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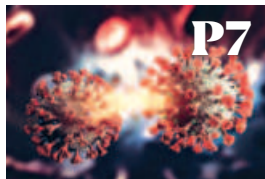
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Covid-19 Pandemic

AFP tally shows over six million have died so far



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Struggling to survive

Slow, painful death of Bain loom craft



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'Need to put a full stop'

Says Khaled Mahmud



B4

No to new carriers

New airlines not getting permission to operate



Ukrainian soldiers help an elderly woman to cross a destroyed bridge as she evacuates the city of Irpin, northwest of Kyiv, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Home beckons

Sailors return today, a week after attack on ship in Ukraine

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The 28 crew members of the ill-fated Bangladeshi ship are finally on their way home, having escaped death when the ship came under attack in Ukraine on March 2.

After a weeklong ordeal, they are expected to reach Dhaka around noon today.

The "missile" attack on "Banglar Samriddhi" claimed the life of one of their crewmates, Third Engineer Hadisur Rahman. They were rescued from the ship after around 21 long hours and took shelter in a bunker in the war-ravaged European country.

After two days, they reached Romania via Moldova and left for Bangladesh from Bucharest by a special flight last night.

Md Daud Ali, Bangladesh ambassador to Romania, told The Daily Star that all 28 crew members would fly from Romania by a special flight of Turkish Airlines.

"The crewmen will have a stopover at Istanbul and from there they will fly for Dhaka. Hopefully they will reach Dhaka by noon tomorrow [today]," he said.

Hadisur's body is still in Ukraine, and efforts are underway to bring the body home, he added.

Although relieved to be safe, the sailors are haunted by the shelling incident and the death of one of their fellow sailors.

This newspaper talked to one of the crew members who described the entire journey over phone yesterday from Romania.

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US, UK ban Russian oil

Ukrainians flee besieged cities as war rages

AFP, Kyiv

US President Joe Biden yesterday banned imports of Russian oil to punish Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine as desperate civilians fled besieged cities and fresh fighting raged.

Britain said it would also phase out Russian oil by the end of the year and the EU planned to slash gas imports by two-thirds, as Western sanctions finally began to target the economic lifeline for Russia's war.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has pressed on despite unprecedented sanctions, although Moscow agreed set up "humanitarian corridors" from four Ukrainian cities on the 13th day of the conflict.

The number of refugees flooding across Ukraine's borders to escape towns devastated by shelling and air strikes passed two million, in Europe's fastest-growing refugee crisis since World War II, the UN said.

Buses streamed out through an evacuation corridor from the northeastern city of Sumy -- where 21 people were killed in air strikes overnight -- while civilians on foot took an unofficial escape route out of the bombarded Kyiv suburb of Irpin.

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CHANDPUR UNIVERSITY

Land scam by AL men 'may be true'

Dipu Moni says; the alleged fraud delaying the start of academic activities

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

Uncertainty looms over the planned launching of academic activities at Chandpur Science and Technology University (CSTU) this year as the land acquisition process remains stalled over alleged price manipulation by some local ruling party men, reportedly close to Education Minister Dipu Moni.

The CSTU authorities had planned to begin academic activities on a limited scale in the existing buildings on the proposed land.

But as the local administration raised the issue that the government would lose Tk 360 crore due to the abnormally overpriced land, the matter is now pending with the High Court.

On Thursday, Attorney General AM Amin Uddin told the court that 139 of the land deeds were registered with corrupt motives to

embezzle public money in the name of land acquisition for the university.

Contacted, CSTU Vice-Chancellor Nasim Akhtar said the university authorities wanted to enrol students from this year in five departments in the existing buildings.

"If the matter is not settled soon, the academic session will stumble and local Awami League men would have to shoulder the responsibility," he said early last month.

Dipu Moni on Monday told The Daily Star that the allegations of price manipulation were likely true, but did not go into detail.

Meanwhile, the VC on Sunday sent a letter to the education ministry, requesting it to allocate the estimated Tk 193.9 crore for the acquisition within 120 work days.

The alleged deception was unearthed by the Chandpur district administration which

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Carbon user fee to cut emission by 12pc by 2030: IMF

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladesh could bring down carbon dioxide emission by 12 percent by 2030 by introducing a carbon user fee on the energy sector as it strives to transition to a low-carbon economy and build climate resilience, said the International Monetary Fund.

The country has targeted to bring down carbon dioxide by 6.73 percent in that timeframe.

The carbon fee can start from this year at \$3 per metric ton of carbon dioxide on the energy and the industrial processes and product use sectors and increase to \$25 per metric ton by 2030, said the Washington-based multilateral lender in its 'Selected Issues' paper on Bangladesh.

The paper was prepared by a staff team of the IMF as background documentation based on the information available as of February 15 for the periodic consultation with Bangladesh.

"This may be an opportune time for Bangladesh to align with interests and net-zero goals of its export consumers, donors and the private investors following the renewed pledges at COP26."

With the early adoption of carbon pricing, Bangladesh will provide a strong and credible signal to donors and investors on its commitment to a greener economy.

"The fee will be easily implementable," the IMF said.

The gradual increase in the fee will help firms to plan for decarbonising their production processes and improving energy efficiency, thereby reducing stranded assets, risks to competitiveness and job losses in the future.

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Smoke billowing out of the Madhurchhara Rohingya camp-5 in Cox's Bazar's Ukhiya upazila after a fire broke out there yesterday afternoon. The blaze killed a child and destroyed about 300 shanties. The cause of the fire could not be known immediately.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

FREE POLLS

EC to hold talks with different quarters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The newly formed Election Commission is going to hold a series of talks with a cross-section of people, including leaders of political parties, to know their expectations from the commission.

During the talks with educationists, civil society members, election experts, media personalities and others, the EC would also seek their advice on how the polls, including 12th national election, can be held in a free and fair manner, Election Commissioner Md Alamgir told The Daily Star yesterday.

The dialogue would start on March 13 with sitting with educationists, he said.

The new Election Commission led by Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibur Awal was formed on February 26.

EC officials said they

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