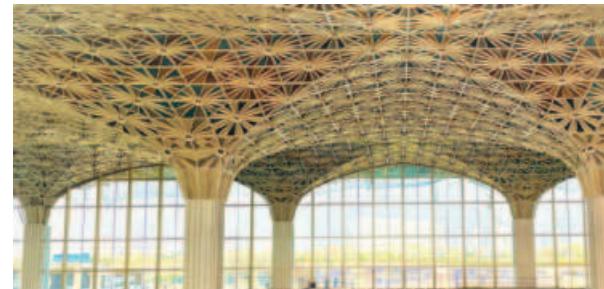


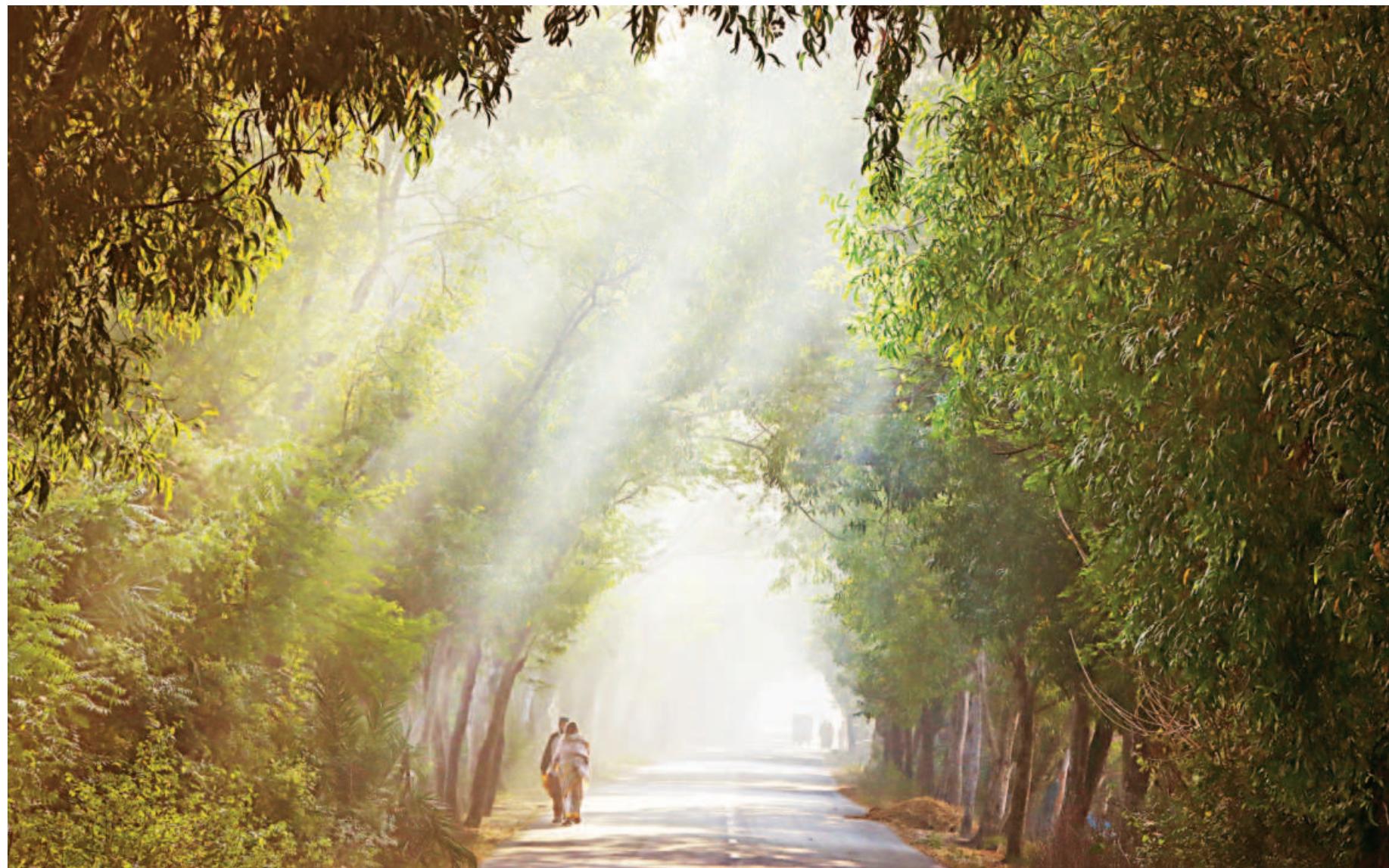


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FIRST LIGHT... Soft rays of sunlight shimmer through the mist, casting a gentle glow over this serene woodland street on a cool winter morning. The photo was taken yesterday in Khulna's Botiaghata.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

US plan sees
Kyiv joining
EU in 2027

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine would join the European Union as early as January 2027 under the latest US plan to end the war with Russia, a senior source familiar with the matter told AFP yesterday.

The complicated EU accession process usually takes years and requires a unanimous vote from all 27 members of the bloc, and some countries, most notably Hungary, have consistently opposed Ukraine joining.

The idea of a speedy accession is included in the latest version of a US-led plan to end the war, which would also see Ukraine cede land to Russia, and has triggered a diplomatic frenzy across Europe in recent weeks.

"It's stated there but it's a matter for negotiation, and the Americans support it," the senior official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said, referring to the US plan.

Meanwhile, Europeans and Ukrainians are asking the United States to provide them with "security

SEE PAGE 8 COL 6

Record high C-section births raise concerns

Experts cite financial incentives, low awareness

ALARMING RISE

C-section rate rises 51.8% in 2025 from 19.1 in 2012-13

WHO recommends 10-15%

Higher among urban, wealthy and educated mothers

WHAT'S DRIVING IT

Profit incentives in private hospitals

Fear of labour pain; early surgical requests

Low awareness of when C-sections are necessary

WHY IT MATTERS

Unnecessary C-sections don't improve outcomes

Higher risk of infection, long-term pain, depression

Lower early breast feeding rates

TANGILA TASnim

Israt Jahan, a 21-year-old student of Dhaka University, gave birth to a girl a year ago. Conceiving shortly after her marriage, she chose to undergo a C-section for delivery.

"I wasn't actually prepared for the baby. When I got to know I was pregnant, I was happy but nervous as well. I had a lot of support from everyone, including my husband. But after check-ups, I decided to go for caesarean delivery."

Citing concern for her unborn child's safety, she said, "I know normal delivery is a good option. But what if it hurt my baby? I didn't want to take any risk. Since we have other options, why would I go for the tougher one?"

On the other hand, 28-year-old Eti Chowdhury had no choice but a C-section.

A mother of a five-year-old boy, her pregnancy journey during the Covid-19 pandemic was particularly difficult. As her due date neared, a premature membrane rupture caused pain and amniotic fluid leakage. After waiting for the pain to ease throughout the day of delivery, doctors decided a C-section was necessary.

"I tried my best to go through a normal delivery, but when the pain became too much to handle, I agreed to the surgery," Eti said.

After the operation, she was kept under

SEE PAGE 8 COL 1

No change in
Khaleda Zia's
condition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's condition remained unchanged, with no signs of improvement nor any deterioration as of last night, according to her doctors.

She continued to receive treatment at the intensive care unit of Evercare Hospital in Dhaka.

Earlier, on Thursday, the doctors confirmed that she is getting "elective ventilator support" to rest her lungs and other organs.

Elective ventilator support means

putting a patient on a ventilator as a planned, non-emergency medical step -- not because they are in sudden respiratory failure, but because doctors believe the patient's organs need rest or support.

The 80-year-old former prime minister has long been battling multiple health issues, including liver cirrhosis. She was admitted to the hospital on November 23 with infections in her heart and lungs.

She has recently developed several additional complications, including infective endocarditis, acute pancreatitis, and severe bacterial and fungal infections.

SEE PAGE 8 COL 3



Tears flow as Sazid is laid to rest

SHOHANUR RAHMAN RAFI, ajshahi

Koelhat village in Rajshahi was shrouded with grief yesterday as hundreds of people bade farewell to two-year-old Sazid, who died after being trapped for over 30 hours in an abandoned shaft.

Sazid's janaza was held at 10:30am in his village in Panchandar union of Tanore upazila. He was then buried in the village graveyard.

Villagers kept pouring in, some to pray, others to get one final glimpse of the child.

At home, his mother Runa Khatun was seen trembling and crying. Relatives sat around her, trying to comfort each other.

Runa and her husband, Rakibul Islam, married ten years ago. They have three sons. The eldest is nine, the youngest three months old. Sazid was their middle child.

Rakibul works in Gazipur. Runa stays in the village with the children and his parents.

"Sazid was the most curious and playful one," Runa said, reminiscing about her departed child before breaking down again.



PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

Sazid's family members break down in tears as the two-year-old was laid to rest in his village home yesterday.

The incident happened around noon on Wednesday. A soil-laden trolley sank into the ground.

Runa, holding Sazid's hand, walked towards the spot. "He screamed 'Ma' and slipped into the opening," she recalled. She thought Sazid had fallen into the pond. Then she heard faint cries -- "Ma, ma" -- from the shaft. She called the neighbours.

Locals said the shaft was one of several groundwater-test holes dug earlier by a man named Kochir Uddin, searching for a suitable tube-well point. None were sealed later. Kochir fled the area within an hour of the incident.

Rescuers dug for hours, but the soil kept collapsing. Tanore Fire Service In Charge Abdur Rouf said the child was eventually found at a depth of 45 feet.

"Before we arrived, locals tried to conduct the rescue themselves, causing the upper layers of soil to cave in. This blocked the shaft significantly, and the oxygen we supplied could not reach him," Abdur Rouf said.

Sazid was taken to Tanore Upazila Health Complex. Dr Barnabas Hasdak declared him dead at 9:40pm on Thursday.

At the grave, his father Rakibul said, "If the shaft had been closed, this would not have happened. If my child had been even 10 or 15 feet down, he might have been saved. But he was 40 feet below for 32 hours. I want justice so that no other family faces this."

Relatives echoed Rakibul's demand.

Sazid's aunt, Shefali, said, "Leaving a hole uncovered like this is a crime. We want justice for Sazid."



BOTTLENECK ON ATISH DIPANKAR ROAD... Illegally parked cargo vehicles occupy half the width of Atish Dipankar Road in the capital, forcing traffic into a single lane and creating a major bottleneck in the area.

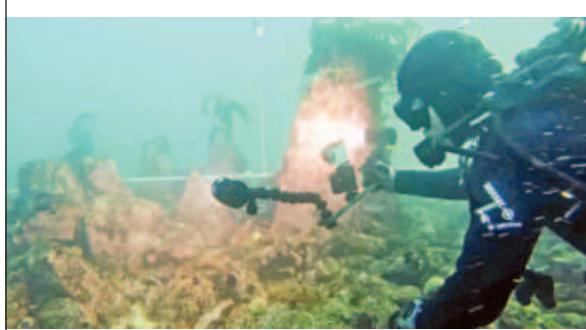
PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Ancient undersea wall found off French coast

AFP, Brest

Divers have discovered a long submerged wall some 7,000 years old under the sea off western France, scientists said Thursday.

Some 120 metres long, it was found off the Ile de Sein in Brittany along with a dozen smaller manmade structures from the same period.



"This is a very interesting discovery that opens up new prospects for underwater archaeology, helping us better understand how coastal societies were organised," Yvan Pailler, professor of archaeology at the University of Western Brittany, told AFP.

He co-authored a study on the find, published in the International Journal of Nautical Archaeology.

Thai PM dissolves House, paving way for elections

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's prime minister dissolved parliament yesterday, paving the way for general elections early next year as deadly border clashes continue with neighbour Cambodia.

The move comes earlier than expected and just three months after Anutin Charnvirakul -- of the conservative Bhumjaithai party -- became prime minister when his predecessor was removed from office over an ethics violation.

"The House of Representatives is dissolved to hold a new general election for members of the House," a decree published in the Royal Gazette on Friday said.

Anutin was widely expected to wait until after Christmas to dissolve parliament.

"Since the administration is a minority government and domestic political conditions are fraught with multiple challenges, the government cannot continue administering state affairs continuously, efficiently, and with stability," the Royal Gazette said, citing a report received from Anutin.

"Therefore, the appropriate solution is to dissolve the House of Representatives and hold a new general election."