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SECOND EDITION



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"The government can send the BNP chief abroad anytime if it wants. The barrier is not the law, but the current illegitimate government."
BNP SECRETARY GENERAL MIRZA FAKHRUL ISLAM ALAMGIR



"It is clear from the speeches and behavior of the government and the law minister that we won't be able to cast our votes in the next national election too."
NOTED JURIST SHAHDEEN MALIK



"Our best form of defence still remains our vaccines... it's possible that it might be less effective."
BRITISH HEALTH SECRETARY SAJID JAVID
ONOMICRON VARIANT

JUSTICE FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING A privilege now gets in the way

Recruiting agents cannot be arrested following victims' lawsuits; cases must go to BMET first for arbitration

ZYNA ISLAM and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

When migrant workers fell victim to labour trafficking and filed cases with the police, the law enforcers prosecuted or arrested the recruiting agents responsible for sending the workers abroad.

Numerous cases showed that recruiting agents have directly been complicit in labour exploitation by force or deception, which, according to the country's law, constitutes human trafficking.

The Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit even last month arrested five members of recruiting agencies, including the owner of Swadhin Tours and Travels, for bribing some airport officials and sending workers abroad using forged documents.

However, as per a recent government decision, law enforcers can no longer directly arrest recruiting agents based on lawsuits by human-trafficking victims.

Instead, they have to refer such cases to the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) for negotiation and arbitration. The prosecution will begin only when the first two fail.

Talking to these correspondents, Expatriate Welfare Minister Imran Ahmed confirmed the development. "It has been decided that whenever a case regarding a migrant worker like this comes up, the first point of contact will be the BMET. Then they will recommend whether or not the case can be tried under the trafficking prevention law," he said.

The decision has, meanwhile, irked those working to protect the rights

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Students check the papers of a pickup truck and the licence of the driver near BTB Bhaban on DIT Road yesterday. They stopped all kinds of vehicles, inset, and checked their papers. Those without valid papers and licences were taken to the traffic policemen who slapped fines on them.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Tensed night at HSIA after false bomb scare

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A regular flight of Malaysian Airlines made an emergency landing at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) last night following reports that there was a bomb or bomb-like object on board, prompting authorities to call in commandos.

With 135 passengers on board, flight MH-196 from Kuala Lumpur landed at 9:38pm, Group Captain AHM Touhid-Ul Ahsan, executive director of the airport, said.

"We didn't find any explosives or bomb-like objects inside the aircraft or inside any passenger's luggage as the search was completed around 1:00am," Touhid-ul Ahsan said at a press briefing.

He said the airport authorities received an information that some passengers might be carrying bomb or bomb-like objects when the plane was in the air.

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Return to classes, don't damage vehicles

Hasina to agitating students



UNB, Dhaka

Asking the students staging protests on the streets to return to their educational institutions, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said they should not vandalise vehicles.

"Please don't do this. Get back to your respective educational institutions. Engage in your studies. Those who are responsible [for recent deaths on the roads] must face punishment, they have been found out," she said.

Hasina was addressing a programme

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ROAD SAFETY MOVEMENT

Cops sue 800 for vandalism, arson

Protesters decide 'no roadblock' today for HSC exams; child run over in Savar, sparking more protests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

When students were continuing their demonstrations demanding safe roads nationwide, a child returning home from school was run over by a pickup truck in Savar yesterday.

Eight-year-old Allama Atique, a first grader of Savar's Morning Glory School and College, was crossing the Dhaka-Aricha highway in Pakiza area around 11:30am when he was run over.

He was crossing the road after being dropped off by his school bus. Allama was rushed to Enam Medical Collage Hospital with critical injuries.

As the news spread, hundreds of students from several schools and colleges in Savar started demonstrating by blocking the highway and demanded immediate arrest of the driver involved.

Kazi Mainul Islam, officer-in-charge of Savar Police Station, said they were yet to identify the pickup.

Meanwhile, police lodged two cases against 800 unnamed students and people for the vandalism and torching of buses during protests over the death of student Mainuddin Islam, who was run over by a bus in the capital's Rampura on Monday night.

In one of the cases filed with Hatirjheel Police Station, police claimed that petrol bombs were used and that police recovered 2.5 litres of octane in five bottles from the spot.

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OMICRON VARIANT

Govt sets strict rules for arrivals



STAR REPORT

Amid the global scare over the new "Omicron" variant of coronavirus, Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said returnees from the African countries will have to have Covid-19 test reports, done 48 hours prior to departure, while entering Bangladesh.

It would also be applicable for returnees from the Omicron-hit countries, he said.

The minister said this while talking to reporters after a discussion at the auditorium of Bangladesh Public Service Commission in the capital, reports UNB.

The Directorate General of Health

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Inequality stays despite progress

Say experts at dev conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The entrepreneurial spirit unleashed by the Liberation War has propelled Bangladesh's remarkable economic growth and also led to an inequitable society, experts said at a development conference yesterday.

"This [entrepreneurial spirit] has, unfortunately, yielded a mixed harvest -- it is part of the Bangladesh paradox," said Rehman Sobhan, chairman of the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

Sobhan's comments came at the annual conference of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies on development.

"While it provided the dynamic for driving development gains, it also engendered some of our basic instincts in the form of largescale corruption," he said, citing the Rana Plaza collapse, Tazreen Fashions fire and the plundering of the environment through land grabbing and encroachment of our water bodies as cases in point.

The quadrupling of food production, the growth and diversification of the agriculture sector, and the flourishing of the manufacturing sector, which contributed to explosive export growth, are all down to the boundless entrepreneurial energy deployed.

Bangladesh is no longer a dependent economy; foreign aid accounts for less than 2 percent of GDP, he said, adding that the positive macroeconomic trends have been matched by improved human development indicators and reduction in poverty.

By last 2010s, Bangladesh has surpassed Pakistan in most economic and social indicators, while it is fast catching up with India in economic indicators and has bested the neighbouring country in many social indicators, according to Binayak Sen, director-general of BIDS.

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KHALEDA'S TREATMENT

No scope for delays

Says pro-BNP doctors' body on sending her abroad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health condition of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, now undergoing treatment at the capital's Evercare Hospital, is critical and there is no scope to further delay her better treatment that is only possible abroad, said physicians.

The pro-BNP association of physicians, Doctors Association of Bangladesh (DAB), yesterday said that it was not possible to ensure better treatment of Khaleda by bringing in foreign doctors in the country as medical equipment and technology is not available here.

Addressing a press briefing at the National Press Club, DAB President Harun Al Rashid said, "Khaleda bleeds several times. It reached a point where there is no chance of delay."

"A team of well-trained physicians and advanced

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A troupe of dancers perform during the inaugural ceremony of Dhaka University's 16-day programme marking the centenary celebrations of its founding at DU campus in the capital yesterday. Photo: Rashed Shumon

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



DEGREES NOT ENOUGH, ACHIEVE STANDARDS

President tells DU students

UNB, Dhaka

President Abdur Hamid yesterday asked students to achieve international standards along with academic degrees.

"As the number of students in Dhaka University has increased over time, so has the scope of its infrastructure and educational activities," the president said.

"Competition has also been internationalised for the benefit of modern science and information technology. So, every student has to obtain international standards along with degrees," he added.

Hamid was addressing the inaugural ceremony of the DU's 16-day programme marking the centenary of its founding. The programme will mark the golden jubilee of the country's independence.

The president, who attended the event virtually as the

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