

THE NATION'S LARGEST ROD MANUFACTURER

★★★★★



WITH MORE CAPACITY, WE ARE MORE READY TO BUILD TOMORROW'S BANGLADESH

 **BSRM**
building a safer nation

Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport

Terminal 3,

Proud Construction Partner



Pneumonia cases shoot up

Shishu Hospital data shows; experts blame air pollution

AHMED DEEPTO

Three-year-old Anisha Anju was struggling to breathe in the pneumonia ward of Dhaka Shishu Hospital and Institute.

With a severe breathing issue, she was taken to the hospital on November 26 from her home in Narsingdi's Belabo. But her condition kept deteriorating and she had to be shifted to the ICU. After being in the ICU for three days, she was moved to the ward five days ago.

"But her [Anisha's] progress has been slow since then," said her mother Shahinur Akhter, staring blankly at her child with an oxygen tube in her nose.

"My daughter has had breathing problems since childhood. Her condition worsens every winter, and this time we brought her here as it got worse. The doctors haven't been able to say how long she'll need to stay," the mother said while talking to The Daily Star on Thursday.

The pneumonia ward, with 19 beds, is now full while the hospital has been witnessing a surge in pneumonia cases since the onset of winter. Its officials said 1,200 patients were given outdoor healthcare on Thursday.

Physicians said air pollution is one of the main contributing factors behind cold-related diseases,

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

A haze of dust hangs over DN Road in the capital's Shyampur. Pedestrians shield their faces with masks as they navigate the polluted air, a byproduct of ongoing construction and heavy traffic. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Anti-noise pollution rules by this month: Rizwana

BSS, Dhaka

Environment, Forest and Climate Change Adviser Syeda Rizwana Hasan today said the new rules to control sound pollution will be finalised this month.

"The rules will give police the power to control sound pollution," she said, adding that fines and jail terms are not enough, rather public awareness and responsible behaviour are key to bring about this change.

Rizwana made the remarks while speaking as chief guest at an

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6

US following situation in Bangladesh

Says White House

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US President Joe Biden is closely monitoring the situation in Bangladesh and the US expects the interim government to ensure protection of religious and ethnic minorities, the White House said on Thursday.

White House National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby told a press briefing, "We're watching this very, very, very closely, and the president is following events closely as well."

Responding to a question from Lalit K Jha, the head of PTI bureau in Washington DC, Kirby said, "The security situation in Bangladesh has been difficult following the ouster of the former prime minister. And we have been working closely with the interim government to enhance the capability of their law enforcement and security services to deal with the challenge."

The PTI bureau chief had said in his question, "Over the past few weeks, several Hindu American groups

SEE PAGE 6 COL 7

'Prepare to remain' in Syria buffer zone through winter

Israel orders troops; Blinken says it is 'imperative' to work against IS in Syria

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz yesterday ordered the military to "prepare to remain" throughout the winter in the UN-patrolled buffer zone between Israeli and Syrian forces on the strategic Golan Heights.

Israel seized the demilitarized zone on Sunday, just hours after Syrian rebels swept from power.

Since then, the Israeli military has launched hundreds of air and naval strikes against Syrian military assets, targeting everything from chemical weapons stores to air defences to prevent them from falling into rebel hands.

"Due to the situation in Syria, it is of critical security importance to maintain our presence at the summit of Mount Hermon, and everything must be done to ensure the (army's) readiness on-site to enable the fighters to stay there despite the challenging weather conditions," Katz's spokesman said in a statement yesterday. Israel says it seized the buffer zone to defend itself.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday told Turkey it was "imperative" to

work against a resurgence of the Islamic State (IS) group in Syria following the fall of Bashar al-Assad.

His remarks came after meeting Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan in Ankara on the second leg of his Syria crisis tour following the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government. Blinken also pledged to work with Iraq against IS.

Meanwhile, mass rallies took place in Syria to celebrate the end of five decades of authoritarian rule by the Assad regime.

"I would like to congratulate the great Syrian people on the victory of the blessed revolution and I call on them to go to the streets to express their joy," said the leader of the rebels Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, who is now using his real name Ahmed al-Sharaa.

Israel's seizure of the buffer zone has triggered widespread international criticism, including from UN chief Antonio Guterres.

Guterres "is deeply concerned by the recent and extensive violations of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity," his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said in a statement on Thursday.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 7

Israeli strike kills 33 Palestinians

Blinken sees 'encouraging signs' on reaching ceasefire

REUTERS, Cairo

An Israeli strike on a post office sheltering Gaza residents killed at least 33 Palestinians and wounded 50, medics said, and the Israeli military said yesterday it had been targeting a senior Islamic Jihad member.

Families displaced by the 14-month-old conflict had sought refuge in the postal facility in the Nuseirat camp, and the strike late on Thursday brought the day's death toll in the enclave to 66, the medics said.

Israel said its target was an Islamic Jihad leader of attacks on Israeli civilians and troops and accused the group of exploiting civilian infrastructure and population as a human shield for its activities.

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said yesterday he saw "encouraging signs" of progress toward a ceasefire in Gaza, urging Turkey to use its influence to encourage Hamas to accept.

His remarks came after meeting Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on the second leg of his Syria crisis tour following the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government.

Earlier on Thursday, two Israeli strikes in southern Gaza killed 13 Palestinians who Gaza medics and Hamas said were part of a force protecting humanitarian aid trucks. Israel's military said they were Hamas members trying to hijack the shipment.

Many of those killed in the attacks on Rafah and Khan Younis had links to Hamas, according to sources close to the group.

The Israeli military said in a statement the two airstrikes aimed to ensure the safe delivery of humanitarian aid and accused Hamas members of planning to prevent the aid from reaching Gaza civilians who need it.

Armed gangs have repeatedly hijacked aid trucks, and Hamas has formed a task force to confront them. The Hamas-led forces have killed over two dozen members of the gangs in recent months, Hamas sources and medics said.

Hamas said Israeli military strikes have killed at least 700 police tasked with securing aid trucks in Gaza since the offensive began on

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Withdraw your statement on political parties

Fakhrul tells Nahid

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday protested Information and Broadcasting Adviser Nahid Islam's accusation that political parties were trying to undermine the interim government and demanded the statement be withdrawn.

"I don't know why or in what context he said this, or whether he understood the meaning of it. This is a dangerous statement. I strongly protest against it. I think he should withdraw his comment," he told a discussion.

The BNP arranged the programme at the Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh, marking the Martyred Intellectuals Day, which will be observed across the country on Saturday.

Fakhrul called upon the interim government to be cautious in making its statements. "Please don't make political parties

SEE PAGE 6 COL 7

Roman soldier's remains from 'year 0' found

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Archaeologists have unearthed a unique grave of a Roman soldier "from year 0" in the Netherlands, shedding light on the ancient civilisation's presence in the region.

The 2,000-year-old grave was discovered in the municipality of Heerlen last month and belonged to a soldier nicknamed "Flaccus" who lived around OAD, researchers said.

They deduced the name from the word "Flac" carved into a bowl found in the grave.

"Today, evidence was found of Roman habitation in the time of Emperor Augustus. A unique discovery that not only teaches us more about our past, but also shows how unique the story of Roman Heerlen is for the Netherlands," Jordy Clemens, Heerlen's council member for culture and heritage, said in a statement.

Despite having waited since 5:00am, a group of labourers for hire leave Mohammadpur Town Hall Market after failing to find any work. They said work has been difficult to find these days. With their hopes of earning dashed, they wondered how they would provide food to their families. The photo was taken from Manik Mia Avenue around 11:30am yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Idols broken, jewellery looted from temple

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Seven idols of deities were vandalised, and gold ornaments stolen from Mahashashan Kali Mata Temple in Jamalpur's Sarishabari upazila early yesterday.

Uttam Kumar Tewari, president of the temple committee, said they found the idols damaged when they went to offer prayers at the temple at Kamrabad in the morning.

Uttam added that the donation box was also looted.

He said a group of miscreants might have done this to disrupt religious harmony in the country.

Condemning the incident, Uttam demanded a proper investigation and immediate arrest of the culprits.

On information, Sarishabari UNO Sharmin Akhtar, along with police, army and intelligence agency personnel, visited the spot, said locals.

Sohel Mahmud, additional superintendent of Jamalpur police, said, "We have visited the spot. Legal action will be taken after investigation."