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## SUPER SPECIALISED HOSPITAL Project staring at long delays

Due to finish at BSMMU in December 2019, now likely to end in mid-2022

REJAUU KARIM BYRON and MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

The government will again extend the period of a project taken to set up a modern healthcare facility at the capital Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) after the project authorities failed to complete the work on schedule mainly due to the pandemic.

The project authorities are now seeking an extension of one and a half years and an additional Tk 195 crore for the job.

A proposal in this regard is likely to be placed for approval before the meeting of the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecne) scheduled today, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Under the project, called Super Specialised Hospital, the authorities are developing land and constructing a nine-storey building with a floor area of 45,000 square metres. The building will have 12,643 medical and surgical equipment, 2,256 computer accessories and six vehicles. Doctors and officials will also receive training at home and abroad under the project.

Originally, the project tenure was from January 2016 to December 2019, which was extended to December last year without increasing the fund, according to the revised proposal.

This time, the project duration has been proposed to be

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A view of the capital's largest bamboo market on the Shitalakkhya river near Kanchpur Bridge in Narayanganj. Shipments of bamboo are brought on boats from all over the country, and the building material is taken from here to various parts of the capital. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Bangladesh waits for US response on vaccines

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh is eagerly waiting for US response to its request for Covid-19 vaccines as the country's stock of AstraZenca vaccine purchased from India will run out soon.

"We have written to the US State Department. We are in touch with the office of US President Joe Biden and the US Chamber of Commerce," an official at Bangladesh Embassy in Washington told this correspondent yesterday.

"If the US donates the vaccine jabs, it will be great. But if it doesn't, we are ready to buy those," the official said.

Dhaka sought from Washington Covid-19 vaccines manufactured by British-Swedish firm AstraZenca and also by US company Moderna.

The US on April 26 said it would start sharing up to 60 million doses of AstraZenca vaccine with other countries in the next

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## MEDIA FREEDOM IN BD Concerned, rights bodies write to UN

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Eight global and regional human rights bodies yesterday wrote a letter to the UN human rights chief, expressing concerns over the state of media freedom in Bangladesh and urging authorities to protect and respect freedom of expression.

"On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, we write to draw your attention to the escalating human rights violations perpetrated by the Bangladesh government, exemplified in part by the increasing crackdown on press freedom and the freedom of expression of journalists, activists and dissidents," says the letter.

The rights bodies that wrote to Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, are Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, Asian Human Rights Commission, Asian Network for Free Elections, Committee to Protect Journalists, Human Rights Watch, International Federation for Human

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## Longest suspension foot bridge opens in Portugal



REUTERS, Arouca

Hugo Xavier became one of the first people to cross the world's longest pedestrian suspension bridge when it opened on Thursday near his tiny hometown of Arouca in northern Portugal.

"Oh...here we go!," the 42-year-old said anxiously as he gathered enough courage to step onto the see-through metal grid pathway of the 516-metre-long (1693-ft) bridge alongside his equally jittery partner and a tour guide.

Hidden between rock-strewn mountains covered with lush greenery and yellow flowers

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## Four Hefajat leaders on police remand

STAR REPORT

Four Hefajat-e-Islam leaders were placed on remand yesterday in seven cases filed with police stations in the capital and Chattogram over the 2013 mayhem and the recent violence in Dhaka and Chattogram.

The leaders are: Azizul Haque Islamabadi, organising secretary of Hefajat's now dissolved committee; Maulana Jubair Ahmed, former vice-president of its Dhaka city unit, and Maulana Jalaluddin Ahmed, former assistant general secretary, and Mufti Harun Izhari, education and cultural affairs secretary of the dissolved central committee.

Azizul was put on remand for seven days in two cases filed with the capital's Paltan Police Station over March 26 violence centring the visit of Indian Prime Minister

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## ROAD TO FREEDOM THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

### Genocide issue will be referred to UN body

MAY 4, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

#### BANGLADESH GOVT AMASSES EVIDENCE OF GENOCIDE

The Bangladesh government decided to refer to the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations the question of genocide in the newborn republic. A spokesman of the Bangladesh mission in Kolkata said documentary evidence of the genocide was being collected for submission to the Commission. These evidence would include photographs and eye-witness accounts brought by refugees to India.

#### SPECIAL TRIBUNAL TO TRY BANGABANDHU FOR HIGH TREASON

The Pakistan government decided to set up a three-member special tribunal to try Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for high treason, reported a Karachi daily. The tribunal would consist of a senior judge of the Supreme Court, a judge of the Punjab High Court and a senior military officer of the rank of a major general. The paper said the trial would be held in Rawalpindi.

#### US WILL JOIN RELIEF MISSION IF UN ORGANISES IT

The US was willing to join the framework of international assistance organised by the United Nations in providing relief to Bangladesh refugees flowing into India, according to state department spokesman Charles Bray. He hoped that such help could quickly be organised. About the food situation in

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## UGC mulls online exams for public universities

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The University Grants Commission is considering allowing public universities to hold exams online keeping in mind that it would benefit students and also reduce session jams.

Vice chancellors of all public universities will sit in a meeting with the UGC on Thursday to discuss the process of holding online exams.

"UGC is considering that all public universities will complete student assessments online. We will sit in a meeting with VCs to discuss the assessment system of public universities. We cannot sit idle as the pandemic situation is uncertain," UGC Member Prof Muhammed Alamgir told The Daily Star.

But taking exams online also depends on the universities as their academic councils or other bodies concerned will have the final say in this regard, he added.

Public universities were holding online classes as they could not take in-person classes since March 17 last year when the government closed all educational institutions due to the pandemic.

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### PRAYER TIMING MAY 4

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:00	12:45	4:45	6:32	8:00
JAMAAT 4:10	1:15	5:00	6:42	8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



### SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN MAY SEHRI IFTAR			
21	4	6:32	
22	5	3:54	6:33
23	6	3:53	6:33



A tailor etching out a design on a garment using a sewing machine in the capital's Gausia market yesterday. As Edi approaches, tailors like him are in high demand as customers get the designs of their choice on their clothes ahead of the festivities. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## India's Covid peak seen nearing

Experts urge nat'l stay-at-home order as over 300,000 new cases reported for 12th straight day

AGENCIES

India reported more than 300,000 new coronavirus infections for a 12th straight day yesterday to take its overall number of cases to shy of 20 million, as scientists predicted a peak in the pandemic in the coming days.

With 368,147 new cases over the past 24 hours, India's total infections stand at 19.93 million, while total fatalities rose by 3,417 to 218,959, according to health ministry data.

Medical experts say actual numbers across the country of 1.35 billion may be five to 10 times higher than the official tally.

The health ministry offered a glimmer of hope, reporting that positive cases relative to the number of tests conducted fell yesterday for the first time since at least April 15.

India's coronavirus cases may peak between May 3-5, according to a mathematical model from a team of scientists advising the government, a few days earlier than a previous estimate as the virus has spread faster than expected.

Hospitals have filled to capacity, medical oxygen supplies have run short and morgues and crematoriums have been swamped as the country deals with the surge in cases.

At least 24 patients died in Chamarajanagar district, about 175km from Bengaluru, in the last 24 hours due to alleged oxygen shortage in the district hospital.

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