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## ROAD TRANSPORT ACT 2018 Efforts for its weakening intensify

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

A government initiative to amend the Road Transport Act-2018 has picked up pace after a brief hiatus, even before the authorities started fully implementing the law.

An inter-ministerial meeting has been called today to discuss the opinions of different ministries, associations and citizens on a draft prepared for the amendment.

Giving in to the pressure from transport associations, the government is poised to make sweeping changes in the act, reducing different fines and sentences for traffic violation in 14 sections of the law. Individuals found guilty of overloading and illegally modifying vehicles will be able to secure bail once the amendment takes effect.

As per the draft, at least 29 of the 126 sections of the act will be amended.

With the secretary of the Road Transport and Highway Division in the chair, representatives of 23 ministries, divisions and government agencies, including cabinet division, have been asked to join today's online meeting, sources said.

On April 13 this year, the Road Transport and Bridges Ministry uploaded the draft for amendment on its official website, seeking public opinion. The draft was also sent to 15 or 16 ministries seeking their feedback.

Yousub Ali Mollah, additional secretary (estate), said some seven to eight ministries, workers' and other associations, and individual citizens have given their

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



Aerial view of inundated Dolika Char in Bogura's Sariakandi upazila. Many such places of the district have remained flooded for around two weeks after the Jamuna swelled due to the rush of water from the upstream. Many locals have moved their homes and use boats to go to one place from another. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO:  
COLLECTED

## XULHAZ-TONUY MURDER Court set to deliver verdict today

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka tribunal is set to deliver today the verdict in the case filed over the murder of former USAID official Xulhaz Mannan and his friend Mahbub Rabbi Tonoy against eight members of banned militant outfit Ansar al Islam.

Judge Md Majibur Rahman of the Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal of Dhaka is scheduled to start reading out the judgement around 11:30am, Assistant Public Prosecutor Golam Sharar Khan told The Daily Star.

The eight accused are Syed Mohammad Ziaul Haque alias Maj (sacked) Zia, Akram Hossain, Sabbirul Haque Chowdhury, Junaid Ahmed alias Maulana Junaid, Mozammel Hossain Saimon, Arafat Rahman Siam, Sheikh Abdullah alias Jubair and Asadullah alias Foyjul.

Zia, Akram, Sabbirul and Junaid are on the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

## Booster shots 'not a luxury'

Says WHO Europe head;  
India's vaccine supply jumps

AGENCIES

A third-dose booster shot of the Covid-19 vaccination is a way to keep the most vulnerable safe and "not a luxury", the World Health Organization said yesterday.

The WHO said earlier this month data did not indicate a need for booster shots, while topping up already fully vaccinated people would further widen a vaccine-availability gap between rich and lower-income countries.

"A third dose of vaccine is not a luxury booster (that is) taken away from someone who is still waiting for a first jab. It's basically a way to keep the most vulnerable safe," Hans Kluge, head of WHO Europe, told a press briefing.

"We have to be a little bit careful with the booster shot, because there is not yet enough evidence," he said.

"But more and more studies show that a third dose keeps vulnerable people safe, and this is done by more and more countries in our region," he said.


Kluge urged European countries with excess vaccines to share them with other countries, particularly those in Eastern Europe and Africa.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

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

### 'Famine inevitable'

AUGUST 31, 1971  
SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN



**VIRTUAL RECOGNITION GIVEN TO BANGLADESH MISSION: INDIRA**  
Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi told Bangladeshi refugees in Cooch Behar today that India was doing all it could do to promote the cause of the Bangladesh liberation struggle.

She pointed out that India had virtually recognised the Bangladesh diplomatic mission in Calcutta. She, therefore, did not understand why there was so much fuss over giving recognition to Bangladesh.

**FAMINE FEARED IN BANGLADESH**  
The Telegraph (London) today reported that with an acute shortage of foodstuff already in parts of Bangladesh, a winter famine in isolated areas was inevitable. The recent severe floods had added to the dangers of famine. The rice crop from 2,600,000 acres had been lost. Many foreigners were deeply disturbed by the refusal of Lt Gen Tikka Khan, military governor of occupied Bangladesh, to allow food to be distributed by foreign voluntary organisations working under the United Nations, added the newspaper.

**UK NEWSPAPERS' DISTRIBUTION IN PAKISTAN STOPPED**  
The British high commission in Rawalpindi announced that it had halted the distribution of all British newspapers and periodicals following a censorship move against foreign publication by the Pakistan government.

Pakistan had asked the commission to cease circulation of newspapers containing articles directed against Pakistan. A similar

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

## Teen stalker confesses to murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

An 18-year-old man confessed that he used to stalk girls in Singra and had killed a man for protesting his activities, police in Natore said yesterday.

Baijid Bostami and some of his cohorts frequently stalked girls in Anadanagar village, said Liton Kumar Saha, superintendent of police in Natore.

Eight months ago, local boatman Arju Sheikh and several other villagers protested the sexual harassment of a girl in the neighbourhood and assaulted Baijid and his friends, the officer told a press conference.

On Thursday, Baijid and two others hacked Arju with sharp weapons and threw him in Chalan Beel, tying his hands and legs together so that he drowns.

The SP said as the victim asked for mercy, they demanded Tk 10,000 from him.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

## Scientists bottle smell that scares bugs



MAIL ONLINE

Good news for the green-fingered! Plant pests like aphids could soon be scared off thanks to scientists who have managed to bottle the scent of predatory insects.

Researchers from the Pennsylvania State University have identified the specific chemicals which ladybirds give off that aphids can pick up on — and flee from.

The finding may provide an alternative to regular pesticides, to which many bugs are growing resistant, while eliminating the risk of

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

## Covid-19 positivity rate drops to 12pc

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country logged 94 deaths from Covid-19 in 24 hours preceding 8:00am yesterday. The daily positivity rate was 12.07 percent.

The total number of deaths in the country has reached 26,109 and the death rate now stands at 1.74 percent, according to a press release issued by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

At least 3,724 new infections were recorded during the 24-hour period, taking the total number of people infected to 1,497,261.

The total positivity rate stands at 16.82 percent, added the release.

A total of 30,855 samples were tested across the country in 24 hours.

At least 6,186 Covid patients have recovered during the period. The total number of recoveries now stands at 1,421,883, and the recovery rate at 94.97 percent.

## NORTHEAST INDIA Thousands threatened by floods

AFP, Guwahati

Flood waters rose across northeastern India yesterday, where hundreds of thousands of people are stranded on the roofs of their homes or have fled to higher ground as more torrential rain fell.

Incessant downpours for more than a week forced the Brahmaputra and other major rivers to burst their banks across Assam and Bihar states.

Up to two metres (6.6 feet) of water has submerged many villages. Experts say annual floods which hit the region are getting worse because of

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



### PRAYER TIMING AUGUST 31

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 4:30 12:45 4:45 6:23 7:45  
JAMAAT 5:05 1:15 5:00 6:26 8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Workers unload belongings of one Kawsar and his wife from a pickup to load them onto a boat in Fishery Ghat area of Chattogram city yesterday. The couple used to work at a garment factory and live near their workplace in the city. But the pandemic made them jobless, forcing them to move to their village home in Sandwip, an island in Chattogram.

PHOTO:  
RAJIB RAIHAN

## Star HEALTHLINE

### How long can a Covid patient INFECT OTHERS?

STAR HEALTH DESK

How long is a person who has contracted Covid-19 contagious is simple math, but we don't like to dabble with math and numbers when we are stuck at home isolating. Allow us to make it easier for you.

1. A joint paper released by the National Center for Infectious Disease (NCID) and the Chapter of Infectious Disease Physicians, Academy of Medicine, Singapore, had indicated that a person becomes infectious at least two days before



Hyginex  
Instant hand sanitizer

BEACON  
Pharmaceuticals Limited

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1