

ROHINGYA CRISIS UN seeks \$943m in assistance

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

At a donor conference in Geneva, the UN has sought \$943m for the Rohingyas and host community in Cox's Bazar.

UNHCR Spokesperson Andrej Mahecic said, "The \$943m plan seeks to meet the needs of more than 880,000 Rohingya refugees and 472,000 Bangladeshis in the surrounding host communities in Cox's Bazar."

He made the statement at a press briefing in Geneva on Friday.

However, no clear-cut decision of the UN's engagement in Bhashanchar was made in the Joint Response Plan (JRP) 2021.

The UNHCR spokesperson said Bangladesh needed robust and sustained international support to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Rohingya refugees.

Mahecic said it must not become a forgotten crisis. Both Rohingya refugees and Bangladesh, having generously hosted them for decades, must see the world standing with the Rohingyas whose vulnerabilities have heightened due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Most of the nearly a million Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh following a military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine state in 2017.

Since late last year, the Bangladesh government relocated some 18,000 Rohingyas to Bhashanchar, where the government built a housing project for 100,000 Rohingyas.

So far, over 40 NGOs have been providing humanitarian aid.

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Despite restrictions on movement, people are visiting the white stone beach at Bholaganj of Sylhet's Companiganj upazila. They have been flocking the area frequently over the Eid holidays. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Biman to stop flights to 3 KSA cities

Cites strict conditions set by Saudi Arabia

RASHIDUL HASAN

Biman Bangladesh Airlines will be forced to suspend all its flights to three destinations in Saudi Arabia from May 20 due to travel restrictions from the Gulf country, sources in Biman said.

"The Saudi government has given various conditions for Bangladeshi citizens and to the respective airlines to follow which we think won't be possible for us to follow. That's why we will be forced to suspend flights to Saudi Arabia," a top official of Biman told The Daily Star, requesting anonymity.

He also said Biman has stopped selling tickets to the three destinations -- Riyadh, Dammam, and Jeddah -- after May 19.

At present, Biman is operating 18 flights weekly to these three cities in Saudi Arabia.

The fresh suspension of flights will put in SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

MAWA-BHANGA EXPRESSWAY Govt delays toll collection start

Toll plazas not ready for July inauguration

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The road, transport and bridges ministry has stepped back from its decision to start collecting toll from vehicles using the Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga Expressway from July this year, as structures required for it are yet to be readied.

No fresh date was fixed to start toll collection on the 55-kilometre expressway. However, it may start when the long-cherished Padma Bridge is open to the public, which is likely to be in June next year, officials said.

Until a new vendor is assigned for this work, the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) will collect toll from two Dhaleshwari Bridges from July onwards as the tenure of the current vendor will expire in June this year.

These developments came as the Road Transport and Highway Division (RTHD) on May 11 held a meeting over the construction of infrastructures and appointing vendors for toll collection on the Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga Expressway -- the country's first ever expressway.

The meeting was called after the finance ministry last month approved a toll rate

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ROAD TO FREEDOM
THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

Indira writes to Nixon

MAY 13-17, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

TAJUDDIN'S 18-POINT DIRECTIVE

Tajuddin Ahmad, the prime minister of Bangladesh, issued an 18-point directive on May 14 outlining the tasks of the people in the Liberation Struggle. He urged that the people should not listen to rumours nor should they have doubts about the ultimate victory.

"Let the people remember that in war marching forward and retreating are of equal importance. The retreat of the liberation army from one point should not give the people the impression that we have abandoned our war against the Pakistan occupation forces," he added.

The prime minister said employees of government and semi-government organisations who had taken shelter elsewhere would be considered as holding their posts and were expected to help the Bangladesh government and the Mukti Fauj according to their capacity. Officers and men of the military and para-military organisations, whether in service or retired, should immediately report for duty at the nearest liberation army unit and should in no circumstances allow themselves to be exploited by the enemy nor should they cooperate with the enemy, said the directive.

It further said employees in the communication and transport system should not cooperate with the enemy. At the first opportunity they should vacate the enemy-held areas along with their means of transport.

INDIRA GANDHI'S LETTER TO NIXON

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Khaleda's condition stable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health condition of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, who recovered from Covid-19 earlier this month, is stable although fluid is still being extracted from her lungs.

The 10-member medical board formed to treat her reviewed the former premier's health condition yesterday at 2:30pm, said AZM Zahid Hossain, Khaleda's personal physician.

"Around 390ml fluid was extracted in the last 24 hours from her [Khaleda's] lungs. Earlier, it was

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New species of dinosaur identified in Mexico



REUTERS, Mexico City

A team of palaeontologists in Mexico have identified a new species of dinosaur after finding its 72 million-year-old fossilized remains almost a decade ago, Mexico's National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) said on Thursday.

The new species, named Tlatolophus galorum, was identified as a crested dinosaur after 80% of its skull was recovered, allowing experts to compare it to other dinosaurs of that type, INAH said.

The investigation, which also included specialists from the National Autonomous

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Heatwave to continue for a few days

UNB, Dhaka

A mild heat wave is sweeping Dhaka, Rajshahi, Khulna and Barishal divisions, said Bangladesh Metrology Department.

Besides, mild heat waves are also sweeping the regions of Rangamati, Chandpur, Maizdicourt and Sayedpur and it may continue, said the Met office in its regular bulletin yesterday.

Light to moderate rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty or squally wind is likely to occur at a few places over Mymensingh, Sylhet, Rajshahi and Dhaka divisions and at one or two places over Rangpur and Chattogram, divisions with moderately heavy falls at places over the country.

Weather may remain mainly dry elsewhere over the country.

In a regular forecast, it said the day temperature may rise slightly and night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

The maximum temperature of the country was recorded at 38.0 degrees Celsius in Jashore yesterday.



PRAYER TIMING MAY 17

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-10 12-45 5-00 6-36 8-00
JAMAAT 4-45 1-15 5-15 6-40 8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Only a handful of passengers are seen on a bus in Farmgate area in the capital yesterday. As the Eid spirit has not yet died down, even on the first day after the holidays, Dhaka seemed to be comparatively empty and traffic-free.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

India's Covid-19 2nd wave 'slows'

Govt warns against complacency as cases fall for 3rd straight day

AGENCIES

India reported a smaller rise in daily coronavirus infections for a third straight day yesterday, as the government said it was working to boost vaccine supplies to avert deaths beyond the pandemic toll of more than 270,000.

The number of deaths in the past 24 hours rose over 4,000 for the fourth time in a week, with yesterday's 311,170 new infections representing the lowest single-day

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