Experts urge govt as Covid cases surge alarmingly

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As Covid-19 transmission escalates, healthcare experts urged the government to take stringent measures immediately to rein in the surge before it goes out of control.

The country witnessed at least 2,187 new cases yesterday -- the highest for a single day in the last 100 days.

The country witnessed 2,202 cases on December 8 last year, according to the data from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

"We are frightened and frustrated seeing the people's reckless behaviour. I think it is high time to send a strict message to the people that the situation is grave. If needed, the government should go for lockdown and cancel all public examinations," Prof Md Sayedur Rahman, chairman of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University's (BSMMU's) pharmacology department, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He also warned that if the transmission was not contained right now, it would go beyond control.

There has been a sharp rise of new Covid-19 cases since the beginning of the second week of March, with healthcare officials and experts blaming it on people's reluctance to follow health safety guidelines.

The new cases recorded yesterday were against 21,212 tests, which meant that the positivity rate was 10.45 percent -- almost 3 points up from the previous day's 7.68 percent.

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Cambodian PM greets Bangladeshis

Sri Lankan PM arrives today to join twin celebrations
BSS, Dhaka

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen yesterday greeted the people of Bangladesh on the occasions of the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the golden jubilee of the country's independence.

"Today, I am very honored and delighted to deliver on behalf of the royal government

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Biman to fly Dhaka-Male

Bangladesh, the Maldives agree to direct shipping lines too

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh and the Maldives would have direct flights and commercial shipping links as the two South Asian countries see a huge scope of boosting trade, tourism, and cooperation on human resource development.

"The good news is the prime minister [Sheikh Hasina] has declared that Biman Bangladesh Airlines will start its Dhaka-Male operations very soon. We are expecting another good news that we can begin a direct shipping line from Chattogram to Male," said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen.

Officials said the move would drastically reduce the cost of travel and transport of commodities and thereby improve competitiveness of businesses.

This was disclosed at a joint press conference by Momen and his Maldives counterpart Abdulla Shahid at the InterContinental Dhaka yesterday, following a meeting between Hasina and the Maldives President

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5 lakh to sit for BCS exams today despite pandemic

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 41st BCS preliminary examination is all set to take place today amid calls for strict following of Covid-19 health guidelines.

Amid the pandemic and the recent surge in infections and deaths, nearly half a million candidates are expected to sit for the exam, which is conducted by the Public Service Commission.

PSC earlier circulated an 11-point health and safety guideline making

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AIR INSIDE DHAKA PUBLIC HOSPITALS Pollutants 10 times the limit in winter

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Two major public hospitals in Dhaka had concentrations of harmful air pollutants 10 times higher than the permissible limit in winter, finds a new study.

The indoor air quality of the healthcare installations during the pre-monsoon period remained two times worse than the permissible limit recommended by the World Health Organization and Bangladesh national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS).

The study was based on the air quality of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH), Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) and Sonargaon Upazila Health Complex in Narayanganj.

Air quality was monitored in 16 locations of the three health care installations between October 2019 and January 2020, said the report published in the journal of Environmental Science and Pollution Research on March 15.

"Outdoor air has a significant impact on the hospitals' indoor air quality," said the study titled "Indoor air quality indicators and toxicity

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JOURNO KAJOL Charge sheet in another DSA case

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

Police recently submitted a charge sheet with the court claiming that photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol's main purpose was to tarnish the images of ruling party leaders and activists and extort money by uploading fake information.

After around one-year-long probe, Sub-Inspector Mohammad Russell

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Visitors browse books at a stall of Amar Ekushey Bô Mela at Suhrawardy Udyan in the capital yesterday. Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the event virtually from the Gono Bhaban. The fair, traditionally organised in the month of February, was postponed this year due to the pandemic.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Ekushey Bô Mela finally begins

PM inaugurates fair dedicated to martyrs of 1971

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday inaugurated Amar Ekushey Bô Mela-2021 in the capital. She joined the inaugural ceremony at Bangla Academy virtually from the Gono Bhaban in the afternoon.

The fair will remain open from 3:00pm to 9:00pm on weekdays; 8:30am to 9:00pm on Fridays and Saturdays, with an hour break for lunch and prayers, until April at the Bangla Academy premises and at Suhrawardy Udyan.

The fair, traditionally organised in the month of February, was postponed due to the pandemic.

This year's book fair has been dedicated to the martyrs of 1971

Liberation War of Bangladesh. The main theme is "Birth Centenary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Golden Jubilee of Independence".

The prime minister unveiled the cover of "New China 1952", the official English version of "Amar Dekha Noya Chin" written by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and published by Bangla Academy.

She also distributed the Bangla Academy Literary Award 2020 among its recipients at the inaugural ceremony.

On behalf of the prime minister, State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid handed the awards over to the recipients. The land

earmarked for this year's fair has been expanded to 15,00,000 sqft to accommodate Covid-19 social distancing requirements. A total of 834 stalls have been allocated to 540 organisations this year.

This year, the "Shishu Prohor" has been called off while the children's corner have been moved to Suhrawardy Udyan. The "Little Mag Corner" has also been moved there.

Visitors to the fair will have to mask up at all times. Hand sanitisation booths have also been set up at all entrances for visitors.

Seminars will be held at the main stage of the fair venue at 4:00pm every day from March 19 to April 14, followed by cultural events.

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মুজিব চিরন্তন

জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের
জন্মশতবার্ষিকী ও স্বাধীনতার সুবর্ণজয়ন্তী
উদযাপন উপলক্ষ্যে অনুষ্ঠানমালা
স্থান: জাতীয় প্যারেড ক্লাব
১৯শে মার্চ ২০২১, শুক্রবার

খিম (Theme): যতকাল রবে পদ্মা যমুনা

সময়	কর্মসূচি
২.০০-৩.৩০ বিকাল ৪.২৮ বিকাল ৪.৩০	আমন্ত্রিত অতিথিবৃন্দের আগমন ও আসন গ্রহণ মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রীর আগমন শ্রীলঙ্কার মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রীর আগমন জাতীয় সংসদ পরিবেশনা অতিথিবৃন্দের মঞ্চ আসন গ্রহণ পবিত্র ধর্মগ্রন্থসমূহ থেকে পাঠ মুজিব চিরন্তন খিমের ওপর টাইটেল এ্যানিমেশন ভিডিও মিউজিক ভিডিও পরিবেশনার খিম সং যতকাল রবে পদ্মা যমুনা খিমভিত্তিক অডিও ভিডিও প্রদর্শনী ফ্লাই পাস্টের রেকর্ডকৃত ভিডিও স্বাগত সম্বোধন: জনাব কে এম খালিদ এম.পি., মাননীয় প্রতিমন্ত্রী, সংস্কৃতি বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয় খিমভিত্তিক আলোচনা: অধ্যাপক সৈয়দ মনজুরুল ইসলাম সম্মানিত অতিথির বক্তব্য: রাশিয়ার পররাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রীর ভিডিও বার্তা সম্মানিত অতিথির বক্তব্য: শ্রীলঙ্কার মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী মাহিন্দা রাজাপাকসা অতিথিবৃন্দকে শ্রদ্ধা-স্মারক প্রদান সভাপতির বক্তব্য: গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকারের মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনা আলোচনা পর্ব সমাপ্তি
সন্ধ্যা ৬.০০	
সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠান	
সময় সন্ধ্যা ৬.৩০	কর্মসূচি বঙ্গবন্ধুকে উৎসর্গ করে বন্ধু রাষ্ট্রের সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠান (সরাসরি পরিবেশনা- শ্রীলঙ্কা) মুজিব চিরন্তন খিমের ওপর টাইটেল এ্যানিমেশন ভিডিও খিমের ওপর একটি সিজি এ্যানিমেশন ভিডিও উপস্থাপনা (কবিতা আবৃত্তি অংশ-১) বঙ্গবন্ধু ও বাংলাদেশের ওপর লোকসংগীত পরিবেশনা উপস্থাপনা (কবিতা আবৃত্তি অংশ-২) নৃত্যনাট্য উপস্থাপনা (কবিতা আবৃত্তি অংশ-৩) সন্ধ্যা মুখোপাধ্যায়ের গান উপস্থাপনা (কবিতা আবৃত্তি অংশ-৪) দুই প্রজন্মের শিল্পীদের মেলবন্ধনে মিশ্র মিউজিক পরিবেশনা উপস্থাপনা (কবিতা আবৃত্তি অংশ-৫) অনুষ্ঠানের সমাপ্তি
রাত ৮.০০	

জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের জন্মশতবার্ষিকী উদযাপন জাতীয় বাস্তবায়ন কমিটি