



PM likely to visit Japan in April

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's Japan visit, which was postponed in November last year, is likely to take place early April.

The visit was discussed when newly appointed Japanese Ambassador Iwama Kiminori paid a courtesy call on her at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

PM's speechwriter M Nazrul Islam said this while briefing reporters on the meeting, reports UNB.

Kiminori also discussed the matter with Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen in a meeting with him on Tuesday.

Japan wants the prime minister to make her trip in late March or early April during the season of cherry blossoms, a foreign ministry official told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said Dhaka is considering early April as many events take place in

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



With the Biswa Ijtema just a day away, devotees from Dhaka and its adjacent districts have started pouring into the Ijtema ground in Tongi. This picture taken yesterday near the capital's Basila bridge shows a boat carrying devotees in the Turag river. The first phase of the Ijtema will be held on January 13-15.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

LEVEL CROSSING Three killed as train hits auto-rickshaw



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Three people, including a child, were killed and five others injured after a train hit an auto-rickshaw at an unmanned level crossing in Tangail's Bhuapur around noon yesterday.

Two of the victims died on the spot while the child passed away on the way to Bhuapur Upazila Health Complex, police and doctors said.

Two of them were identified as Lovely Begum, 25, wife of Alamgir Hossain of Agterila village in Bhuapur, and eighteen-month old Jannati, daughter of Sanjab Ali of the same village.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

BUSINESS

Forex volatility continues

In a desperate attempt at collecting the greenback to meet immediate requirements, a good number of banks are ignoring directives of two lenders' organisations to not offer over Tk 107 for each US dollar coming in as remittance. The directive was a part of a consensus reached between Bangladesh Foreign Exchange Dealers' Association (BAFEDA) and the Association of Bankers Bangladesh (ABB) in September to follow multiple exchange rates.

STORY ON B1

Cost-of-living crisis biggest global risk

Warns WEF survey as global inflation remains at sky-high amid Ukraine war

AFP, London

The cost-of-living crisis will be the biggest global risk over the next two years, a survey by the World Economic Forum warned yesterday ahead of its Davos meeting next week.

Global inflation remains at sky-high levels after energy and food costs rocketed last year following the invasion of agricultural powerhouse Ukraine by major oil and gas producer Russia.

Supply constraints caused by the Covid pandemic have also contributed to decades-high consumer prices.

"Conflict and geo-economic tensions have triggered a series of deeply interconnected global risks," said the study ahead of the WEF's annual meeting of global elites in the Swiss Alpine village of Davos.

"These include energy and food supply crunches, which are likely to persist for the next two years, and strong increases in the cost-of-living and debt servicing."

It added that such "crises risk undermining efforts to tackle longer-term risks, notably those related to climate change, biodiversity and investment in human capital".

The survey, produced with consultants Marsh McLennan and Zurich Insurance Group, took into account the views of more than 1,200 global risk

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

International brands exploiting RMG workers

Finds study on 1,000 Bangladeshi factories

AFP, London

Major international fashion brands are operating unfairly toward Bangladesh clothing suppliers, with some allegedly paying for items below the cost of production, according to a study published yesterday.

The study's compilers, Aberdeen University and the advocacy group Transform Trade, surveyed 1,000 Bangladeshi factories making garments for global brands and retailers during the Covid pandemic.

More than half of the factories experienced at least order cancellations or refusal to pay or price reductions or delayed payment for goods.

"This research highlights reports of unfair trading practices encountered by manufacturers during Covid-19," the report found.

Such practices resulted in lower wages for the factories' workers, job losses, and high staff turnover, it said.

One in five factories revealed they

had struggled to pay the legal minimum wage as a result.

The report also uncovered incidents where some companies demanded reductions for clothing ordered before the pandemic erupted in March 2020.

And some fashion firms refused to budge on price, despite soaring costs and rampant inflation.

The study called for the creating of a fashion industry regulator in importing nations to improve purchasing practices.

Respondents told researchers that the "highest proportion" of unfair business practices included major brands such as H&M, Next, Primark and Zara owner Inditex.

The responses of some companies to the claims were included in the report. Inditex said it has "guaranteed payment for all orders already placed and in process of production and worked with financial institutions to facilitate the provision of loans to

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

2 Pakistan teen girls ran away to meet BTS

CNN, online



Two teenage girls reported missing in Pakistan last week have been found more than 750 miles from home after attempting to travel to South Korea to meet K-pop super band BTS, police in the South Asian country said.

The two girls, aged 13 and 14, went missing on Saturday from Korangi in Karachi city, said Abraiz Ali Abbasi, a senior police superintendent of the area.

During a search of their homes, police found a diary that revealed their plans to travel to South Korea to meet the supergroup BTS, Abbasi said in a video statement.

"From the diary we saw mentions of train timetables and that they had been planning to run away with another friend of theirs ... who we then interviewed," Abbasi said.

"We started tracking them aggressively and found out they were in custody of the police in the city of Lahore where they had travelled by train."

Abbasi said arrangements for the girls to be taken back home to Karachi have been made in coordination with police in Lahore.

And he made an appeal for parents to "please monitor their children's screen time," so they're more aware of what their children are viewing online.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

B'BARIA COURTS Lawyers' boycott adds to plight of justice-seekers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Justice-seekers were deprived of services as Brahmanbaria lawyers continued their court boycott for six straight working days yesterday.

Judicial activities at the district judge and chief judicial magistrate's courts have been suspended since January 4, following an altercation between lawyers and court employees over the alleged misbehaviour with a judge.

The District Bar Association started boycotting the court, demanding withdrawal of two judges, including Brahmanbaria district judge, and a court staffer.

On January 2, a group of lawyers reportedly misbehaved with Judge Mohammad Faruque of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-1 in Brahmanbaria and created chaos in the courtroom.

The next day, court employees started a work abstention, protesting the lawyers' actions, but withdrew it later that day.

On January 5, the High Court summoned Brahmanbaria Bar Association President Tanbir Bhuiyan, Secretary (administration) Akkas Ali and lawyer Zubayer Islam to appear before the bench of Justice JBM Hassan and Justice Razik-Al-Jalil on January 17 to explain their conduct.

Sohel Mia, who hails from Brahmanbaria but works

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



A pickup truck driver on his mobile phone while driving in the capital's Shewrapara, completely oblivious to the danger he is posing to himself, other vehicles and pedestrians. Though the Road Transport Act-2018 made it a punishable offence, this kind of irresponsible behaviour goes unabated as the authorities concerned hardly take action. According to the law, the punishment for using mobile phones while driving is maximum one month of imprisonment or a fine of Tk 5,000 or both. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

NIPAH VIRUS Don't drink raw date juice

Warns IEDCR as country reports this year's first death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health experts yesterday advised people to not drink raw date juice, the main source of the Nipah virus in the country, following the recent death of a woman.

At an event yesterday, the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) told reporters that the 35-year-old woman died from Nipah-induced encephalitis in Rajshahi last week.

Last year, the IEDCR recorded three Nipah virus cases, two of which led to death – one in Naogaon and the other in Faridpur.

"We don't know much about this deadly virus yet. So far, we know that it has around 71 percent fatality rate and raw date juice is the main source of contracting it. So, we must refrain from consuming it," said Prof Tahmina Shirin, director of the IEDCR, while sharing data on the viral infection.

She, however, said consuming the

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1