

EVERYONE CAN MAKE ROADS, BUT **THERE'S ONLY 1 EXPERT** SO CHOOSE BSRM TO BUILD SAFER HOMES

COUNTRY'S NO. 1 STEEL EXPERT

BSRM building a safer nation

GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS RECORD HOLDER

GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS RECOGNIZES

World's Largest VRM

SHAH CEMENT

LICENCES FOR HEAVIER VEHICLES

Another win for transport leaders

Govt gives into their demands, allows pro drivers with less experience to get licences for heavy, medium vehicles

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government has again relaxed the experience requirements to obtain driving licences for heavy and medium vehicles, following transport leaders' demand.

The road transport and bridges ministry yesterday issued a circular in this regard, which will come into effect immediately and last until June 2022. Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) sent the proposal to the ministry early this month, officials said.

Earlier, the government had given the similar opportunity from August 2018 to June 2021 following transport leaders' demand, but neither the BRTA nor the transport leaders have any data on how many drivers have taken the opportunity.

But Buet's Accident Research Institute (ARI) found that the involvement of heavy vehicles in road crashes has been increasing and it also said the relaxation is one of the reasons for the rise.

Around 49 percent victims of road crashes are pedestrians and deaths of 59 percent pedestrians are caused by heavy vehicles, ARI's Director Prof Hadiuzzaman told The Daily Star, citing their research.

Under the original rules, a driver had to have three-year experience with a light-vehicle licence to apply for a licence to drive medium-sized vehicles. Only after three more years

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5



BNP leaders and activists gather in front of its Nayapaltna central office in the capital before bringing out a procession yesterday to mark the 51st Victory Day. In a brief rally prior to the procession, the BNP demanded party Chairperson Khaleda Zia's treatment abroad.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

People will be woken to restore democracy

Vows BNP while marking Victory Day

UNB, Dhaka

Vowing to "awaken the people for the restoration of democracy", the BNP yesterday brought out a colourful procession in the capital, marking the 51st Victory Day.

Led by their central leaders, the party followers joined the event carrying the national flag, placards, banners and portraits of party top leaders.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir inaugurated the procession around 2:30pm in front of the party's Nayapaltna central office.

After parading different streets through Bijoynagar, Kakrail and Shantinagar, the procession ended at Nayapaltna around 3:50pm.

Thousands of leaders and activists of the party and its associate bodies started gathering in front of the central office since noon, causing traffic congestion.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4



2nd death anniversary of Fazle Hasan Abed today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the second death anniversary of Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, the larger-than-life spearhead of Brac, who passed away from a malignant brain tumour.

But the organisation he built after wrapping up his life in London as an accountant in 1972 is carrying on his purpose with intent.

Based on its impact, innovation and sustainability, Brac in 2021 was ranked first among the world's top 500 non-governmental organisations by Geneva-based NGO Advisor -- for the sixth year in a row.

What started as just a small relief and rehabilitation effort in a

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5

Omicron cases surge in UK

Scientists see bigger wave; London mayor declares 'major incident' to help hospitals; Dutch go into lockdown

AGENCIES

Britain reported a surge in cases of the Omicron coronavirus variant which government advisors said could be just the tip of the iceberg, and London's mayor declared a "major incident" to help the city's hospitals cope.

The number of Omicron cases recorded across the country hit almost 25,000 as of Saturday, up by more than 10,000 cases from 24 hours earlier, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) said.

Seven people believed to have had the Omicron variant had died as of Thursday, up from one death in the UKHSA's previous data which ran up to Tuesday. Admissions to hospital of people thought to have the variant increased to 85 from 65.

The government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) said it was "almost certain" that hundreds of thousands of people were being infected with the variant every day and were not being picked up in the figures.

SAGE said without a further tightening of Covid-19 rules, "modelling indicates a peak of at least 3,000 hospital admissions per day in England," they said in minutes of a meeting.

Last January, before Britain's vaccination campaign gathered speed, daily hospital admissions in the United Kingdom as a whole surged above 4,000.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has faced a rebellion in his governing Conservative Party over some of the measures he has taken so far to try to curb Covid-19's latest spread. A newspaper said on Saturday that Johnson's Brexit minister, David Frost, had resigned in part because of the new rules.

The advisors said it was too early to assess the severity of disease caused by Omicron but if there was a modest reduction compared to the Delta variant, "very high numbers of infections would still lead to significant pressure on hospitals".

London Mayor Sadiq Khan declared a "major incident" - which allows for closer coordination between public agencies and possibly more central

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

Gang of RMG thieves busted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Detective Branch of the police has arrested five members of a gang that stole an export consignment worth about Tk 60 lakh of a unit of the Envoy Group, one of the biggest garment exporters from Bangladesh.

The theft of 8,053 garment items of Manta Apparels, the concern of Envoy Group, took place on December 13, said DB Chief AKM Hafiz Akter at a press briefing yesterday.

Around 12:30pm, a lorry of Tamanna Traders, the transport agency used by Manta Apparels, loaded with 329 cartons of men's trousers left the factory premises in Ashulia for Chattogram Port, from where the consignment would be shipped to Chile.

When Monirul Islam Khan, assistant general manager of Manta Apparels, called the lorry's driver Solaiman Firoz around 4:40 pm, he was told that the vehicle had broken down at a spot not too far from the factory's premises.

The driver's phone was switched off when Khan called next for a shipping update. He then sent the company's security personnel to the place where Firoz said the lorry had broken down but could not find the vehicle.

A general diary was filed with the Ashulia Police Station that day. On December 17, Khan filed a case with the Uttara West Police Station.

So far, the DB has managed to recover 8,000 pairs of trousers and arrested five. The arrestees are Sabuj, 30; Motahar

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

Treasure trove of dinosaur tracks found in Poland



REUTERS, Warsaw

Hundreds of dinosaur footprints, so well-preserved that even the scaly skin can be seen, have been found in Poland, giving an insight into a complex ecosystem around 200 million years ago, geologists said.

Described by the Polish Geological Institute-National Research Institute as a treasure trove, the fossilised tracks and bones were found in an opencast clay mine in Borkowice, 130 km (80 miles) south of Warsaw.

"In the traces left by dinosaurs, you can read their behaviour and habits... we have traces left by dinosaurs running, swimming, resting and sitting," said geologist Grzegorz Niedzwiedzki.

The largest footprints of carnivorous dinosaurs are 40 cm long and in many cases the skin can be seen in detail.

"In order for such a state of preservation to be

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



US Senate confirms new envoy to Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US Senate has confirmed Peter D Haas, a career diplomat, as the ambassador to Bangladesh.

The US Congress made it public in a statement on its website yesterday.

Haas will replace Ambassador Earl R Miller, who was appointed to the post in 2018.

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2



PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 20

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5-25 12-45 3-45 5-24 7-00
JAMAAT 6-00 1-15 4-00 5-27 7-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Salam Miah drying hair of cattle, goat and lamb tail in the capital's Lalbagh area yesterday. He collects these from Old Dhaka's Posta where rawhides from different parts of the country are taken for sale. He buys a tuft of hair for Tk 5 and sells it for Tk 20. The hair is used in making brushes, jackets and dolls.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Rohingya leader's body found in camp

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

The mutilated body of a missing Rohingya leader was recovered from an abandoned home in the refugee camps of Cox's Bazar's Ukhia on Saturday -- almost a year after he went missing.

The victim was identified as Syed Amin, 40, said Mohammad Shihab Kaiser Khan, Armed Police Battalion commander and superintendent of police.

The recovery was made following the arrest of three people -- Mohammad Islam, 22, Abdul Monaf, 26, and Mohammad Elias, 28, -- on that morning by the APBn.

Amin was kidnapped by his rivals over establishing dominance in the area. He

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1



OBITUARY

Dr. Nazrul Islam (1934-2021)

Dr. Nazrul Islam, an accomplished government official who dedicated his life to, and played an instrumental role in the economic development of Bangladesh, passed away on 18 December 2021 at the age of 87. He was from Chittagong.

His government career encompassed an astonishing array of leadership positions in the energy and industries sectors (Chairman of Petro Bangla, Steel and Engineering Corporation & others) and academia (Rector PATC, Chairman Executive Committee Council of Bangladesh Institute of Technology and member of the BUET syndicate and academic counsel). He reached the highest echelons of government, culminating in his appointment as a full Secretary and a Member of the Planning Commission. He also represented Bangladesh as part of presidential entourages and governmental delegations in various international fora and chaired numerous task forces covering energy and education policy.

Despite his noteworthy achievements, one of his proudest accomplishments was his involvement in the rural electrification project of Bangladesh in the early 1970's that had a transformative effect on society.

He was known by family, colleagues, and friends for his exceptional work ethic and his integrity, modesty, kindness and generosity. He is survived by his wife, Safurunnessa Islam, his three children, Dr. Sarosh Khan, Dr. Naheed Islam and Omar Islam, four grandchildren and numerous relatives and friends.