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SHAH CEMENT

## Luxury boats with ludicrous fire safety

SUSHANTA GHOSH

Dozens of luxury launches are carrying hundreds of passengers without adequate fire safety equipment, industry insiders said.

Some of the vessels are equipped with elevators, well-furnished rooms, echo sounders to fathom the depth of water, radars, wifi, radio communication and modern gadgets. But the owners do not invest in fire safety equipment.

"These boats have multiple large engines and countless things that consume electricity. But our fire safety measures are not enough. There is always a risk of fire hazard," said Mujibur Rahman, master of the Sundarban-10.

"There should be large fire extinguishers and hose pipes on each floor of launches. Besides, every member of the crew should have firefighting training every month," he told The Daily Star.

Md Kamaluddin Bhuiyan, deputy director of Fire Service and Civil Defence in Barishal, said construction of every building containing 10 or more floors requires approval from the fire service.

But these vessels are carrying hundreds of people without having to consult the fire service.

The launch owners and crew members are not interested in fire safety training, he said, adding that no fire drill for the crew members took place in the last four years.

Contacted, Barishal Port Officer Mostafizur Rahman said, "We check the lights and the number of crew members. But we are not responsible for checking fire safety."

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Three rows of people carriers, popularly known as Legunas, and another row of buses parked on a street near Golap Shah Mazar in Gulistan make the road practically unusable for other vehicles and motorists. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Nine in 10 Covid cases were in Dhaka city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Four Covid-19 patients died and 268 new cases were reported in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

Ninety-one percent of the cases were in the Dhaka metropolitan area while the rest were from 12 districts including Dhaka, according to a press release from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Of the four patients who died during that time, three were in Dhaka and another in Rajshahi division.

The total number of fatalities due to the highly transmissible virus has now risen to 28,060 and the total confirmed cases to 15,83,253.

The death rate was 1.77 percent.

Against a total of 17,072 tests countrywide, the positivity rate was 1.57 percent.

During the past two months, the positivity rate has been below two

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## RAPE OF TOURIST Prime accused arrested in Madaripur

Cops in Cox's Bazar arrest 3 more suspects

STAR REPORT

Ashiqul Islam Ashiq, a prime accused in the tourist rape case in Cox's Bazar, was arrested by Rab in Madaripur yesterday.



Imran Khan, assistant director of Rab's legal and media wing, confirmed this to The Daily Star last night.

Earlier in the day, police in hours-long drives arrested three more suspects at different places of Cox's Bazar, Muslim Uddin, an additional deputy inspector general, said in a press briefing at Laboni Point office of Cox's Bazar Tourist Police.

The arrestees -- Rezaul Karim Sahabuddin, 25, Mehedi Hasan, 21, of Baharchhara under Cox's Bazar municipality, and Mamunur Rashid, 28, of Ulubunia village under Chakaria upazila -- were not named in the case documents, but police found their involvement in the

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## FEMALE MIGRANT WORKERS Over half return with shattered dreams

BILS shares findings at roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 55 percent of 323 female migrant workers' return to the country was either unexpected or forced, says a study by the Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies.

As many as 22.6 percent of the female migrants returned less than a year of their migration, 17.6 percent between one and two years and 17.3 percent within two to three years. The data was collected between July and December 2020.

Also, 38 percent of the returnees said they were "abused physically" in the destination countries while 52 percent were victims of forced labour, according to the study, which was conducted in 12 upazilas in Chattogram, Jashore and Faridpur.

It further found 60 percent of the returnees were unemployed after their return home.

In terms of social stigma, 52 percent thought a change of social attitude towards them had happened after their return.

BILS shared findings of the report "Social and Economic Reintegration of the Returnee Female Migrant Workers: Success and Sorrows" during a roundtable at The Daily Star Centre yesterday. The report was earlier shared with the media in September.

On average, the returnee's families had Tk 2,378 income-expenditure gap while two out of every three returnees did not have a regular monthly income, said Manirul Islam, lead researcher of BILS.

Also, 61 percent of the returnees had a debt burden of Tk 76,736 each.

In the case of social attitude, 38 percent said they were considered as "low-class" people while 45 percent said they were overlooked or avoided or not invited to social events.

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## Star to honour IT pioneers today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

For the sixth consecutive year, The Daily Star is going to honour trailblazers in IT and IT-enabled services today.

The Daily Star ICT Awards 2021 will go to six pioneering IT entrepreneurs and enterprises in six categories, namely digital commerce, startup, ICT solution provider catering in the international market, ICT solution provider in the domestic market, ICT business person and ICT Pioneer.

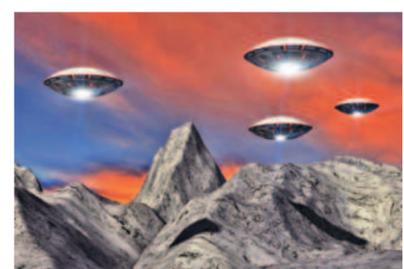
The event, organised to propagate the development of ICT industry further, is supported by Brac Bank Ltd, Daraz and Independent University, Bangladesh and enlightened by Bangladesh Association of Software & Information Services (BASIS).

Radisson Blu Dhaka Water Garden is the

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## How world will react to alien life?

Nasa appoints 24 theologians to find answers



MAIL ONLINE

Nasa is looking to the heavens for help with assessing how humans will react if alien life is found on other planets and how the discovery could impact our ideas of gods and creation.

The agency is hiring 24 theologians to take part in its program at the Center for Theological Inquiry (CTI) at Princeton University in New Jersey, which Nasa gave a \$1.1 million grant to in 2014.

CTI is described as building 'bridges of understanding by convening theologians,

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## Memorial meeting on Reazuddin tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sampadak Parishad (Editor's Council) and Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab) will jointly organise a commemorative discussion on journalist Reazuddin Ahmed tomorrow.

The discussion will be held at Jahur Hossain Chowdhury Hall of Jatiya Press Club at 10:00am, according to a press release issued by the Editor's

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PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 27

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:27 7:00  
JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:30 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## SAGAR-RUNI MURDER Probe gets time for 84th time

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday asked Rab to submit its report on the much-talked-about Sagar-Runi murder case on February 11, 2022.

This is the 84th time the investigation authorities of the case received time from a court. Currently, Rab's Additional Superintendent Khondoker Shafiqul Alam is the investigation officer of the case.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Debdash Chandra Adhikary passed the order.

Journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi was brutally killed at their rented flat in the capital's West Razabazar area on February 11, 2012.

After Sher-e-Bangla Nagar police and the Detective Branch of police, Rab was tasked with the probe on April 18, 2012.

At least eight people Rafiqul Islam, Bakul Miah, Masum Mintu, Kamrul Hasan alias Arun, Abu

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For the construction of lanes for Bus Rapid Transit, this section of the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway in Azampur of Uttara has been dug up and left like this. There seems to be inadequate warnings and protection for motorists and pedestrians using the highway.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## OMICRON THREAT Travel chaos worsens

Over 7,000 flights scrapped globally; China sees 21-month case record

AFP, New York

More than 7,000 flights have been canceled worldwide over the Christmas weekend and thousands more delayed, as the highly infectious Omicron variant brings holiday hurt to millions.

Severe weather is compounding the travel chaos in the United States, with storms expected to wreak havoc on roadways in the country's west, though they brought a white Christmas weekend to Seattle and parts of California.

According to Flightaware.com, more than 2,000 flights were canceled yesterday-- including more than 570 originating from, or headed to, US airports. More than 4,000 delays were reported.

Aircrew and ground staff have fallen sick or gone into quarantine after exposure to Covid, forcing Lufthansa, Delta, United Airlines, JetBlue, Alaska Airlines and other carriers to cancel flights during a peak travel period.

More than 2,800 flights were scrubbed around the globe on Saturday, including more than 990 originating from or headed to US airports, with over 8,500 delays. On Friday, there were around 2,400 cancellations and 11,000 delays.

The cancellations added to the frustration for many people eager to reunite with their families over the holidays after last year's Christmas was severely curtailed.

Chinese airlines accounted for the highest number of cancellations, with China Eastern scrapping more than 1,000 flights, over 20 percent of its flight plan, on Friday

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