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BNP to take out 'black flag' processions Jan 26, 27

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP, in its first programme after the January 7 election, is going to take out nationwide black flag processions on January 26 and 27 to press home its demands.

The demands include the release of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and all other leaders, withdrawal of all fabricated cases and dissolution of parliament, said BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi while announcing the programme at a press conference in the party's Nayapaltan central office yesterday.

The processions, which will be organised in all district towns on January 26 and in metropolitan cities on January 27, would also protest higher prices of commodities, he said.

The BNP leader accused the Awami League government for failing to control the price hike of essential commodities.

"The day after the dummy government took oath, prices of rice and some daily essentials suddenly went up. After the polls, Sheikh Hasina gave the corrupt businesspeople a chance to take revenge on the people for boycotting the polls."

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Schoolchildren and pedestrians are forced to walk on the street near the gate of Dhanmondi Government Boys' High School in Dhaka as people tasked with repairing the pavement have left a pile of sand there. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

ANOMALIES IN BIMAN HIRING Probe report not yet submitted despite HC order

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Even though the civil aviation authorities were ordered by the High Court last August to submit a probe report on Biman's pilot recruitment anomalies within a month, they showed up in court yesterday empty-handed.

The authorities requested time until the end of February to submit the report.

Meanwhile, a probe body formed earlier by Biman Bangladesh was halted in its track despite having made considerable progress.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines in February 22, 2022, recruited a batch of 14 contractual pilots to fly its Boeing 777-300ER aircraft.

In August last year, a bench of Justice JBM Hasan and Justice Razik-Al-Jalil had ordered the civil aviation ministry to launch an investigation into the allegations of anomalies in this recruitment.

The order was issued following a hearing on a writ petition filed by Md Tanvir Ahmed after The Daily Star published a report titled "Biman paying for hiring unqualified Boeing 777 pilots" on March 1.

The newspaper had found that two first officers had laked their certificates and

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2000-yr-old 'bullet' found with Roman dictator's name on it

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A 2000-year-old "bullet" has been found with a Roman dictator's name on it.

The lead projectile, inscribed with the name of Julius Caesar, was unearthed in Spain and could have been used with a slingshot by the general's troops.

The artefact -- known to specialists as a "glans inscripta" -- measures 4.5 by 2 centimetres and weighs 71 grams and would have been made using a mould into which molten lead was poured.

On one side, an inscription reads "IPSCA" -- likely Latin for an unknown Spanish town -- while the other reads "CAES" for Caesar.

Experts say the discovery could prove Indigenous Spaniards supported the cause of the dictator during his civil war in 49-45BC.

"In the 1st century BC, many inscribed glans were made because they were very useful instruments for housing short, very specific messages," study lead author Javier Moralejo Ordaz told Live Science.

The message on the bullet was likely meant as political propaganda and encouragement for Caesar's own troops, he added.

Caesar's civil war engulfed Greece, Egypt, Africa, Spain and the Balkans. The final offensive is known as the Battle of Munda, which took place in Andalusia, Spain.

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BIMAN FLIGHT Plane returns to Dhaka after crack in windshield

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

An aircraft of Biman Bangladesh Airlines heading for Saudi Arabia had to return to Dhaka and make an emergency landing as a windshield of the Boeing 787-9 cracked mid flight.

The flight departed the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) around 5:30pm and returned around 8:00pm.

With 285 passengers on board, BG349 safely landed thanks to Tania Reza, the pilot in command, said Tahera Khondokar, general manager, (public relations) at Biman.

"The flight was headed for Dammam. But two hours into the flight, the captain saw a crack on the left side of a windshield. By that time, the aircraft was in Indian airspace," she said.

After communicating with the air traffic control at HSIA, the captain decided to return.

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Gaza death toll crosses 25,000

Says enclave's Hamas-run health ministry; violence surges in West Bank as Israeli forces conduct raids

AGENCIES

Gaza's Hamas-run health ministry yesterday said the death toll in the Palestinian territory breached 25,000 as Israel pushed its southward offensive and renewed bombardment in the north.

Alongside fierce fighting in southern Gaza and across the besieged territory, strikes in Syria and Iraq raised fears of a wider conflagration.

A total of 25,105 Palestinians have been killed and 62,681 have been injured in Israeli strikes on Gaza since October 7, the Gaza health ministry said in a statement yesterday. Some 178 Palestinians were killed and 293 injured in the past 24 hours, the ministry added.

An AFP correspondent reported gunfire, air strikes and tank shelling that was especially heavy in Khan Yunis, southern Gaza's main city. Witnesses also told AFP that Israeli boats were bombarding Gaza City and other areas in the north early yesterday.

In Rafah, near the border with Egypt, at

least five people were killed in a strike that hit what the Gaza health ministry said was a civilian car.

Israel is pressing its push southwards against Hamas, after the military said in early January the group's command structure in northern Gaza had been dismantled, leaving only isolated fighters.

➤ Israeli boats bombarded Gaza City, other areas in north

➤ 178 killed in 24 hours in enclave

➤ 1.7m people displaced in Gaza: UNRWA

➤ The availability of water 'shrinking every day': OCHA

Violence has also surged in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where the military said it had demolished two houses in Hebron that it said had belonged to two Palestinian gunmen who had carried out an attack on a road between Jerusalem and Bethlehem in November.

The official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported clashes between Israeli troops and Palestinian fighters in the West Bank village of Maithalun, south of Jenin, as well as in the West Bank towns of Arura and Qalqilya.

But Hamas has also reported heavy combat in the north of Gaza as Israel's military said its troops, backed by air and naval support, were striking the group's infrastructure throughout the Palestinian territory.

Country logs Covid death after a week

Infection rate rises slightly

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another Covid-19 death was reported in the country yesterday while the infection rate has been on a steady rise for the past month.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, this is the third Covid-related death in the country this year, after two deaths were reported on January 11 and January 14. Before January 11, the last Covid death in the country was recorded on September 13 last year.

The patient who died yesterday was a male aged between 61-70 and his death was reported from the Chattogram division.

With 34 new cases recorded yesterday, the Covid-19 infection rate has now shot up to 5.92 percent. The day before, it was 5.83, while on Friday, it was 5.12, indicating an upward trend in the daily infection rate.

In December 20, the rate was 0.66 percent.

The total positivity rate currently stands at 13.09 percent.

While the infection rate has been on a sudden rise in the country over the past few days, the reason behind it is yet to be determined.

Experts fear that JN.1, a subvariant of Omicron, which the WHO termed "variant to watch for" as it spreads fast, may be behind it. They have suggested maintaining hygiene rules.

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Clinic director among 3 held for selling newborn

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Three people, including the director of a private hospital, were arrested in Rangpur city yesterday for selling a newborn after his parents failed to clear the hospital bills, said police.

The arrestees are SM Rahman Roni, 58, director of Holy Crescent Hospital, Rubel Hossain 30, a broker, and one Bithi Aktar, 30, from Rangpur city, said Abu Maruf Hossain, deputy commissioner (crime) of Rangpur Metropolitan Police.

On January 13, Laboni Aktar, 22, a resident of Bhurarghat area, was admitted to the hospital after she went into labour.

She gave birth the same night.

On January 17, when the hospital authorities came up with a Tk 40,000 bill, Laboni and her husband said they could not afford it.

The next day, Laboni was

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In tears, relatives open the shroud to see the face of a Palestinian killed in an Israeli strike in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Ukrainian strike on Donetsk kills 25

Says pro-Russian authority; fire breaks out at Russian gas terminal after drone attack

REUTERS

At least 25 people were killed and 20 injured after Ukrainian forces shelled the Russian-controlled city of Donetsk in eastern Ukraine, Alexei Kulemzin, the city's Russian-installed mayor, said yesterday.

There was no immediate comment from Ukraine on the incident. According to Kulemzin, Ukrainian forces shelled a busy area where shops and a market are located.

Reuters photographs taken at the scene showed crying people and bodies lying on a snow-covered street near one of the city's markets.

Pushilin said emergency services were working at the scene and that forensic specialists were trying to collect fragments of the weapons used in the attack.

Donetsk is one of four Ukrainian regions which Russia claimed to have annexed last year in a move condemned as illegal by most countries at the United Nations General Assembly. Russia does not fully control any of the four regions.

Meanwhile, a fire broke out at a Baltic Sea terminal belonging to Novatek NVTK.MM, Russia's largest liquefied natural gas producer, after a Ukrainian drone attack, forcing the company to suspend some operations there.

The Ust-Luga complex, located on the Gulf of Finland about 170 km (110 miles) west of St Petersburg, processes stable gas condensate into light and heavy naphtha, jet fuel, fuel oil and gasoil, according to Novatek's website. The port is used to ship processed products to international markets.