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SHAH CEMENT

## OMICRON FEARS UK tightens testing for travellers

Adds Nigeria to red list; 17 more cases detected in India

AGENCIES

Britain will require all inbound travellers to take a pre-departure Covid-19 test and arrivals from Nigeria will have to quarantine in hotels to slow the spread of the Omicron variant, Health Minister Sajid Javid said.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said that travel restrictions are necessary to slow the spread of Omicron while scientists work to understand more about the transmissibility and implications for vaccine effectiveness of the variant.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) said that the total number of confirmed Omicron cases had risen to 246 after 86 new cases were detected yesterday.

"We've kept the data under review over the last week or so since we learned about Omicron, and we're seeing increasing number of cases linked to travel," Javid said in a broadcast clip late on Saturday.

"We've always said we will act swiftly if we need to... and that's why we decided to bring in this change on pre-departure tests."

The pre-departure testing requirement will mean that, from 0400 GMT on Tuesday, all inbound travellers must take a either a PCR or a rapid lateral flow test a maximum of 48 hours before departure.

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People travelling on a truck use a tarpaulin to stay dry near Bijoy Sarani in the capital yesterday. Triggered by a depression in the Bay, drizzles and rain disrupted daily life all day. The mercury dipping also added to city dwellers woes.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

We are looking for legal scope

Says law minister on allowing Khaleda have treatment abroad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said the government was looking for legal scope to allow Khaleda's medical treatment abroad.

"Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has considered the issues of Khaleda Zia's treatment from a humanitarian aspect. Two applications for allowing Khaleda Zia to go abroad have been rejected earlier. Now, we are examining whether there is any scope in this regard. Decision would be made examining all the aspects so that the law is not violated," he said.

The minister was talking to reporters after attending a programme at the Judicial Administration Training Institute in the capital.

Meanwhile, issuing a note of warning, the BNP yesterday said people of the country would take to the

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## DUPED CUSTOMERS, MERCHANTS They're to get back stuck money soon

REFAYET ULLAH MIRDHA

E-commerce customers and merchants waiting for their money stuck in the central bank's payment gateway can expect their amounts from next week, said the chief of the commerce ministry's Digital Commerce Cell yesterday.

The commerce ministry will send the letter to the Bangladesh Bank within the next two to three days asking to start the payment, said AHM Shafiquzzaman, the DCC chief and also the additional secretary to the commerce ministry.

The central bank has about Tk 512 crore stuck in its payment gateway.

Since the BB is all set to start refunding, it is expected that the disbursement will begin next week, he told The Daily Star.

Initially, the consumers and merchants who did not go to the court will get back their money.

Those who took the legal route will have to wait for the settlement of their cases, Shafiquzzaman said, adding that their number is very low.

So the majority of the affected consumers and merchants are expected to get back their money, he said, adding that

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## PANAMA, PARADISE PAPERS Silence halts ACC probe

Commission submits report to HC with names mentioned in media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has failed to provide the High Court with a report on whether the Bangladeshi nationals who own properties abroad -- including Canada, Australia, Singapore and Malaysia -- had made the purchases with laundered money.

The reason for the ACC's failure to prepare the report sought by the High Court a year ago is legal complexities, Khurshid Alam Khan, the commission's lawyer, told The Daily Star.

Citing an example, the lawyer said according to Egmont Treaty, a country cannot disclose the names of money launderers without permission from the country where the money was laundered to.

On January 11, the ACC sent a notice to the foreign and home ministries and the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU) seeking necessary information about the money launderers who purchased properties abroad.

Then on February 8, the commission wrote to the special police super (Immigration).

None replied yet.

The commission, however, yesterday furnished a compliance report to the court containing the names of 43 individuals reportedly published in the Paradise Papers and the Panama Papers as money launderers in 2016 and 2017.

Khan placed the compliance report before the bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice AKM Zahirul Huq in line with its earlier

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## No plan to seal borders, enforce lockdowns

Health minister on Omicron

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

The government has no plan to seal off borders or slap lockdowns to prevent Omicron variant, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said yesterday.

"There is still no such situation so that the borders need to be sealed off or lockdown to be slapped. Screening and the [Covid-19] tests have been strengthened in each border [entry points]," Maleque told the journalists following his visit to the newly built Nursing Institute in Savar.

He came up with this statement when the Omicron variant of concern has spread to more than three dozen countries, including five confirmed cases in neighbouring India.

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## Astronomers discover Mars-sized exoplanet



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Astronomers have found a distant exoplanet where the surface could be made of molten iron.

The planet, classified as GJ 367b, is located 31 light years away from the Earth and has a diameter of just over 9,000km, making it roughly the size of Mars.

"From the precise determination of its radius and mass, GJ 367b is classified as a rocky planet," Kristine Lam of the German Aerospace Centre said.

"It seems to have similarities to Mercury. This places it among the sub-Earth sized terrestrial planets and brings research one step forward in the search for a 'second Earth'."

Its year lasts under eight hours, making it a part

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## 2 killed in 'shootout' with Rab

STAR REPORT

Two people were killed in a "shootout" with members of Rab in Bholia early yesterday.

The identities of the deceased could not be known immediately, said Saiful Islam, superintendent of police of Bholia.

Shakhawat Hossain, officer-in-charge of South Aicha Police Station, said the "shootout" took place between a group of robbers and members of Rapid Action Battalion around 4:00am at Char Kukrimukri

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PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 6

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 5-15 12-45	3-45	5-19	7-00	
JAMAAT 5-50	1-15	4-00	5-22	7-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## Rain to stay couple more days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There will be moderate to heavy rainfall in Dhaka and the southern part of the country today and tomorrow due to deep depression caused by cyclone Jawad in the Bay of Bengal.

"The country will be dry from then on and the temperature will fall by two to three degrees Celsius at night from Wednesday," said Meteorologist Bazlur Rashid of Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD).

Meanwhile, over 1,000 tourists remain stranded on St Martin's island as the authorities yesterday suspended operation of passenger vessels to and from the island for two days, reports UNB.

Pervez Chowdhury, upazila nirbahi officer in Teknaf, said the local administration suspended operations of all types of vessels, issuing cautionary signal 3.

The suspension will continue until the weather

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Students try to go between a pile of garbage and a bus to get to their school on the right of the photo. The garbage has been there for the last two days, said locals. The photo was taken at 12:30pm yesterday in front of Senpara Parbata Government Primary School in Mirpur-10.

## POST-COUP MYANMAR Security forces plough car into protesters

5 killed; junta chief meets Suu Kyi party stalwart

AGENCIES

Five people were killed and at least 15 arrested after Myanmar security forces in a car rammed into an anti-coup protest in Yangon yesterday morning, local news portal Myanmar Now reported.

Witnesses on the scene told Reuters dozens had been injured. Photos and videos on social media show a vehicle that crashed through the protesters and bodies lying on the road.

Another protest was held in Yangon in the afternoon despite the morning violence.

Anti-military protests are continuing despite the killing of more than 1,300 people since the February 1 coup. The scattered protests are often small groups voicing opposition to the overthrow of an elected government led by Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and the return of military rule.

The opposition's shadow government said it was heartbroken to see peaceful protesters crashed and shot to death.

"We will strongly respond to the terrorist military who brutally, inhumanly killed the unarmed peaceful protesters," the National Unity Government's defence ministry said in a statement on social media after yesterday's attack.

In the incident, a "flash mob" protest in Yangon,

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